

SECOND CHANCE BOUQUETS

FLOWERS GIVEN A NEW PURPOSE



HAILEY PECK PHOTOS, THE NONPAREIL

A resident smiles as she is given flowers by Second Chance Bouquets at Heritage Ridge at Fox Run in Council Bluffs on Wednesday, Aug. 4, 2024.

Wedding bouquets brighten up senior living communities

HAILEY PECK
Council Bluffs Nonpareil

Smiles were out on full force Sunday as the Second Chance Bouquets crew, run by Eva and Kevin Cloward, made their way around Heritage Ridge at Fox Run.

With oranges, pinks, and whites, the bouquets delivered left residents thrilled for the extra color soon to be added to their rooms.

"They're just so beautiful," one resident said.

The flowers used to make the bouquets came from two separate weddings that took place Saturday night. By Sunday at 1 p.m., volunteers from Second Chance Bouquets had rearranged them and placed them in new vases, creating

bouquets of varying heights and hues.

For those residing at Heritage Ridge at Fox Run, a senior and retirement living facility in Council Bluffs, the flowers brought a welcome surprise to their day.

Each bouquet delivered came with an explanation of what Second Chance Bouquets does. Kevin Cloward could also be seen joking with the residents as he dropped off vases.

Please see **FLOWERS**, Page A2



MORE: For additional photos, point your smartphone camera at the QR code, then tap the link.

NEWSVU

THE DAILY NONPAREIL

Tuesday, August 6, 2024

WHERE YOUR STORY LIVES

nonpareillonline.com



A bouquet from Second Chance Bouquets sits on the reception desk at Heritage Ridge at Fox Run on Sunday, Aug. 4, 2024.

A2 | TUESDAY, AUGUST 6, 2024

Flowers

From A1

The interactions only lasted a minute or two, but Kevin said it's why he and his wife, Eva, started Second Chance Bouquets.

"It's the look on the faces of the residents when they get the flowers," Kevin said. The flowers will last longer than the brief interactions. They will sit on dressers, window sills or tables as a reminder that someone thought of them.

Since the nonprofit's founding in 2017, the Clowards have made 11,700 deliveries to people living in 45 different assisted living and nursing homes throughout the Omaha metro area.

While beautiful, Kevin said, the flowers are just an expression of the nonprofit's larger mission.

"I don't look at us in the flower business," Kevin said. "I look at us in the human joy department."

It was Eva's idea to start the nonprofit. She saw a video online about a similar organization in another state. The video made her cry.

"And I'm not a crier," Eva said.

Eva said sometimes families don't visit their loved ones in assisted living communities or nursing homes because they think they're being taken care of.

"We need to do this for the residents in the nursing homes," Eva said. "Just to bring them some joy."

Kevin liked the idea. So did Eva's friend, a florist.

"She said, 'Oh my gosh, I throw away so many flowers after an event. This would be good,'" Eva said.

Less than two months later, the Clowards picked up enough flowers at a wedding to fill three cars.

"We kind of jumped into the deep end of it," Eva said. "We weren't really doing small potatoes."

Second Chance Bouquets does some advertising on social media, but it's mainly florists that recommend the service to brides, grooms and event planners. The Clowards also attend one bridal show a year.

They've also picked up flowers from funerals and big events like the Aksarben Ball in Omaha and Nebraska Gov. Jim Pillen's inaugural ball.

Eva said people are often excited that the flowers

won't go to waste at the end of a wedding or event.

"It's a lot of money that they're throwing away, and they don't know what to do with it," Eva said. "So everybody was very excited."

At the end of a wedding reception, normally around 11 p.m. or later, the Clowards and other volunteers pick up the flowers and take them back to the Clowards' garage.

Often the Clowards and other volunteers pick up what they call "beach balls," giant floral arrangements that decorate the churches or venues where the weddings are held. They take those arrangements apart and build smaller bouquets in donated vases.

The Clowards, who don't have any training in floral arranging, approach the task differently from one another. Eva picks up individual flowers and arranges them in her hand. Kevin likes to build them in the vase.

"Once you have beautiful flowers, you're going to make beautiful bouquets, right?" Eva said. "You can't go wrong with the beautiful flowers."

Given the late nights, Eva and Kevin said it can be hard to find volunteers willing to help pick up the flowers. One year, Eva and Kevin picked up flowers from multiple weddings every weekend from June to November. They've had to scale back since then.

"You don't want to get burned out from doing good," Eva said.

The Clowards have found reliable volunteers in Terri and John Beadleson.

"It happens to be two of my favorite things: flowers and seniors," Terri said.

Terri and John have been to weddings in Council Bluffs and throughout the Omaha metropolitan area to pick up flowers. Terri said families are often overjoyed that flowers from their day will continue to bring more joy in the rooms of seniors.

"The flowers are so beautiful," Terri said. "You hate to see them go in the garbage can."

People interested in donating flowers, vases or time, can email secondchancebouquets@gmail.com or visit the nonprofit on Facebook or Instagram.

Emily Nitcher of the Omaha World-Herald contributed to this report.