

Alfred University libraries awarded for initiative that makes use of expended Keurig coffee pods
10/11/19



Students at Scholes Library
with plants they received
during last week's Library
Plant Giveaway.

ALFRED, NY – Mechele Romanchock, director of libraries at Alfred University, loves her coffee. What she isn't particularly fond of, however, are the Keurig coffee makers at Herrick and Scholes libraries. The cause of her ire: the amount of garbage – in the form of spent plastic pods – created by each cup of joe brewed using the libraries' Keurig machines.

One day, in the spring of 2018, while emptying coffee grounds into the trash so she could place a used pod into the recycling bin, Romanchock realized the size of the container was perfect for starting a plant. And that gave her an idea for dealing with the disposal of the spent Keurig cups: she would clean them out, and use them to pot plant cuttings and root divisions.

The plants would ultimately be given to students as a way to welcome them to campus that fall. Dubbed the First Annual Library Plant Giveaway, the event also served as a way to bring students into the libraries, where they could meet with staff and learn about library services. More than 100 plants that had been started in the used Keurig pods and grown over the summer were handed out at Scholes and Herrick libraries.

The South Central Regional Library Council (SCRLC) recently recognized the Library Plant Giveaway Program when it awarded Romanchock and Alfred University's Public Services Team with the 2019 SCLRC Sustainability Award.

Because the program was such a success last year, Alfred University Libraries decided to do it again this fall. Keurig pods were collected throughout the 2018-19 academic year and used to start plants. On Wednesday, Oct. 2, the libraries held the Second Annual Library Plant Giveaway. Students visiting Herrick and Scholes walked away with 256 plants, which shows the program, like the plants, has grown over the last year.

The idea for the Plant Giveaway program came naturally to Romanchock, who when she began her duties as director of libraries in 2016, noticed there were only a few plants at Scholes Library. She gradually introduced plants and, eventually, each sill on the south-facing windows of all three floors was adorned with plants. Soon, fellow library staff began bringing in plants as well.

The Plant Giveaway program was the first major collaborative event between the newly unified Herrick and Scholes Library Public Services teams. The 2018 event helped that partnership begin with an early, and fun, success.