

The business behind Valentine's Day

Durham residents have found a use for long-standing holiday capitalism

By Jennifer Tietnguyen
Social Media Editor

Valentine's Day isn't just flowers and chocolates. For some families in Durham, N.C., – it's a livelihood.

Mayra Hernandez, 21, and her mother, Irma Delgobo, 37, have been setting up their Valentine's Day stands for more than five years.

Their largest location is at the corner of Alston Avenue and Main Street, but they had their handmade products scattered in six other locations throughout the Northeast Central Durham area.

"We've been preparing (for this day) for about three weeks now," Hernandez said. "Today, we started setting up at 5 in the morning, and we'll probably stay till 7 p.m."

The romantic riches

The products range from \$5 roses to \$65 packages of giant teddy bears, candy and roses. Hernandez says Valentine's Day is the best day to invest money and make a profit out of it.

According to Forbes Magazine, Hernandez's sentiments are not far from the truth. This year, the magazine estimates \$142.31 will be spent on gifts by the average American.

Delgobo aims to double her profits – a feat she has done every year thus far. "We buy everything ourselves," Hernandez said, "The quality is good. We drove to New York to get this wrapping paper and, this year, we got about 500 bears."

Though Delgobo has put in the most money to create the products, everybody, she says, pitches in to create the packages.

A little help from friends

The mother and daughter duo receive assistance from friends and family members to man their other selling locations – along Avondale Drive, Hillsborough Road and



Irma Delgobo, 37, preps a vase of handpicked roses and carnations to sell at her pop-up Valentine's Day store. (Staff photo by Jennifer Tietnguyen)

Roxboro Road – but the market can be saturated with similar vendors on this holiday.

Miriam Hernandez, 39, who has been operating her own set of stalls for six years, said vending is an important business.

"Sometimes, it is necessary for money," she said, "or if you don't have a job. But I like being here. I like the people here."

Community support

Venice McKeithen, of Pittsboro, N.C.,

stopped by to purchase some presents for her grandson and daughter.

McKeithen said the vendors do a very good job with the products and locations they pick.

"I came in here because of that big bear on the side," McKeithen said, smiling. "It's very convenient, well put together and the quality is good."

Myra Hernandez said being outside in the cold all was worth it, after all was said and done.

"It's a day where everyone is out buying gifts for their loved ones," she said.