

EXPOSURE



CUTTING A NEW CLOTH

Fighting COVID-19 through a student's perspective

Story by [Fresno State](#)

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As the impacts of COVID-19 became more apparent and Fresno's supply of personal protective equipment (PPE) diminished, Fresno State freshman Nicholas Tom and his mother felt compelled to intervene. The two began making masks out of unused Fresno State t-shirts, taking to their sewing machines and repurposing the University's excess inventory. In early May 2020, the pair delivered nearly 500 masks to Community Regional Medical Center and plan to continue meeting the need as demand increases. Find out more about what inspired Nicholas to give back to his community in his own words below.

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REFLECTING GENEROSITY

"The sound of chirping sewing machines encompasses my home. We work in the dining room while the living room hosts fabric galore. Masks flood our boxes—my eyes fog as perspiration dampens my face in my effort to contribute. My family enjoys being of service by providing personal protective equipment (PPE) to our medical personnel.

My name is Nicholas Tom, and I recently finished my freshman year as a President's Scholar at Fresno State. I am presently a kinesiology-exercise science major with a minor in music and, potentially, math.

Born and raised in Fresno by two Fresno State alumni, I aspire to study biomechanics in graduate school, to help others live well. Always enamored by the school, I studied the greatness of Paul George, Derek Carr, Davante Adams, and Aaron Judge.

I had prospects of playing college basketball elsewhere, but because I led my class academically, I chose to apply to the Smittcamp Family Honors College. This offered me an amazing and unusual sense of community and support. As a musician, a drummer, making the Bulldog Beat created extra incentive."



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"My mom remains an avid seamstress and also works for Fresno State; our friends in healthcare asked her to sew them masks because they faced the pandemic unequipped. Her masks quickly became popular.

I took this opportunity to get involved and help my community from home.

At the same time, Fresno State's Trademark Licensing Office had been looking for a partner to help repurpose the counterfeit shirts they had confiscated into something functional and meaningful. We teamed up and began making masks out of the shirts that could no longer be used. Soon enough this became our quarantine project. Hundreds of counterfeit shirts, along with several hundred unused promotional t-shirts from the athletic department and bookstore lined our house waiting to be transformed into masks."



"I learned this from my father. Dad passed after a long battle with cancer in the spring of 2019.

One of his greatest lessons was his sense of generosity. He found joy in

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giving, and I try to reflect that in all my affairs.

As the pandemic grew, I witnessed my freshman year changing. Quarantined at home, I became productive. Hearing horrible stories of suffering, I got involved to help to make lives easier."



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"A little over a month ago, I traveled with a team from Fresno State to deliver masks to healthcare workers at Community Regional Medical Center. Lines of nurses and doctors awaited, with looks of desperation on their faces. I was taken aback by the level of genuine gratitude the staff exhibited as these masks would help keep them safe. Several frontline workers made sure to thank each and every one of us as they were so appreciative of the work that had been done for them. The thoughtfulness contributed by everyone in this project helps push these medical workers to keep working under these chaotic conditions. The joy the workers exhibited made me feel like our time was worthwhile as I know the efforts they put out to protect our community.

Our world has been shaken due to unforeseen circumstances. As anxiety swells, I have found that giving back keeps me out of the negative feedback loop that can consume our world.

Instead, I find fulfillment. Although chaos has begun to dominate, I found it important to focus on what I can control. We each have unique skills, and through showing compassion to others we can serve others and conquer problems."

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Footnote: *Photos by Cary Edmondson – University Brand Strategy and Marketing; Story by Nicholas Tom*

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