About a year and a half ago, Sun City, AZ Branch 6156 member Rebecca Fakeri was attending a Renaissance fair and saw some wares made of chainmail—small metal rings linked together in a pattern—that a vendor had made. She liked them a lot and thought to herself, “I can do that.”

Fakeri grew up in Hertfordshire, England, surrounded by the history of the Middle Ages and medieval times. “I’ve always loved chainmail armor and decided to learn how to make some of the many different styles from around Europe and the Middle East,” she said. “These include European, Persian, Helm, Byzantine and so many more.”

After watching a couple of videos and talking with chain mailers, Fakeri quickly acquired some new skills. The third-year letter carrier, who moved to the United States eight years ago, works as a city carrier assistant (CCA), so the time she can devote to her hobby depends on how much time she spends delivering. That can vary wildly. “I’m in a very small office, so I get months where I’m working constantly,” she said, while during other months there can be a lull.

She has set up shop at an occasional craft fair when her work schedule allows, and posts on her Facebook page to drum up interest. Fakeri also has a page on Etsy, the e-commerce site dedicated to handmade goods, where she can sell directly to consumers. Her chainmail shop’s name is “NakedArts.” “I just thought of it out of thin air,” she said, and received a good reaction from those she sought opinions from.

The carrier has been selling her wares online since late 2017, when she took her first big order. Fakeri ships her product via USPS, of course. She has received multiple orders from anywhere from Tennessee to France. “I take them to work with me” to mail them, she said. The carrier hopes to use internet sales more in the future, though at the moment, she mainly sells her chainmail goods in person.

Fakeri says it can be time-consuming to post photos and descriptions of inventory, so marketing her items by wearing them seems to be one of the best forms of advertisement. People will stop her while she’s out and about and compliment her on items she’s wearing, and she’ll explain that she made them. That sometimes results in a sale. “I usually wear things I’ve made and people want to buy them from me,” she said. “People will buy things straight off me.”

Fakeri works on pieces for a couple of hours each evening at home, or will work later when necessary to finish an order.

The amount of time it takes to make each piece depends on the materials used. A byzantine-style bracelet will take 45 minutes or so to put together. Aluminum is light and pliable, so it doesn’t take as long as steel or titanium rings, which are stronger. Aluminum also allows her to add color into the mix, and she incorporates crystals and gemstones into some pieces to add sparkle.

Pliers are her main tool, and she uses them to open and close jump rings that make up a chainmail design without scratching any of the pieces. “One ring at a time, I will turn this all into beauty,” Fakeri wrote in a recent social media post showing a tableful of supplies.

Jewelry isn’t all she makes, either. “I’ve kind of branched out to other stuff, too,” she said—including chainmail candle holders, armor, bags, bras, bookmarks and Christmas ornaments. Prices for her standard items depend on the materials used, but range from $10 for a chainmail bookmark to $140 for a necklace- and earring-set. More complicated orders can fetch higher prices.

Fakeri receives mostly custom orders online via Etsy, and she gets many requests for items influenced by the popular HBO TV show “Game of Thrones.” Dragons in particular are popular motifs. “If I tag my items as ‘Renaissance fair,’ people will find them,” she said.

This past spring, the carrier was commissioned to make a 51-inch steel
Fakeri has become involved with a project with chainmailers around the world. “We are making the largest chainmail quilt,” she explained. The 8-inch-by-8-inch square that she is working on depicts a Union Jack, the United Kingdom flag. Participants have a deadline of February, and the 150 volunteers worldwide already have submitted 40 pieces. Her chainmail flag contribution is halfway complete and already includes thousands of rings.

The carrier also is inspired by her postal career, creating little “chainmail mailmen” keychains for people in her office. “I actually sold my first one to my union steward,” she said.

To learn more about Fakeri’s chainmail creations, visit facebook.com/chainmaileandstuff or etsy.com/shop/NakedArtsChainmaille.

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NALC offers its deepest sympathy to the families and friends of departed brothers and sisters