

A Bouquet of Cheer



What Cheer Flower Farm is a nonprofit with the mission to grow, rescue and donate flowers and flower bouquets to underserved people dealing with stressful situations. Its 2.7 acres are located on a former

factory site in Providence. The organization has remediated 18,000 square feet of polluted soil and turned it into organic flower fields, with plans for further expansion.



Early spring is busy season for the farm, but What Cheer's farmer, **Krystal Kraczkowski**, took some time out of her planning to talk to me about what's blooming this season.

Emily Olson (Motif): What's going on at the farm?

Krystal Kraczkowski: Right now, I'm doing a lot of planning and researching new crops I want to grow. We are also planning a whole new growing space. Right now it's a flat area of asphalt, but we're working with Ground Works, an organization that gives job opportunities to individuals who might be able to otherwise get a job, to rip out the asphalt, add gravel and make raised beds that are handicap accessible.

The new area is going to be about 5,000 square feet and it will double our growing area. It's on the corner of Agnes and Magnolia, so you'll be able to drive by and see that we're growing flowers instead of just factories.

EO: What types of flowers do you grow?

KK: I grow flowers have the longest vase life and are easiest to grow. So we grow a whole bunch of a few things. I also grow fillers and greens to bulk up what gets donated to us.

EO: Who receives your donated bouquets?

KK: We only give away to other nonprofits, and we have changed up a little bit who we've been

donating to in the pandemic. We can't give flowers to patients in hospitals, but we give to the food bank and the hospitals themselves. And we give to the workers in hospitals.

EO: When people are in life-threatening situations, dealing with health issues or food insecurity, why are flowers important?

KK: I used to work at the farmers market for Robin Hollow Farm and saw the flowers go from seed to centerpiece. My favorite time of the week was going to the market and bringing flowers to people because they would thank me for bringing joy to their lives and for all my hard work for making their day a little brighter. Flowers help you feed your soul, and that makes a huge difference in someone's life.

EO: As a flower farmer, what advice would you give someone who has a little patch of earth and wants to grow their own?

KK: Plant as many as you can. Even if it looks like the worst place for a flower. Remember what they said in Jurassic Park: Life finds a way. It's so incredible to see that life can find its way in every situation. It's a reminder to do the same thing in your life.

To volunteer, donate flowers or inquire about bouquets, visit whatcheerfarm.org