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Give your RA some love

Megan Troutman Feb 15, 2018

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Valentine’s Day has always been one of my favorite days of the year. Yes, I’m one of the few hopeless romantics who enjoy the idea of having a day to celebrate the people who matter to you. I’ve heard the arguments of people saying, “But you shouldn’t have to have a specific day to tell people you love them, you should tell them every day.”

And to that I say: *Have you been to college?* I barely have time to tell my plant I love her and then water her. I have little to no time to call up relatives and old friends every day to tell them I love them and they're an important part of my life. Even though I promise they are.

That's why I love Valentine's Day—sometimes you just need a reminder to tell people what they mean to you.

But I digress. What I really wanted to talk about, were Resident Assistants, better known as RAs.

You hear stories about the “cool RAs” and the “mean RAs,” but really, they're all superhumans.

RAs are required to plan community-building events, as well as programs to teach their residents about something—anything. They have to maintain a bulletin board, create door tags and they even plan one-on-one meetings with residents to talk about school life, home life, roommate life or any other aspect about their hectic lives.

On top of that, RAs have to work. Take, and pass, classes. Manage their social lives. Maybe exercise. Sometimes eat well. Occasionally sleep.

They are superhumans.

I remember during my freshman year, the RAs in my building planned Valentine's Day-related programs and decorated their bulletin boards with pink construction paper and hearts. Some RAs planned heart-shaped chocolate events and others advertised "condom parties," where they would pass out free condoms and discuss safe sex.

RAs were constantly planning ways to bring hall mates together or pass on life wisdom to the freshman class.

They do receive free room and board, which is a nice money-saver, but being an RA is no easy job.

I can say that because I was an RA my sophomore year.

I'm not sitting on my high-horse, because I was by no means a superhuman RA. I died. It was an extremely taxing job, and by the end of the year I was exhausted and did not return the following year—mostly because I was studying abroad and couldn't commit to a full-year contract, but that's beside the point.

Some people are RAs for three years straight — now *those* people are superhumans.

On top of all the bulletin board and door tag crafts, RAs also have to be trained to deal with real-world, difficult scenarios. RAs have to know how to handle resident cases of sexual assault and abuse, mental illness, underage drinking, suicide and sometimes even school shootings. RAs have to read situations beyond their control and have to decide, in a split second, how to react. Their jobs are important, yet they are often seen as the

“party enforcers” and the “tattle-tales” when really, they’re just trying to keep their freshmen safe for a year, which I can tell you from experience is more of a pain in the butt than you would expect.

So, fellow students, whether you’re having an anti-Valentine’s party this year or sending out heart-shaped letters full of glitter, remember to do one thing—give your RA some love.

Megan Troutman is the editor-in-chief of The Lumberjack, Northern Arizona University's student newspaper. College Chronicles aims to connect FlagLive! readers to various aspects of campus life.