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With the current state of the world, Emily Vance, an Arizona State University online student and digital photography major, used her talents and passion for photography. To spread the word, or images in this case, and unite other photographers together to spread compassion while helping to raise money for the Navajo Nation COVID-19 Relief Fund.

Vance sat down with AZ Foothills magazine for an interview about this unique fundraiser.

Hi, Emily, so how did the Masked Portrait Project come to be?

I was actually in an online class for my digital photography major at ASU Online. I really wanted to do a project that reflected the times and the current world situation. I came up with the Masked Portrait Project, I was in Portland at the time, and I started talking to an ASU alumnus, a teacher now, and she does tons of work with children in the Navajo Nation. So we started brainstorming, and we decided to have funds be raised for the Navajo Nation COVID-19 Relief Fund on GoFundMe. I mainly did not want to profit off this, and it's just become a labor of love.



Why is wearing a face mask such a passion of yours?

In the early days of COVID, I lost a few of my central photography contracts, so I had to get a job at a grocery store. I would just hear so many individuals complain about wearing a face mask for the 10 to 15 minutes that they were inside. It just bugged me for some reason, so I wanted to tell a story through this project about wearing face masks. It was all about spreading love and not germs!

I am a healthy 28-year-old; I don't need to wear a mask because I'm sure I will be fine. However, it's just a sign of respect for those who have compromised immune systems. Wearing a mask is like wearing a seatbelt in today's world. It's merely for the protection of yourself and myself.

Lastly, just explain the process of how someone can donate or get involved with the

Masked Portrait Project.

Right now, people can message me on Facebook, Instagram, or through the website, and it's just "pay what you can." If I can't do the photoshoot myself, we have many volunteer photographers who can do the shoot for me here in the Valley. We just ask that you send us confirmation from your donation before scheduling the shoot. However, we don't ask for contributions from photoshoots across the country or around the globe. We just ask that you use the hashtag #TheMaskedPortraitProject, to spread the word about the project. Spread kindness, and not germs!

For information about the Masked Portrait Project, please visit <https://www.themaskedportraitproject.com/>.

To donate to the Navajo Nation COVID-19 Relief Fund, visit: <https://www.gofundme.com/f/official-navajo-nation-covid19-relief-fund>.

Follow the Masked Portrait Project on Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/themaskedportraitproject/?modal=admin_todo_tour

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