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Hometown Focus

THE DIXON PILOT, WEDNESDAY, MARCH 25, 2020 10

Campus rallies to 3-D print protective medical gear

ROLLA, Mo. -- When representatives from Phelps Health, anticipating a shortage of protective masks due to the coronavirus outbreak, needed help, students, faculty and staff at Missouri University of Science and Technology answered by harnessing the power of technology and ingenuity.

Campus was abnormally quiet Saturday and Sunday, March 21-22, not only because it was the weekend before spring break but also because, due to the coronavirus outbreak, most students had moved out for the semester and a majority of faculty and staff prepared to work remotely. But 3-D printers in a couple of buildings on campus were humming away, fabricating prototype masks and face shield brackets.

Inside the Kummer Student Design Center, where S&T students usually work on rockets, solar cars, Mars rovers and other projects, a few students, faculty and staff outfitted one room Saturday with a dozen 3-D printers to produce prototypes for Phelps Health's physicians, nurses and other medical workers.

Across campus, students at Missouri S&T's Makerspace were using their 3-D printers to fabricate prototypes of the face shield brackets. The university enlisted more printers for the cause Sunday.

'Phenomenal' prototypes

The S&T prototypes "are phenomenal," says Dr. Casey Burton, director of medical research at Phelps Health.

Although there are no confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Rolla, Burton and Shawn Hodges,

Phelps Health's director of ancillary and surgical services, foresaw the need to obtain more protective gear for the Rolla-based regional health system.

"Shawn had already been experimenting with 3-D printed masks with Rolla High School but realized he needed to drastically scale up production capacity to meet the needs of our community," Burton says. "He reached out to me to rally the university and beyond for their support and to help organize those operations with him on our end."

Burton asked Missouri S&T Chancellor Mohammad Dehghani if it was possible to harness the university's 3-D printing capabilities to aid in the effort. Dehghani directed others across campus to do what they could to assist.

The Kummer Student Design Center staff and students were among the first to respond. Dr. Chris Ramsay, assistant vice provost for student design and director of the center, marshalled the few remaining student members of the center's 19 design teams to set up a 3-D printer farm to run 24 hours a day in the center at 10th Street and Bishop Avenue.

"We started out with five" 3-D printers at the design center, Ramsay says. "I sent a note out to all the design teams, and the students who were still in town brought their printers in and now we're up to 12."

Students re-energized

"This has re-energized our design team students," Ramsay says. Hundreds of S&T students had worked since the fall on projects for design competitions that are now canceled due to the coron-



Eric Schneider, a senior aerospace engineering student at Missouri S&T, tests the fit of a prototype 3-D printed surgical mask on the head of a mannequin in the Kummer Student Design Center at S&T. In the background is Stephen Williams, an S&T mechanical engineering student. Photo by Tom Wagner/Missouri S&T.

avirus. "This community need fulfills a hunger that they have to do something positive and meaningful in this crisis."

While the design center produced prototype surgical masks, S&T's Makerspace chief executive officer Daustin Hoelscher, a senior computer engineering major from Mascoutah, Illinois, was printing a prototype bracket for the face shields.

Phelps Health medical staff evaluated both product prototypes on Sunday and were continuing evaluations Monday.

"This could certainly be a game

changer for us and even the rest of the world, so we appreciate Missouri S&T's efforts," says Dr. Brian Kriete, otolaryngologist and medical director of surgical services at Phelps Health.

"I'm so pleased with how our university community has come together to help in this time of need," says Dehghani. "The rapid response and support for one of our important community partners typifies the true S&T spirit of innovation, ingenuity and community engagement. I am very proud of the way our university has responded to this critical need."

A community effort

The Rolla Public School System is also involved in the effort, with instructors at Rolla High School, Rolla Junior High School and Rolla Technical Institute (RTI) putting their 3-D printers to use. Some students in robotics classes and teams are also helping, says Dr. Amy Hermann, RTI director.

"RTI instructors Meghan Brough and Leigh Ann Carpenter also sent out an 'all call' to all our robotics kids, saying if they had 3-D printers, we could help the community. Several robotics kids are now printing too," she says.

They're Back -- Purple Martins bring hope during crisis

By Dennis Payne, Richland

It started with one old metal purple martin box that I relocated from Arkansas. I had given it to my father when I left there to join the Army in '83. When he died, I brought it up here to Richland and still use it. It is now a low-rent fixer upper seriously showing its age after being trashed by a hawk when my father had it. Even though it's missing a few parts, it is the first box the scouts check out when they arrive in mid-March.

Though an estimated 60 percent of martins die from one year to the next, my flock has continued to grow over the last 10 years to around 60 birds last year, causing me to gradually add three more boxes. They are always a welcome sight in March, indicating my least favorite time of the year in the Ozarks is ending and my favorite time of year is around the corner. I always hate to see them leave in August, but there is comfort in knowing they will return the next March. In fact, the noisy martins arriving, raising their young, leaving, and returning creates a rhythm on our place in Missouri that we've come to trust.

I always wait until the day the scouts arrive to erect the boxes. That keeps the sparrows and starlings from moving in. Usually one or two birds appear and perch on

the electric line above the old low-rent martin box between March 21 and 24. The box and its attached pole are resting on the ground pending occupancy of the purple gang, so I have to hustle when the scouts appear. Last year one of the scouts attempted to occupy the box as I was attempting to erect it during a gusty windstorm. If you have ever put a leaded bell sinker on a line attached to a flyrod or bamboo cane pole and attempted to cast it, you can understand how difficult erecting a heavy metal martin box on the end of a long aluminum pole during a wind storm might be, especially with a darting bird attempting to occupy said box at the same time. Feels like threading a moving needle while wind blows the thread.

The scouts arrived March 18. Early. That morning my wife Cindy Lou grabbed the binoculars and asked if the three birds on the electric line above the low-rent martin box could be our scouts.

"Too early," I thought, but grabbed my binoculars anyway. And there it was. A sleek dark little swallow, a young one, a familiar and joyful sight for me indeed. Like Maverick in the movie Top Gun performing an unauthorized flyby of the flight deck control tower, the small young male an-

nounced his return to the scene of his birth.

They have never come this early in the 10 plus years that we have been here. But here they were. Two sleek young purple martins and one plump opportunistic starling all seeking to get a room with a good view.

When all four boxes were up, one of the martins checked out all of the boxes and then disappeared while the darker and smaller male martin remained perched on the old battered box and proceeded to inspect the north side top level apartment on the east end. I would not have chosen the north side where the wind is colder. But he likely knew it would be cooler in the summer months to come. With just his beak sticking out, he seemed content to remain in his room for the night. He had returned to his place of birth from another country, perhaps another continent. This was natural. It was part of the rhythm created by those that had been hatched and raised and schooled in flight here on our place in Missouri for over 10 years.

Cindy Lou said how nice it was to have them back and to experience something that was "normal" for a change. With all the tension, uncertainty, fear, anxiety and apprehension, we are experiencing in our lives today a bit of normalcy is appreciated. The return of the martins that early spring day was a gift, a special gift. I stayed outside a long time as the sun was setting, content to watch a little head with a tiny beak protruding from the north side of the old fixer upper that has proudly stood in two states for the last 20 summers, withstanding heat, wind, severe weather to include hail storms and even a hungry hawk attack. They are back early. The main body will arrive in a few days. Spring cannot be very far behind. The sunny days will return. The grass will grow. The leaves will return to the trees around the place and along the creeks. Our little piece of Missouri will begin to put on her Sunday britches again as she always has before. This cold, wet, dreary funk will end and the old normal will return.

With spring will also come the blooming of the wild plums, the redbuds, followed by the dogwoods, the maples, Cindy's willow, the grass, the mowers and the smell of gasoline, the tractors and the smell of diesel, the smell of hay being cut, cured, raked and baled, the smell of hamburgers sizzling on a charcoal grill, the smell of beer when you pop the cap off the bottle top, the tartness of lemonade



Dennis Payne, of Richland, bird watching for purple martins. Photo submitted

and the rush you get from drinking cold sweet tea when you are hot. Maybe this really is the beginning of something familiar and normal again.

You have to claim a little miracle whenever you can find one these days. I am claiming this one. A tiny bit of "normal" returning to the farm.

DMS students attend Central District Choir



DMS students attended the Central District 4-6 Choir in St. James. Dixon students who attended are (left to right) Hunter Alexander, Sam Blase, Eleanor Pickett-Becker, Hannah Shockley, and Payton Pratt. Photos submitted

Community Calendar

This calendar of club, council and board meeting times and places is provided as a community service by THE DIXON PILOT.

Dixon City Council meets **First Monday** of each month at 6 p.m. at Dixon City Hall at 203 S. Walnut.

Dixon Lions Club meets **First & Third Wednesdays** at 5:30 p.m. at Oak Hills Country Club.

Arlington Lodge #346 meets the **First & Third Tuesday** of each month at 7:00 p.m. at the Lodge Hall on High School Drive.

Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 4238 meets the **First Friday** of each month at 7 p.m. at the Post Hall, corner of Highway 28 and Chestnut Street.

Dixon Ambulance District Board meets on the **Second Monday** of each month at 7:00 p.m. in the Ambulance Building on Ellen Street.

Dixon Athletic Booster Club meets each month at 7:00 p.m. in the Dixon High School Library.

American Legion Post 298 meets the **Second Thursday** of each month at 6:30 p.m. at the Post Home, corner of Ellen and 5th Streets.

Dixon Firefighters meet **every Thursday evening** at 7 p.m. at the Fire House on High School Drive.

VFW Post 4238 Auxiliary meets at 7 p.m. on the **Second Thursday** of each month at the VFW Post Home, Highway 28 and Chestnut Street.

Dixon R-1 School Board meets on the **Third Thursday** of each month at 6:00 p.m. in the Administration Building.

Gascosage Electric Cooperative Board meets the **Third Thursday** of each month at 6:00 p.m. at the Co-operative Headquarters on Highway 28.

Dixon Area Chamber of Commerce meets the **Third Monday** of each month at 6:00 p.m. in the Bank of Missouri Community Meeting Room.

Senior Citizen Center Site Council Meeting is on the **Third Wednesday** of each month at 8:30 a.m. at the Senior Citizen Center on Old Y Road.

Dixon Area Caring Center Board meets **Last Tuesday** of each month at 5:30 p.m.

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