



Card Care Connection, in partnership with Regis Salon and other local businesses, held a Beauty Bash fundraiser at the Saint Louis Galleria last summer, offering a day of makeovers, face painting, and fun.

# Thoughtful connections

Somewhere in the United States, a cancer patient is reading a caring message from someone they don't know. It comes in the form of a carefully crafted, individually handmade card, sent with caring and compassion from an organization in St. Louis called Card Care Connection.

The brainchild of a social worker in the Bob Costas Cancer Center at SSM Cardinal Glennon Children's Medical Center, Card Care Connection has reached out to hundreds of children and adults with cancer to provide them with personalized cards and hopeful messages.

"It's a way to reach out to people," says Aleeza Granote, LCSW, founder of Card Care Connection. "Two years ago, I was working with adult oncology patients and I saw day in and day out patients being discharged to limited support systems. I kept thinking, what could I do?"

It was after one patient's family sent her a card in 2011, that Granote had the spark of an idea. "I thought it was so nice to receive a card that I decided to collect beautiful, handmade cards and start sending them to people myself," she says.

just here in St. Louis but across the country — including other social workers, hospice agencies, church and senior citizens groups, and crafting clubs, and asked members to send handmade cards. When they started arriving, the beauty of each card took her breath away. "I was overwhelmed with the high quality and the creativity of the people who made them," she says.

Granote developed a website, [www.cardcareconnection.com](http://www.cardcareconnection.com), that details how to donate cards or request a card for a loved one. The site receives up to 100 card requests every month. "I underestimated the value of the program," she says. "There are so many people who want and really need these cards to lift their spirits, both children and adults."



It is by design that no one who makes a card actually writes in them. Granote herself penned the first notes, taking care to make each message one of caring concern. Now she has a small team of dedicated and trained writers who handle every request.

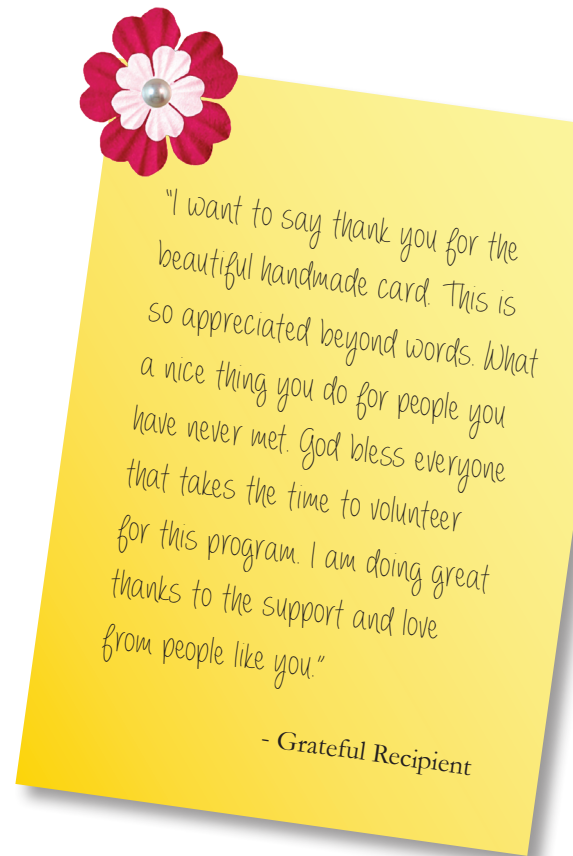
"We are careful about the messages we offer because not everyone will survive their battle with cancer," she says softly. "It's a letter about everything else that's important, the connection and the caring concern."

In late 2013, Granote expanded her program to include Bundles of Cheer, small care packages of practical, travel-sized items such as socks, lotions, nail polish, lip gloss, tea bags, special lollipops for nausea, and handmade pillowcases that could be sent in addition to a handmade card. Like the cards, Bundles of Cheer are beautifully packaged for each recipient and are given to men, women, and children with cancer.

Many testimonials from card recipients echo that appreciation.

"I ask myself every day, how can I help lift people's spirits?" Granote says. "This is a way that I can do that and I feel so blessed that this project keeps growing."

**Card Care Connection receives 50-100 card requests every month. Since 2011, more than 10,000 cards have been made.**



Aleeza Granote, LCSW, founder of Card Care Connection and a social worker in the Costas Center at SSM Cardinal Glennon Children's Medical Center, coordinates the delivery of Bundles of Cheer and beautiful handmade cards to brighten the lives of cancer patients across the country.



"Not everyone is a card maker, but anyone can collect small items or sew a pretty pillow case or send postage stamps or money to help support our mission," says Granote. "Every little bit helps to spread the connection in a new way."

Is her mission critical? Granote believes it is. "Some of the people we send cards to are extremely depressed, are lonely, scared, or don't have a strong support system to rally around them," she explains. "A handmade and hand-written card really shows them that someone cares."

**you can help!**

- Make cards yourself or with a group\*
- Donate postage stamps
- Donate travel-sized items such as fuzzy socks, handmade pillowcases, lip balm, etc.\*
- Make a financial contribution

\*See examples online at [www.cardcareconnection.com](http://www.cardcareconnection.com)