



Members gearing up to celebrate OHCE Week

Whether they are raising scholarship money, beautifying their communities or sewing cloth face masks for healthcare workers across the state, members of Oklahoma State University Extension's group, [Oklahoma Home and Community Education](#), continue to make a difference every day.

Committed to making a difference, this group, established in 1935, will celebrate their service to Oklahoma May 2-8 during Oklahoma Home and Community Education Week. This year's theme is Celebrating Your Helping Hands. This group certainly knows how to put their hands to good work.

With nearly 3,500 members statewide, club members work together to strengthen individuals, families and communities through education, leadership and action. Through the group's relationship with [Oklahoma State University Extension](#), OHCE presents research-based information to its members.

The impact of OHCE is strong and felt far and wide. For example, when the COVID-19 pandemic began last year, there was a desperate shortage of face masks for workers in the medical field and other areas. OHCE members stepped up to the plate and put their sewing skills to good use. They made nearly 75,000 masks that were donated to hospitals, clinics and other places. McCurtain County OHCE made 9,007 masks, which was the most from any one county.

Suzette Barta, community engagement coordinator for OSU's College of Education and Human Sciences - Extension, Engagement and Continuing Education, said operating a sewing machine wasn't the only way club members were making their mark on their communities.

"The pandemic certainly didn't slow them down. OHCE members also made great strides in technology usage," Barta said. "Clubs held three district meetings by Zoom and afternoon workshops were prerecorded and posted on YouTube. Groups even held silent auction fundraisers that were posted on hosting counties' Facebook pages."

Despite the challenges of the pandemic, OHCE members continue to make a difference around the state. Other highlights include:

Washita County: Kristy Spalding, county OSU Extension educator and Extension director, put together mask kits that included all materials needed to sew masks for volunteers who wanted to donate their time and skill to sewing masks. Masks were provided to a nursing home, home health agencies, hospice agency and a retirement center. OSU Extension handed out 166 of the

free kits, utilizing all of the material, elastic and ribbon they had on hand. Also in Washita County, an OHCE club donated needed items for foster children.

Craig County: White Oak Public School Project – OHCE members collected school supplies for teachers and students throughout the year and gave each student a Christmas backpack filled with goodies, along with a wrapped gift from their wish list. Members also volunteered as a group with Grand Nation for snack bags of food to be delivered for breakfast, lunch and dinner to families in need. In addition, they donated gas money for trucks to get the food from the food bank to Vinita.

Stephens County: Sunshine OHCE made more than 1,000 red ribbons for Duncan Public High School to use during Red Ribbon Week, which is a week set aside for drug awareness and education.

Beckham County: sewed a quilt for a local veteran.

“This is just a small sample of what our thousands of members do for their communities every day,” Barta said.

For more information about OHCE, contact your [local OSU Extension office](#).