

CROSSROADS LAB

The Crossroads Lab is a philanthropically funded initiative to explore under-covered issues critical to the future of Fort Worth and Tarrant County.



DEE MURPHY Courtesy

Madaleine Murphy (white shirt in back) and Sebastian Kravutske (in hat) share some time with students at Samuel Beck Elementary after delivering messages from an Elf on a Shelf. The Byron Nelson High School seniors created a charitable organization named Miracle of Kindness that sends handmade inspirational cards to people.

Miracle workers: How 2 Trophy Club Nelson students are brightening the lives of thousands

BY RICK MAUCH
Special to the Star-Telegram

A pair of teenagers at Trophy Club Byron Nelson High School are providing a miracle.

A Miracle of Kindness, that is, the name of the charitable organization started by Madaleine Murphy and her friend Sebastian Kravutskas.

Murphy explained how they came up with the name: "M is for *Murphy* and *miracle*, a highly improbable or extraordinary event, development, or accomplishment that brings welcome consequences. K is for *Kravutske* and *kindness*, the quality of being friendly, generous, and considerate."

They started by making cards with a plethora of special messages, such as *You are awesome*, *Never forget how amazing YOU are*, *I hope you have a great day*, and *You shine brighter than the sun*. Others simply get straight to the point with statements like *You rock!*, *Stay strong*, *You inspire me*, *Be brave* and *We believe in you*.

The duo has made over 3,000 cards and given them mainly to children in hospitals and senior citizens in nursing homes and care centers. Now, they've branched out to include other projects of positivity.

It all began when they were sophomores and were on the verge of being accepted into the National Honor Society. It also

coincided with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent isolation that came with it.

"Many aspects of my life had been altered due to the COVID-19 pandemic," Murphy said. "When quarantine started, just as with many others, I had been secluded from the outside world. Everything changed so fast."

Then, her grandmother was moved to Texas from Canada so the family could protect her. Murphy witnessed her grandmother's battle with seclusion and it gave her an idea: Looking for opportunities to fulfill her service goals for the National Honor Society, she came across an opportunity to write letters

for seniors and create cards for kids in hospitals.

"I soon realized that the creation of these cards was not only beneficial to me, but was also extremely beneficial to my grandma," Murphy said. "She found joy in us creating these cards together."

In a world of fear and unknown, card-making became their safety blanket. They would work on cards and letters together for hours at a time.

"Working alongside my grandma and making peoples' days brighter was life-changing," she said.

Murphy then got the idea to bring Kravutske on board. It was a way for him to not only help others emotionally, but himself

as well. At the time he was also being accepted into the NHS, his mother was undergoing cancer treatment.

"I knew he would be the best person to help with the influx of needed cards and help me create an organization to do more. That is when we created Miracle of Kindness," she said.

The two have garnered national attention for their charity work, which started through a program called Sas4Kids in Boston (Send a Smile For Kids) to distribute to children in hospitals. They've even been featured in at least one national publication.

"It shows us the large influence that we have had on our community and children, and it inspires us to keep working to help others," Kravutske said.

The reason they started in Boston, Murphy said, is that much distribution had stopped during COVID and Sas4Kids was one of the few organizations still delivering cards. However, from there, Murphy and Kravutske branched out — or rather got closer to home — as they are now also sending to places such as Dell Seton Medical Center in Austin and Texas Children's Hospital in Houston.

They also send traditional cards such as those for children in foster care with birthday related messages.

But wherever they are going, Kravutske said, knowing the cards are brightening lives makes him and Murphy feel as uplifted as those receiving them.

"You get this warm feeling in your heart, and you feel an uncontrollable smile grow on your face," he said.

Murphy said that even though the cards are handmade by the two of them, neither are artists, adding, "But we are both creative."

The two also work with a second-grade class at Samuel Beck Elementary in Trophy Club. They create fun little gifts and packages for them, and in October they dropped off 21 homecoming mums for students.

They recently created personalized goodbye letters for each of the students from the Elf on the Shelf in their class. These letters were in class the morning the youngsters found out their Elf was "headed back to the North Pole."

"We did this for them last year too. It is such a fun project," Kravutske said.

Murphy and Kravutske have received the Green Cord Community Service Award for their work. This is a statewide initiative designed to reward high school students for community volunteer work. Being seniors, Murphy and Kravutske had to perform at least 100 hours to qualify.

Ever humble, Murphy said, "The real award is just knowing we are making people feel supported and inspiring others to do more."

In January they plan to run a recycled card drive in which others can join in with their own uplifting messages.

"These are cards where you cut the front of the card off and donate it to us, keeping the personal message inside for yourself. We then take the front of the card and create more from it," Murphy said.

On their recently completed website is a form for individuals to request a card be sent to someone who might need one to brighten their day.

"We will create and send a card by request. We are hoping we can touch more people by providing this option," she said.

And, of course, if other students are inspired to follow in their footsteps, Murphy said they offer service hours for anyone wanting to get involved.

Murphy and Kravutske can be reached by email at info@miracleofkindness.com.



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