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The **Upstate NY AIDP Chapter** apply talents to a Labor of Love –
"With Love, From a Friend"

When interior designer **Eve Elzenga** began a personal project of making Valentines for **Eldersource's** clients without families in 2008, **AIDP** had yet to be launched. Fast forward two years and Elzenga is expanding her mission to provide Valentine remembrances to include recipients of **Meals-on-Wheels**. And **AIDP**, with now over 35 local members, has joined with her to create beautiful tokens of love and honor.

"With Love, From a Friend" -- a project named for the message contained within each card, has three objectives:

1. To make unique/beautiful homemade Valentines that are distributed to elderly people without families in the Rochester region. This "remembrance" is a symbol of both love and respect for these elders;
2. To introduce creative, compassionate people to one another to build/strengthen community ties and goodwill;
3. To have a convivial time while being creative.

The initiative is held each year in mid-to-late January. Initially Elzenga invited friends, acquaintances, artists, and friends-of-friends to her home for card making parties. She quickly saw the need was greater than her capacity. Now in it's 3rd year, she has found advocates who want to be included in the project.

The alliance with **AIDP** is a natural fit says **Upstate NY Chapter** President, Anita Hansen. "Creating a Valentine card is like designing a room. How we capture the essence of the heartfelt sentiment with color, art, materials and objects is what we as designers do daily", Hansen says. "The opportunity to share our talents in this way is an honor. After all, these elders helped build this community. It is the least we can do."

Eldersouce, a program of **LifeSpan**, identifies and distributes the remembrances through their social worker network. Narrative feedback from social workers shows that clients treasure the Valentines. In fact, many of them keep them up in their homes year-round.

In 2010, **Meals-on-Wheels** is being added as a recipient of cards. **Meals-on-Wheels** delivers 800 meals daily to elder clients in Monroe County. These seniors are without families and are financially compromised.

Other advocates are helping too: Laurie Cargill, a professional commercial baker, is making and packaging individual cookies to be delivered with the **Eldersouce** cards. A group of Girl Scouts in Pittsford, working on their Silver Badge about Elders, have adopted the initiative as part of their project. Even their Mom's are helping out.

Elzenga hosted a series of parties at her home, inviting new and old friends alike to join in the creative fun. Her hope is that others in the community will adopt the idea and coordinate their Valentine making parties and projects, utilizing her and the distribution system she has built. "My fondest hope is that we can remember all of our seniors without families -- especially those who are not financially advantaged," Elzenga says. "Everyone deserves to be remembered, respected and loved."

Beautiful event, Eve!!!

Several designers participated in Eve Elzenga's **Valentines Extravaganza**, totaling over 525 valentines made by all the volunteers, to be delivered to Rochester Elders.



Designer, Jill Ausfield, applying some of her talent



