I have found that among its other benefits, giving liberates the soul of the giver. --Maya Angelou

Why 1,200 Widows Will Be Surprised With Flowers Today

After the birth of her fourth child, Ashley Manning started a flower business as a respite from the whirlwind of family life. On Valentine's Day in 2020, she gifted a bouquet to her son's preschool teacher, who was widowed. Months later, at the end of the school year, that teacher told her, "I just want you to know how much that meant to me, that you thought of me on that day." Inspired, for the holiday in 2021, Manning invited her community to nominate widows to receive bouquets -- an effort that surprised 119 widows with flowers. It struck universal heartstrings. Donations and volunteers poured in. In 2023, around 500 volunteers prepared and delivered 800 bouquets for widows, literally backing up traffic in Manning's neighborhood. Manning's intent to comfort a triggering holiday for the grieving has taken up residence in thousands of hearts. Today, 1,200 bouquets will be delivered in Manning's city of Charlotte, North Carolina, and communities inspired by her effort are sharing flowers with widows in Tennessee, New York, Washington, Ohio, and Texas. But the ripples extend beyond flowers on Valentine's Day. Michelle Boudin, who reported on Manning's story in 2022, returned to volunteer with her Widow Outreach Project flower deliveries in 2023. After losing her mom in 2022, Boudin's Valentine's Day experience prompted her to honor her mother, a former schoolteacher, by creating a special day with gifts of books for students in a local classroom. In parallel, a few states away, the mother of one of Manning's bouquet recipients is plotting a special surprise for a friend who lost her husband.

Be The Change:

Honor a loved one by dedicating an act of kindness to them.