



The FLOWER PROJECT spreads unconventional love



Volunteers donate cards to family service centers in Burlington

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Throughout Winter Term and the beginning of February, about 40 volunteers gathered with colorful scrapbook paper and markers, creating personal, handmade cards with sayings such as “You are so loved” and “You are important.”

The Flower Project aims to provide positive messages to victims of domestic or sexual abuse in the Burlington area.

On Valentine’s Day, these cards — along with bouquets of flowers — will be delivered at the Family Justice Center in Burlington, Allied Churches and Crossroads Sexual Assault Resource Center. They will be given as part of The Flower Project.

The project was started by Elon University senior Chloe Allen her freshman year to promote positivity by reminding these women they are loved.

“We were talking about ways we could give back to the community, and we were thinking about Winter Term because usually it’s empty — there’s not that much to do,” Allen said. “We were thinking about prepping for Valentine’s Day, and I volunteer for Allied Churches, so I had the idea to

bring encouragement to them.”

Each person who comes to these sessions brings their own unique approach to the card-making.

“I’m not super creative with the card-making, but what’s really cool is you get to see everyone’s skills and talents pour into the cards,” Allen said. “Each card takes about 10 minutes. It’s whatever people want to do.”

Since it was initially started, The Flower Project has grown with more volunteers, more money donated through its website (theflowerproject2017.weebly.com) and a promo-



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SENIOR, THE FLOWER PROJECT FOUNDER

tional video. Volunteers can now bring about 250 bouquets to three locations.

Though Allen is the primary organizer, she wouldn’t be able to do it alone. Flowers are delivered to her two days before Valentine’s Day, and she needs all the help she can get to cut the roses, take off the thorns and wrap them in paper.

Last year, Allen and her team started at 6 p.m. and didn’t finish until 1

a.m., so she’s hoping to recruit more volunteers, such as senior Ben Charette.

“It’s a great cause and it’s a cool idea,” Charette said. “You’re spreading happiness. Chloe did a good job.”

While hand-delivering these cards and bouquets, Allen has seen the impact the project has made.

Allen stopped one woman who was about to leave the shelter without getting her bouquet or card. When she approached her, the woman said, “This made me feel so special!” And, by chance, Allen pulled out a card with

away,” Allen said. “You don’t really know the impact you’re making. You just got to have faith something will come from it.”

The first year, Allen purchased the flowers from BJ’s so she could buy them in bulk. But after learning that massive flower companies engage in exploitative practices towards their workers, she decided to switch to a fair trade company, despite higher prices.

This year, after seeing The Flower Project’s promotional video, the fair trade company decided to donate \$250 worth of roses, bringing The Flower Project to their goal almost immediately. Allen plans to donate the extra money to the places they deliver to.

As a senior, Allen will be passing down the project to someone who’s just as passionate about the mission.

“It’s a lot of work, a lot of planning, just a lot of responsibility, so I wouldn’t pass it down to someone who didn’t want it,” she said. “I haven’t had anyone approach me yet to say I want to take this on.”

But since Allen is going to be a teacher in Charlotte as part of Teach For America, she hopes to bring the project there and have high school students get involved and donate to local shelters.

Though it may prove difficult, she isn’t opposed to keeping the program going at Elon University.

“I’m thinking I might just take it with me but I don’t want to be selfish about it, if someone else wants to do it,” Allen said.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF CHLOE ALLEN
Throughout Winter Term and the beginning of February, volunteers make cards and bouquets in various locations. Each card is handmade and takes about 10 minutes to create.