

# RIVER FALLS

## NEWS

# UWRF thrift event raises funds for patients with medical hair loss ‘Beauty without boundaries’

BY KAITLYN DOOLITTLE  
Reporter

UWRF thrift event raises funds for patients with medical hair loss

University of Wisconsin-River Falls hosted its third annual ‘Gift and Thrift’ event on Thursday, Dec. 7. For students in the sales promotions and event planning course, this event is the culmination of a semester’s worth of planning and organizing. The students will donate the funds from thrifting sales and silent auction wins to EBeauty Community, a nonprofit organization that provides wigs to those experiencing medical hair loss.

According to its website, EBeauty is the only national wig exchange program in the United States that assists patients undergoing cancer treatment and has helped over 60,000 women in the last 10 years.

The final total has yet to be released, but as of recent calculations UWRF students estimate that \$2,300 will be given to the work of EBeauty Community.

This year marks the 12th year of the sales promotion and event planning course and within those years, marketing and communication students have raised over \$60,000 for various charitable organizations and causes across the globe.

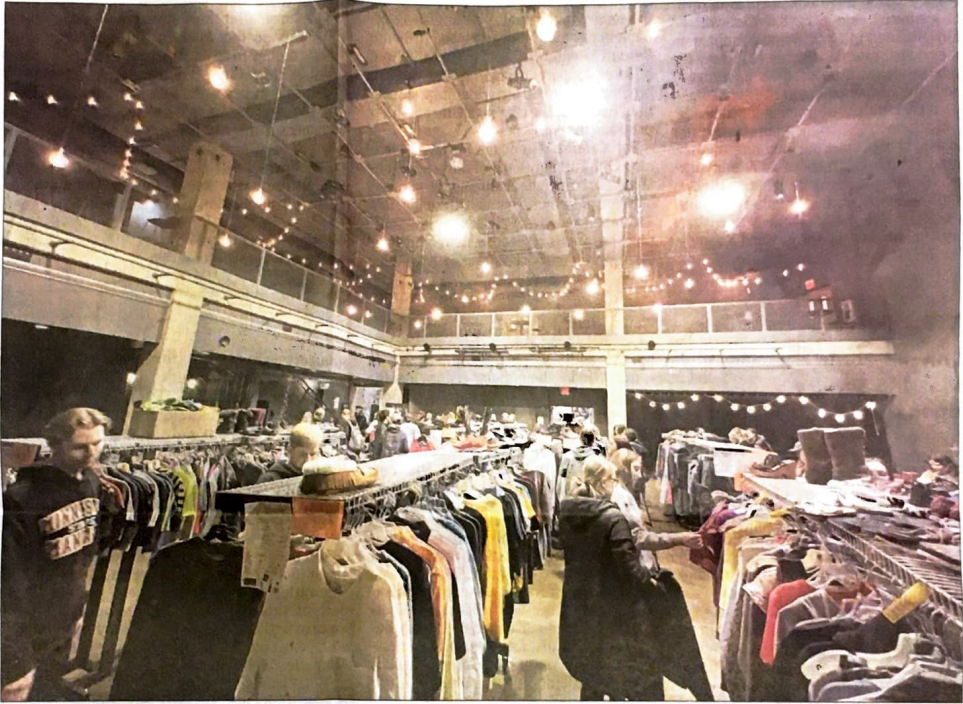
When Laura Jirsa, the Chief Operations Officer of EBeauty Community, underwent chemotherapy while diagnosed with breast cancer in 2011 her sister-in-law, Carolyn Keller, the President of EBeauty Community, wanted to help her reclaim herself through hair.

Keller went on to source used wigs to help people, like Jirsa, to instill a sense of normalcy and identity. In collaboration with hospitals, cancer centers, Paul Mitchell Hair and Beauty Schools, patients and their families, Keller carried forward with her mission of supplying free, used and clean wigs to those who need them and succeeding their goal of “beauty without boundaries.”

In 2019, Jirsa’s breast cancer returned. The second round of cancer fired a passion for Jirsa to take on a stronger role within the EBeauty Community. Jirsa led and operated an EBeauty Home where women tried on different types of wigs to see what is their perfect fit.

“This is a healing process,” Jirsa said. “Hair holds identity.”

In addition to wigs, EBeauty also offers eyelash products, hair care and more, thanks to their sponsors and enthusias-



KAITLYN DOOLITTLE/STAR-OBSERVER PHOTOS

UW-River Falls students and community members on the search for clothes, books, shoes, accessories provided by the students in the sales Promotions and Event Planning course.



UW-River Falls students and River Falls community members thrift for goods from the Gift and Thrift event that took place Thursday, Dec. 7. The funds raised from this event were donated to EBeauty, an organization that provides free wigs for women undergoing medical hair loss.

tic volunteers.

“We give as much as we can,” Jirsa said.

Jirsa spoke during the sales promotion and event planning course at UWRF about EBeau-

ty — and after she left she received a call asking to be a part of “Gift and Thrift.”

“I’m really impressed by the enthusiasm and leadership [from the students,]” Jirsa

said.

For marketing communications students Kaley Bloom, Sophia Heiberg and Lily Van Allen, Jirsa’s message hit close to home with family members

undergoing cancer treatment and hair loss.

It was a unanimous decision, according to Van Allen.

Now with the “why,” the class had to figure out their “how.”

The 17-student class were responsible for delegating responsibilities like collecting thrift items, organizing a silent auction, marketing, social media, branding and logistics for the event.

“This is a very hands-on class,” Bloom said.

The students are responsible for their committees, along with tracking 30 hours of work beyond scheduled class hours.

With a large to-do list, the class pulled it off with over 2,000 donated items and over 130 people waiting outside of the event in anticipation to gift and thrift.

“This was an incredibly valuable experience,” said Heiberg.

To learn more about UWRF’s marketing and communications department can be found on their website: uwrf.edu. To learn more about EBeauty and how to donate, can also be found on their website, ebeauty.com.

Kaitlyn can be reached at kdoolittle@ourorkemedia.org