

Home

News

- Columnists
- School News
- Real Estate News
- Senior News
- Health News

Other News:

- Blackstone
- Blackstone Valley
- North County

Opinion

Obituaries

Sports

Buy Photos

Calendars

Living

Celebrations

Classifieds

RIJobs.com

Legal Notices

Community

Contact Us

- Contacts
- Advertising Info
- About Us
- Breeze At A Glance

THIS WEEK'S STORIES:

Search Stories

THIS WEEK'S ADS:

Search Ads

SEARCH THE BREEZE ARCHIVES:

Search Archives

[Advanced search](#)

9/9/2010

Share Email Story | Print version

Athena goes to Hollywood - VIDEO



Jennifer Jolicoeur, president, founder and 'mother goddess' of Athena's Home Novelties in Woonsocket, stands next to her 'wall of bras,' an attempt at the Guinness World Record for most bras hooked together. Jolicoeur is using the campaign to raise money for breast cancer research and foundations. So far, she has collected just more than 31,000 bras in her goal to reach 169,000

Valley Breeze photo by BrennaMcCabe

Woonsocket entrepreneur invited to Emmys for world record, charity

By [Brenna McCabe](#), Valley Breeze Staff Writer

WOONSOCKET - The enchanting purple world of Jennifer Jolicoeur - mother goddess, founder and president of Athena's Home Novelties in Woonsocket - just exploded into Hollywood.

The entrepreneur showcased not only her products at this past weekend's Nighttime Emmy Awards in Los Angeles, but also raised awareness for breast cancer and for her latest related venture: to break the Guinness World Record for most bras chained together.

Jolicoeur and her team of goddesses collected more than 150 signatures on signs and bras in honor of breast cancer survivors and those who were lost to the disease last week.

The record for most bras hooked together is 169,000, currently held by a group of Australians, according to Jolicoeur. The company has received about 30,000 bras and raised more than \$40,000 for various breast cancer foundations, including the Susan G. Komen for the Cure Foundation, the largest breast cancer nonprofit in the country. Jolicoeur also agreed to send money to the Gloria Gemma Fund a few weeks ago, she said.



Breeze
Dining
Guide

View menus from local restaurants →

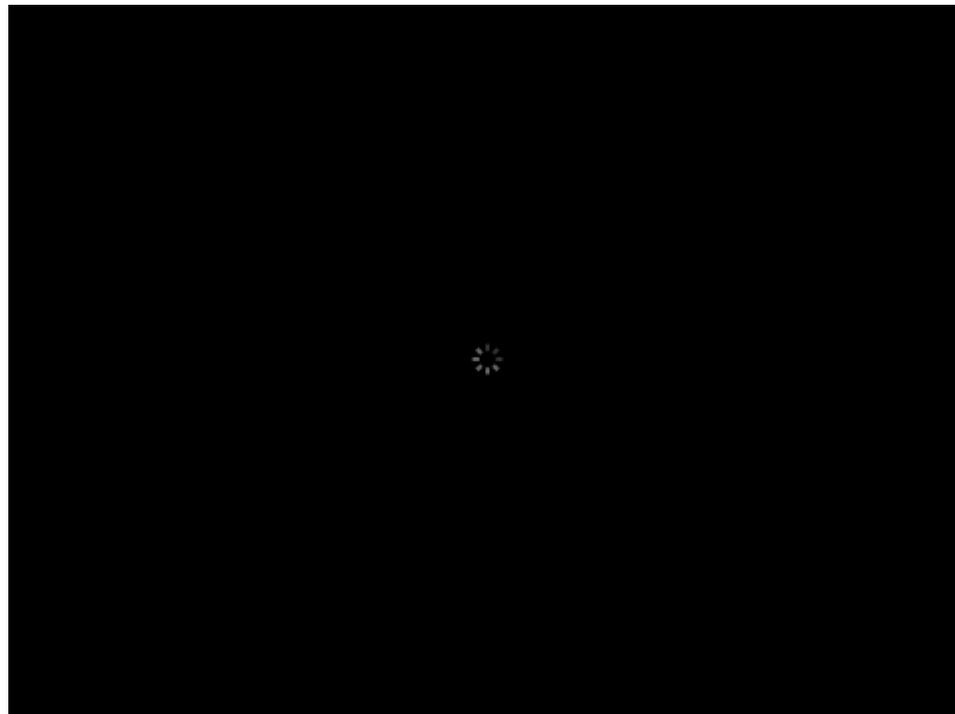
What she could have never imagined was the day the mother goddess received a phone call from Steve Stein, head of the Emmys Gifting Suites, which provide swag bags of free products for celebrities right off the red carpet. Stein had a cancellation for the Emmys Suite and inquired about Athena's ability to jet over to Hollywood. According to Jolicoeur, Stein had heard about Athena's and its attempt to break the world record through his wife and wanted to invite some goddesses to collect celebrity bras.

The entrepreneur soon realized "collecting" bras might be a bit difficult, as most of the celebrity women needed their bras for support and the men didn't wear them at all.

"I mean, how many women are going to want to take their bra off?" she said, laughing.

So she bought 100 light-colored brassieres from Burlington Coat Factory at Diamond Hill Road and hoped for the best.

"I actually doubted the whole thing was real," she said, remembering the phone call two weeks before the Emmys. But after speaking to her marketing company, her representatives told her the offer was real. Two weeks later, it was time to pack her bags for Hollywood.



Jolicoeur and two other goddesses, Michelle Salguiero of Cumberland and Jenifer Bartoszek of Salem, N.H., were invited to assist the mother goddess in putting together 150 swag bags the night before the primetime Emmys in their Renaissance Hotel suite overlooking the famous Hollywood sign in the hills. The goddesses worked all day to fill tiny bags with soy candles and other novelties, or as Jolicoeur described them to celebrities, "Lotions, potions and things that go buzzing in the night."

As someone who does not watch too much TV, it was difficult to be as excited as some of her cohorts when running into some of the male cast members from HBO's hit series "True Blood" and other actors and actresses from popular television shows. But Jolicoeur's heart flip-flopped at the sight of some of the acting veterans attending the awards show that night, including Dee Wallace of "E.T.," Ghostbusters' Ernie Hudson, and Micky Dolenz of The Monkees.

"Dee Wallace was the mom from E.T.," Jolicoeur said. "She plays a great mom. I'll never forget it - I looked up and said, 'You're Dee Wallace!' and she said, 'Yes, I am!' She just threw her arms around me and hugged me like that great mom from the movies. It just blew my mind."

Wallace's was one of her favorite celebrity encounters, she said, because she could relate to Jolicoeur's cause. Wallace, she said, had grown up around her mother taking care of people struggling with breast cancer. Everyone seemed to have a breast cancer story, the founder said, and every celebrity that appeared at her table offered to sign a bra or place his or her signature on the Athena's sign that was set up behind their table. The mother goddess laughed when she remembered an appearance from the star of ABC's "The Bachelor."

"He is just this mountain of a man and here I am, this small woman looking up at him and he starts saying things like, 'Oh, you're raising money for breast cancer? Please keep me abreast of the situation,'" Jolicoeur said, imitating his British accent. "Then he would say, 'I'm really milking this breast joke, aren't I?'"

She said he and the other celebrities were supportive of her efforts and created a buzz. Athena's goddesses stayed Thursday through Sunday, and before they knew it, they were back to their purple and green headquarters in Woonsocket with 100 more bras to add to their collection.

Upon entering the goddess' world, one encounters walls painted a darkened shade of violet inside the warehouse headquarters and cubicle boards filled with bras. The undergarments ranged from lavish, cream-colored lace to army camouflage and pink duct-taped brassieres. Each bra had a message or meaningful initials written in Sharpie ink. Some were humorous - like "Boobs Magee" and "Bodacious Ta-Tas" - and others were more serious, heartfelt messages with names of former loved ones and survivors. Jolicoeur said sometimes when people come into Athena's with bras of parents and relatives, she expects them to tell her about recent deaths or suffering. But, she said, many have surprised her with references to mothers who have died decades ago who still want to fight for the cause.

"The pain is still lingering," she said, adjusting a bra on her wall.

She came up with the idea to break the record shortly after one of her goddesses discovered she had breast cancer.

"She was in her 30s and has two small children," Jolicoeur said. "When someone your age gets the disease, it deeply affects you."

The founder remembers attending a regional Athena's goddess conference in Florida and relaxing with a few friends after a long weekend of meetings.

"One woman said, 'This bra has been poking me all freaking day,' so as kind of a joke, we all unhooked our bras and put them in a pile," she said. "Later we had some wine and decided that would kind of be our thing; everytime we got together, we would unhook our bras and throw them in a pile. Then a month later in September, the same girls were at my house and we took our bras off and started hooking them together, just getting silly, you know. Then I thought to myself, I wonder how far we could stretch these? And that was it."

Jolicoeur had just thought of the perfect way to honor her goddess, raise money for a good cause and break a world record.

"I literally dropped the bras on the floor," she said. "I was so excited. I grabbed a diary and everyone started throwing ideas at me. Within a few days, we had a Web site, a Facebook page and a blog."

Her purple and green office, decked with trinkets and art portraying everything from John Lennon to Wonderwoman, now also reflects her efforts in breast cancer fund-raising throughout. Next to her computer are photographs of Ellen DeGeneres, Oprah and the logo someone designed for her cause. She said her dream would be to receive national publicity for the cause on the Ellen DeGeneres Show so she could break the record and be able to raise more money for local breast cancer foundations.

So far, her efforts have solidified into "Operation Purple Envelope," or "OPE," an attempt to send 300 purple envelopes with specialized Ellen DeGeneres brand stamps with both personal and form letters to try to get producers' attention. Jolicoeur even has a YouTube video posted on its channel, "AthenasCup," with 400 of her "goddesses" in Woonsocket's Stadium Theatre. In the video, Jolicoeur shouts, "Are you loving OPE?" and the goddesses respond, "Yes!"

While the count edges up from 31,000 bras, Jolicoeur waits with a bottle of champagne on her desk with the number "169,000" and a tiny sign that hangs around the bottleneck that says: "Dream Big." She waits for the day, she said, that she will be able to open that bottle and celebrate a record that she and her goddesses came up with one random night in Tallahassee.

"We want people to know, hey, celebrities are in on this," she said.

So far, Jolicoeur said she does not know what will become of the bras with celebrity autographs, but has pondered putting them up for auction to raise money as well as integrating them into a piece of artwork for a breast cancer foundation.

Amy Labrecque, receptionist and goddess at Athena's, said the owner of the building donated a large trailer to Jolicoeur so the company could store its collection of bras. There are 99 "goddesses" in Rhode Island, and hundreds across the United States. Jolicoeur will be back near the red carpet for the American Music Awards on Nov. 21, she said. For more information, visit www.athenascup.org.