

Here is why masks are being placed on statues of runners all over the place

Several have been added along the Boston Marathon course

By [Matthew Doherty](#) Globe Correspondent, Updated April 6, 2020, 4:28 p.m.



The statue of Boston Marathon runner John A. Kelley in Newton was decorated with protective masks as a reminder of best health practices in April of 2020. RAY CHARBONNEAU

Amby Burfoot was running along the banks of the Mystic River in Connecticut early Saturday morning when his brother, Gary, mentioned the idea of putting a protective face mask on the downtown Mystic statue of 1957 Boston Marathon winner John J. Kelley.

With Amby's wife Cristina leading the creative efforts, the Burfoots raced home and constructed a green shamrock mask honoring Kelley's Irish heritage and placed it across his face on the statue.

Burfoot didn't think much of the idea until it dawned on him that he knew other runner statues around the country and people in those communities who would be interested in putting protective masks on their own hometown statues.

So the 1968 Boston Marathon winner reached out to connections through phone calls and emails, and within 24 hours, face masks were placed on statues of well-known runners along the Boston Marathon route, as well as from Boulder, Colo., to Cape Elizabeth, Maine.

As of Monday, nine runner statues in five states were wearing protective masks, including three in Hopkinton and one in Newton. Burfoot hopes the masks serve as a reminder to be healthy during the coronavirus outbreak.

"I thought the idea had the theme of we're runners, we appreciate our health, we want everyone to be healthy, and we want everyone to follow good health procedures," said Burfoot. "Everybody has been amazingly receptive and energized and wanting to be part of it."

The idea resonated immediately for Tim Kilduff, the executive director of the 26.2 Foundation in Hopkinton and a longtime friend of Burfoot. Kilduff called Hopkinton selectman John Coutinho for help, and the next day homemade masks made by Hopkinton High junior Emily Karp were placed by Coutinho on the runner statues of George V. Brown, Rick and Dick Hoyt, and 1946 Boston Marathon winner Stylianos Kyriakides and his mentor Spyros Louis in Hopkinton.



The statue of Stylianos Kyriakides is located in Hopkinton. BRUCE MACDONALD

At the 19-mile mark in Newton, Ray Charbonneau put red and white bandanas and colorful necklaces on the double statue of “Old John” Kelley, who competed in a record 58 Boston Marathons.

Kilduff, who served as race director of the Boston Marathon in the 1980s, believes the masks not only reinforce the importance of wearing protective masks in public.

Burfoot and Kilduff hope the trend of putting protective masks on statues can spread globally, and for all types of statues.

Kilduff said he reached out to people associated with Marathon Greece in Athens to place masks on their runner statues. There is a Facebook group devoted to the initiative, and Burfoot said people have been reaching out to him about statues that they’ve missed and are already taking action.

“We’re attempting to go global,” Burfoot said. “And I’m pretty confident we’re not the only ones with a good idea. Hopefully sports statues and maybe all statues everywhere we’ll be seeing a lot of masks.”



The statue of father-son Boston Marathon team Dick and Rick Hoyt is in Hopkinton. BRUCE MACDONALD