New Ministry Brings Smiles During Difficult Times

BY SARAH R. GREGORY
STAFF WRITER

A new, local ministry is delivering bouquets and smiles to local patients.

Healing With Flowers, a Greeneville-based 501(c)3, creates new arrangements from flowers donated after weddings, funerals and church services and delivers them to patients at local hospitals, nursing homes and in hospice care.

Since being established in April, the all-volunteer group has distributed more than 2,500 bouquets.

Cindi Laws, of Greeneville, started the new ministry after the Knoxville-based non-profit Random Acts of Flowers ended its Greeneville operations in February, citing financial shortfalls.



PHOTO SPECIAL TO THE SUN

Healing With Flowers founder Cindi Laws works in the non-profit group's workshop, located in a warehouse near Landair Transport Inc.



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Flowers that would have otherwise been discarded are re-arranged and awaiting delivery to local hospital, nursing home and hospice patients by volunteers with Greeneville-based Healing With Flowers.

Laws was an active Random Acts of Flowers volunteer, and is "the hub that really makes Healing With Flowers work," said Gypsy Tweed, president of the organization's board.

The group's volunteers believe that the new, locally-based organization is poised to serve Greeneville well.

"We wanted to restart something smaller that we could just run in Greeneville independently, and not have a corporate entity to report to," Tweed said. "We really feel like this is a ministry in the community. The volunteers that are keeping this going feel very strongly about it."

So far, the effort has attracted about two dozen volunteers, who work from a small shop established in a warehouse adjacent to Landair Transport Inc. Shelves in that shop are stocked with vases, ribbons, plant food and other materials needed to prepare the deliveries, which average about 500 per month, Tweed said.

"We've had as many as 12 volunteers at one time working to re-arrange flowers," she added. "We try hard not to have any thrown away, to really get them out and delivered."

A new partnership with Holston United Methodist Home for Children is helping the organization carry out its mission.

"We were able to partner with Holston Home's kids and staff to do deliveries. It's just a great outreach," Tweed said. "Young kids get to interact with old people, which, in their environment, they don't get to do a lot. It's a tremendous partnership that we're really excited about."

With the help of volunteers like those from Holston Home, the group is able to make between 40 and 60 deliveries on a given day. As many as 225 arrangements have been made at once, with each providing countless smiles, Tweed said.

"We really cater to a group of individuals, especially in nursing homes, some of whom never have a visitor unless it's us with flowers," she said. "Even though Greeneville is a small town, I just think this outreach is tremendous."

Ministry Fundraiser Stages Broadway Theme

BY SARAH R. GREGORY
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A special event will bring Broadway flair to the General Morgan Inn's terrace to benefit a Greeneville non-profit group that serves local patients.

Healing With Flowers will present a "Festival of Tables" fundraiser on Nov. 7.

Tables on the General Morgan Inn terrace will be decorated to reflect the theme, "An Evening On Broadway."

Kevin Spirtas, best known as Dr. Craig Wesley on the soap opera "Days Of Our Lives," will be the master of ceremonies for the event that promises "food, fun and entertainment."

Tables that seat eight can be reserved for $500 each. Those who reserve tables are planning elaborate Broadway-themed displays. Attendees can also represent various Broadway produtions through their attire.

"People are really getting into it and making elaborate centerpieces," said Gypsy Tweed, president of the Healing With Flowers board of directors. "After the event, we will take the flowers [from centerpieces] and re-purpose them for delivery."

So far, tables are being planned to represent productions like "Wicked," "Priscilla, Queen of the Desert," "Matilda," "Cinderella," "Guys & Dolls," "Kinky Boots," "South Pacific" and more.

"Some of these are going to be really cute. Some of them I expect to be really tacky," Tweed said with laughter.

All of the tables will help benefit Healing With Flowers' mission to re-arrange donated flowers for delivery to patients at local hospitals and nursing homes and in hospice care.

Donations of vases, ribbon, flower food, dishwashing detergent and printing materials are also being sought for the organization.

Since Healing With Flowers was established in April, all of its bouquet cards and fliers have been printed without charge by Copies Unlimited, a local business owned by Jancie Painter, who also serves on the organization's board.

Money from the Nov. 7 fundraiser and other donations will help offset printing and supply costs and provide fuel needed to carry out Healing With Flowers' deliveries, Tweed said.

To sponsor a table or for more information about individual tickets, contact Healing With Flowers at 708-4325.