

Layla Hammond, left, and Sara Tatro decorate Kindness Rocks during the Trinitarian Congregational Church's Vacation Bible Camp in July 2017.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO/
JEN PIESCICK

Northfield church hopes to inspire positivity through Kindness Rocks

By **SHELBY ASHLINE**
Recorder Staff

NORTHFIELD — Residents and visitors to Northfield may have noticed some atypical rocks scattered around town as of late, thanks to some creative children at the Trinitarian Congregational Church.

At the recommendation of resident Jennifer Chabott, Trinitarian Congregational Church's Christian Education Coordinator Jen Piescik oversaw 14 children making Kindness Rocks, simple painted rocks featuring words of inspiration and positivity.

"I thought this was a really good project and a great way to send a message," Piescik said, noting how she hoped the rocks would brighten the community and residents' days.

About 25 Kindness Rocks are spread throughout town, Piescik said — in flower pots at Mim's Market, near Dickinson Memorial Library, on paths outside the church, near the Northfield Food Mart. Some colorful rocks have words like "Love," "Smile" and "Be Strong" written on them, while others have hearts, crosses or peace signs.

Ten-year-old Mia Fowler-Shaw of Vernon, Vt., said she decorated three different rocks with the words "Hope," "Peace" and "Smile" in hopes that seeing her rocks might make people smile or have a good day.

"If they see one that says 'Kindness,' they might be kind," added 11-year-old Alyssa Williams of Northfield.



A Kindness Rock that reads "Life is colorful" on display in a flower pot in front of Mim's Market, at 60 Main St. in Northfield.

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Piescik said Chabott shared the idea of Kindness Rocks with her after seeing a segment about them on the "Today" show. Hundreds of Kindness Rocks subgroups, which are often inspired by Megan Murphy's Kindness Rocks Project, exist across the country, according to a today.com article.

Members of the Trinitarian Congregational Church brought rocks for the children to decorate during July's Vacation Bible Camp, and Piescik originally dispersed them throughout the community in August.

But Piescik hopes the first approximately 25 rocks are only the beginning. She plans to continue the project in the new year, perhaps also making buckets of smaller stones that local businesses can offer to residents,

though some of the existing Kindness Rocks have been taken and replaced already. Piescik said she and the children are happy to share them with anyone in the community who feels they need a Kindness Rock.

She also plans to bring together older and younger generations to decorate rocks together for Northfield and beyond.

"I thought maybe this could start spreading to other towns where members of our congregation live, too," Piescik said, citing Warwick, Turners Falls, Greenfield, Vernon, Vt. and Winchester, N.H., as examples.

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