

**Once an art student, Alfred University alumna Emily Bellinger finds a niche for her fabric art**  
4/17/20



Emily Bellinger, photo by  
Julia Merrell

Alfred University alumna Emily Bellinger '11 has been dividing her working hours between teaching at the Rochester Institute of Technology, where she earned her MFA, and running her fabric business from her home in Rochester. She describes herself as a fine arts quilter, and her work, which can be viewed at [www.emilybellinger.com](http://www.emilybellinger.com), includes quilts with designs that range from traditional to post-modern.

She collects fabrics. "I have a horde of fabric at my beck and call," she says. "I've been stocking up for years." A little over a week ago, she found a great use for the snippets and scraps: she has been making personal protective face masks and selling them around the greater Rochester area.

"I've only been doing it for seven days," she said in an interview earlier this week, "and I've made 122."

The numbers are climbing. Emily has found a niche market.

Her face mask business started almost accidentally. As part of her quilting business, she also makes custom-designed

bags, some of which she had sold to a friend in Chicago. “He messaged me and asked if I could make him five custom masks. I showed him some options via text message, he picked out his favorite fabrics, and I made the masks and posted them on Instagram. People started messaging me on Instagram, wanting their own masks, and my whole life blew up.”

Each day, she personally delivers masks to buyers in the Rochester area, after plotting their addresses on a map and planning an efficient delivery route. Customers pre-pay for their orders; her boyfriend drives the car; she jumps out and delivers the masks, then sends a text message: “Look in your mailbox.”

“I have a whole spreadsheet with columns for shipping, addresses, that sort of thing. I try to keep myself organized so I don’t go insane. I’m also adamant about sticking to a calendar for when I received the mask order. I keep everyone in the queue.”

Emily estimates half of her income is generated by her fabric business, with the other half coming from her teaching at RIT. That proportion may be changing.

“Restaurants are submitting bulk orders, and I’m welcoming all business,” she says. “I’m maintaining a steady level of being overwhelmed. It’s my new normal.”