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4-H Teens Spread Kindness Small Acts Support Others

If you live in Monroe County, you may be the surprise recipient of an act of kindness in the next few weeks. The 4-H UNITY (Urban Neighborhoods Improved Through Youth) group is a collaboration between Cornell Cooperative Extension Monroe County's 4-H Youth Development Program and Ibero-American Action League's Aspira Program. Teens that are part of the group are students at Eugenio Maria de Hostos Charter School. The youth have been working on different projects to offer positive impact to their community this school year. Recently they have decided to spread joy during a challenging time.

The teens decided it would be wonderful to offer bright spots to people who may be facing challenges during the COVID-19 crisis. The youth thought of supporting people in their neighborhoods and surrounding community. This could range from neighbors to medical professionals. The teens recognized that they and others in their community could use a positive lift. Giving to others would be a chance to make kindness contagious in Rochester.

The youth made a plan for several weeks of projects. They started with blessing a neighbor or family member with random kindness. Each youth thought of their own way to lift someone else up. One youth painted a decorative birdhouse and left it on her neighbor's porch as a surprise gift.

Other projects included painting Kindness Rocks, creating sidewalk chalk art, and making gratitude cards. Supplies for the project were provided through the 4-H Program in support packages and delivered to youth by their mentor at the Aspira Program. When reflecting on being able to gift others with kindness, 4-H Teen Leader Kaelin, shared, "It made me feel good inside." 4-H Program Leader, Susan Coyle shared, "It is refreshing to meet virtually with these youth each week. They have been thrown off schedule, are missing their friends, and feel uncertain. Through these challenges, they have not given up hope and are having fun while offering positivity and kindness to their families and neighborhoods."

Can you help these teens spread more kindness? Are there projects that you can

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participate in while maintaining social distancing? Could you send a note of thanks to a first responder, surprise a neighbor with a flower bouquet, or leave an inspiring rock in a community garden? How would it make you feel to provide another person with a simple gift? If you are inspired by the 4-H Teen Leaders, please help spread kindness!

The Monroe County 4-H Program is offered through Cornell Cooperative Extension to the youth of Monroe County. 4-H is a worldwide youth development program open to all youth ages 5 to 19, who want to have fun, learn new skills, and explore the world. In return, youth who participate in 4-H find a supportive environment and opportunities for hands-on or "experiential" learning about things that interest them.

Learn more at <http://monroe.cce.cornell.edu/4-h-youth-development>.

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