

FLAIR

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"It's the summer of the flip-flop," she says with a shrug, strands of hot glue dangling from her fingers.



Allison Montague ties ribbon onto a plain flip-flop to make it colorful — and more saleable for her side business, *She's Flipped!*

PRESS PHOTOS/ANNA MOORE BUTZNER



ALBERT LEWIS

A cold day at camp warms a visitor's heart

Somebody made a mistake, and I want to thank him or her for it.

About two weeks ago, I was supposed to be inducted into the Downtown Rotary chapter. But that was the day the Rotary made its annual visit to the Indian Trails Camp. It was a cold day; not one I would associate with summer camping. More than a few Rotarians were purchasing Indian Trails Camp sweatshirts to counter the cold of the hour. I bought a cap to keep my few follicles reasonably warm.

The Rotarians have been supporting the Indian Trails Camp since the 1970s, and I quickly understood why. A large number of campers had a variety of physical and developmental disabilities. Some were in carefully designed chairs and had prosthetic devices, while others were in wheelchairs and being fed by counselors. I saw a few who needed to be fed through complicated food tubes.

I put on my cap, ate my lunch, talked with a few Rotarians and realized while I was complaining about the cold and feeding myself, here were truly challenged people who could have complained about a lot more serious issues.

As I drove home with my host, Aquinas College President Dr. Harry Knopke, I commented the disabilities don't disappear but, in times of joy and mutuality, seem to duck away for the moment.

And I remembered the time my wife, Shirley, and I were introduced to the L'Arche Daybreak Community in Richmond Hill, Ontario. There, all of the "core members" have one or more disability.

In the first 24 hours of our visit, we were curious and asked, "What is the specific disability of this person? How much does so-and-so really understand?"

Staff members looked at us with an amusement tempered by compassion and responded, "I think Roy may have X disease or Y syndrome, but it doesn't really matter; he's my friend, I love him and just want to do what I can to help him have a good and quality life."

After 48 hours, we were able to focus less on the disabilities and more on the personalities. People emerged from what formerly seemed to be shells of shame or diagnoses waiting to be discovered.

I once heard an individual comment that people with disabilities are God's teachers. They help us to better appreciate what we have. I found the comment utterly absurd and calloused. It does not fit my theology, or even a minuscule part of my personal philosophy.

On that cold day at Indian Trails camp, I saw campers, counselors and Rotarians singing, eating and thoroughly enjoying an hour out of a busy day. We were thanked many times for coming to the camp and for the support over the years.

I want to thank the campers and staff for sharing their lives and enthusiasm with me. Put me on your list for an annual gift, and thank you for the many gifts of life and joy you have given me.

LAW and ORDERS

Attorney by day shows her flip-flop side by night

By Terri Finch Hamilton
The Grand Rapids Press

She's flipped. Allison Montague doesn't mind if you whisper it behind her back.

She knows, she knows. She's a lawyer, has two daughters, ages 2 and 4, and she stays up until all hours of the night gluing ribbon and frou-frous onto rubber flip-flops.

Dozens of finished pairs surround her as she hot-glues blue-striped ribbon around the rubber tops of blue sandals. About 200 plain pairs are piled in plastic bins, waiting for inspiration and glue. Hundreds of yards of ribbon are piled in baskets — leopard print, gingham, polka dot, preppy striped grosgrain, Chinese silk.

She didn't mean for it to get this far, the attorney confesses, her pink toenails wiggling in a pink and green ribboned pair.

"I know it seems silly," she begins, "but"

But people are buying these flip-flops like crazy. "It's the summer of the flip-flop," she says with a shrug, strands of hot glue dangling from her fingers.

It all started in April when Montague, 34, a labor and employment attorney who works part time at Varnum, Riddering, Schmidt and

Howlett, offered to help a friend sell handmade jewelry at the Temple Emanuel craft show.

Montague walked into a crafts store to get some supplies and saw plain rubber flip-flops for sale.

"It just hit me," she says. "I've always been sort of ribbon-obsessed anyway. I thought, they'd be cute dressed up with some ribbon. So I thought I'd buy a couple pair and see what I could do."

They turned out pretty cute. So she stayed up until 3 a.m. the night before the craft show and made 20 pair to try to sell there.

"Everyone went nuts for 'em," Montague says. "They caused quite a stir."

She would have sold more, she says, if she'd had more sizes. So she took orders.

"And thus, a business was born," she says. An attorney friend at work agreed to help out on the business end.

Montague named the business *She's Flipped!* — and is as surprised as anybody she's already sold nearly 200 pair.

Montague works for a few hours every night after she puts her two daughters to bed. Her husband, Jeff, an architect, created the Web site, www.shesflipped.com.

She's working on several pair to be worn by a bride, mother of the bride and

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Lance's wristbands champion his cause

By Melissa Kruse
The Grand Rapids Press

You don't need to go to France to see streaks of yellow passing through the streets.

Banana-colored bracelets fashioned by Tour de France champion Lance Armstrong are buzzing about on wrists everywhere.

The deity of cycling is rocking wrists throughout the land with the yellow bands proclaiming his mantra, "Live Strong." All proceeds from the \$1-a-piece bands go to support cancer victims, research, advocacy and education on the disease through the Lance Armstrong Foundation.

But trying to get your hands on

Since the '04 Tour de France began, the cycling champion's cancer-fighting foundation has sold 65,000-80,000 'Live Strong' wristbands per day.

one is a race to the finish itself.

Sporting goods stores such as Galyans and The Finish Line sold out their stock of the accessories within a few weeks of their shipment from the foundation.

Michelle Milford, spokesperson for LAF, said the bracelets went on sale in mid-May and more than 1.5 million have been sold through the foundation's Web site, www.wearyellow.com.

"Every day, we set a new record. Yesterday we sold 77,500," Milford said.

Since the beginning of the Tour de France nearly 2½ weeks ago, LAF has sold between 65,000 and 80,000 per day. The color was chosen because yellow "is Lance's favorite color and the lead color of the Tour de France," Milford said. "It's also the color of hope and perseverance for people

living with cancer." The leader of the Tour is denoted by a yellow jersey.

Ken Hayes, 14, picked up his band earlier at the Birch Run Nike Factory Outlet, along with the other team members of the Grand Rapids Flames, a community baseball team.

The freshman-to-be at Lowell High School said the craze is over the cause and the role model Armstrong provides.

"The bracelets show strength. He came back from a life-or-death struggle to win the fifth Tour de France, and he's (in a position to be) the record holder for the most Tour de France wins. So, I guess

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Yellow wristbands sold for \$1 each by the Lance Armstrong Foundation deliver a positive message and support cancer research and education.

PRESS PHOTO/CHRIS CLARK