How Your Holiday Cookie Exchange Can Do Good

Here's a sweet way to help end elder loneliness this holiday season.

By Bridget Shirvell

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Never underestimate the power of a cookie. Cookies have superpowers. Friendships are cemented by sharing secrets over coffee and Chewy Chocolate Chip Cookies. Childhood (and adult) hurts soothed while baking spritz cookies with mom. And this holiday season the power of the cookie is being harnessed to end elder loneliness.

The GlamourGals Foundation, a nationwide nonprofit that connects teen volunteers to provide friendship and makeovers to women living in senior homes, is using cookies to help build awareness of the problem of elder loneliness and raise the money to help end it. You can help by hosting or participating in a cookie exchange, sharing a cookie story for their book, or gifting The Cookie Book as part of their #dough4good campaign.

More than one million Americans live in assisted living or nursing homes according to the 2017 Profile of Older Americans by the Federal Administration for Community Living, and the GlamourGals Foundation reports that nearly 60 percent of senior home residents never receive any visitors. This sad situation has a negative impact on the health of the seniors. Studies have shown that chronic loneliness can result in diminished cognitive performance, may lead to an early death, and has the same impact on mortality as smoking 15 cigarettes a day.

"Some of my fondest holiday memories are in the kitchen making cookies with my mom and Grandma Grace, and it is important to me to keep the tradition of baking together going and encourage others to do the same," says Elisa Marshall, co-founder of the NYC cafe Maman. She is hosting a cookie exchange for GlamourGals on December 4 at Maman. Sign up and bring cookies to exchange while enjoying light bites and drinks. The event will also include a gift-wrapping class so you can learn how to make your cookie gifts and other presents Instagram-worthy. The cost of the evening is $18 with all proceeds going to GlamourGals.

This Maman event isn’t the only way to get involved: The GlamourGals website has tools to help you host a cookie exchange to benefit the foundation. Get their Cookie Book, which has stories and recipes from chefs including Marshall, Braden Perkins of Verjus Restaurant, and others as well as cookie recipes from home bakers. Act fast and you may be able to submit your story or recipe online for the book.