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Core Values Motivates Student to Print 3-D Masks for Healthcare Workers

CEDARVILLE, OHIO -- Although Cedarville University sophomore Connor Hart of Loveland, Ohio has more than two years remaining in college, he is putting his education in 3-D printing to work during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As a freshman, Hart, the founder of Hands of Hope Foundation, started creating 3-D prosthetics for children with limb differences. Since social distancing has become protocol to help flatten the COVID-19 curve, Hart stopped meeting with his clients, but switched to printing masks that could help medical professionals and nursing homes during the pandemic.

“What I love most about working for Hands of Hope is knowing I am positively impacting the lives of both our clients and volunteers,” expressed Hart. “Knowing I provided joy to someone else with no strings attached is what keeps me smiling and driven toward giving others the same opportunities I have been given.”

His love for others fits perfectly with the core values that are espoused throughout the university: Love for God, Love for Others, Integrity in Conduct, and Excellence in Effort.

Motivated by his care for others and multiple news reports about the shortage of qualified masks for doctors and nurses, Hart searched for a way he could pitch in. When the Hands of Hope Foundation received encouragement from a team of doctors about the need for masks, he decided to begin printing and distributing reusable masks. Hart started making 3-D plastic masks last week and sent them to various medical facilities.

Hart, who is majoring in mechanical engineering, can make eight masks a day through his 3-D printing equipment and has printed and shipped 25 masks so far. Each mask can be sanitized to allow for extended use.

According to Hart, each mask is completely reusable, meaning one mask can last for months if it is sanitized effectively and the filter is changed regularly. Hands of Hope Foundation has shipped masks to medical agencies, including a nursing home in Holgate, Ohio.

Hands of Hope started in September 2015 when Hart and three classmates at Milford High School in Milford, Ohio, volunteered to create a 3D-printed prosthetic for Hope McGill, a 7-year-old girl from the community missing her left arm from the elbow down.

“Hope was adopted from China. She had been taught from an early age to hide her arm, making her self-conscious about it. Because of the prosthetic, Hope became more confident in her little arm,” noted Catherine McGill, Hope’s older sister and a Cedarville student.

Hands of Hope became a club at Milford High School and made prosthetics for three other children. However, in the spring of 2018, Milford High School decided to drop Hands of Hope as an extracurricular group due to a lack of interest from the student body. Not wanting to see the organization dissolved, Hart transformed Hands of Hope into an official nonprofit and invited Catherine McGill to serve as the Foundation’s media director.

Hart and McGill created The Hands of Hope Foundation’s chapter on Cedarville University’s campus. This was made possible by Cedarville’s school of engineering and computer science.

“Connor went the extra mile prior to coming to campus for his freshman fall semester,” said Robert Chasnov, dean of the school of engineering and computer science and senior professor of engineering. “He needed a space for the 3D printers he uses to manufacture the hands his team would be designing. Since we had a project lab that was being used primarily to store mobile test equipment, I set him up in that space.”

Located in southwest Ohio, Cedarville University is an accredited, Christ-centered, Baptist institution with an enrollment of 4,380 undergraduate, graduate and online students in more than 150 areas of study. Founded in 1887, Cedarville is recognized nationally for its authentic Christian community, rigorous academic programs, including its Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering program, strong graduation and retention rates, accredited professional and health science offerings and leading student satisfaction ratings. For more information about the University, visit www.cedarville.edu.