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Va. Beach garden for shooting victims a labor of love

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By [Scott Harper](#)
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VIRGINIA BEACH

As Evelyn Flengas watched coverage of the Connecticut school shootings, she felt a special pang for one of the victims: Catherine Violet Hubbard, a 6-year-old who loved animals and had bright red hair and kind, blue eyes.

Flengas, who runs Evelyn's Wildlife Refuge, an animal rehab center, was so moved she wrote the Hubbards to tell them of her grief and also of an idea.

She wanted to build a memorial garden in honor of Catherine and the 25 other children and educators who were gunned down that cold morning in December at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Conn.

The Hubbards were humbled by the request, writing back that they would love to see their daughter remembered in such a peaceful, living way. They especially liked the concept of "Catherine's Corner," a quiet spot off to the side.

Here, a wall made of 26 gray stones, one for each victim, would rise from a flowered setting of native plants known to attract the butterflies that Catherine so loved.

With the help of Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, the Butterfly Society of Virginia and others, the garden has been completed. On Thursday, its purple, yellow and orange flowers framed a warm picture of spring sunshine, and several butterflies danced from petal to petal.

Flengas nearly was brought to tears.

"I always get very emotional talking about it," she said. "I just didn't want these kids to be statistics.

1 OF 2 PHOTOS: Evelyn Flengas holds up a picture of Catherine Hubbard, a six-year-old victim of the Sandy Hook Elementary shooting, on the card her parents sent. Evelyn Flengas runs an animal rehab center in Virginia Beach. She was touched by the death of a fellow animal-lover, Catherine, who was murdered in the Newtown, Conn., shootings. The picture was taken at her home in Virginia Beach on Thursday, May 09, 2013. (Hyunsoo Leo Kim | The Virginian-Pilot)

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Not just another senseless act of violence that gets forgotten."

She encourages visitors to come and see the little garden, at 2633 Highland Drive, and reflect.

There is no place to sit, except a single wooden bench designed for children. It overlooks a small pond ringed by plants and includes a silent fountain that runs all day.

Christian Ullmann, a senior at Princess Anne High School, built much of the garden. It was his Eagle Scout project.

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"It was definitely a labor of love," Ullmann said. "It's something I'll remember for a long time."

Flengas is not the first animal-lover to reach out to the Hubbards. In Catherine's memory, donations from across the country have come to animal rescue groups, shelters and humane societies. Now the Hubbards plan to build their own facility, the Catherine Violet Hubbard Animal Sanctuary, for orphaned and sick pets.

In news stories in Connecticut, Catherine's mother, Jennifer, has talked about her daughter's pet rabbit, Flopsy, and the slow deterioration of the family dog, a yellow Lab.

"I picture beautiful gardens," she told the Hartford Courant. "I can hear kids laughing. And I just see a place that's just about as calm as you can get, because Catherine was such a quiet soul."

"I think that's why she was drawn to the animals, because she just has some type of connection with them."

As Flengas on Thursday showed off the more than 40 orphaned baby possums, rabbits and raccoons in her care at the refuge, chatting with each like a doting mother, that same connection was clear.

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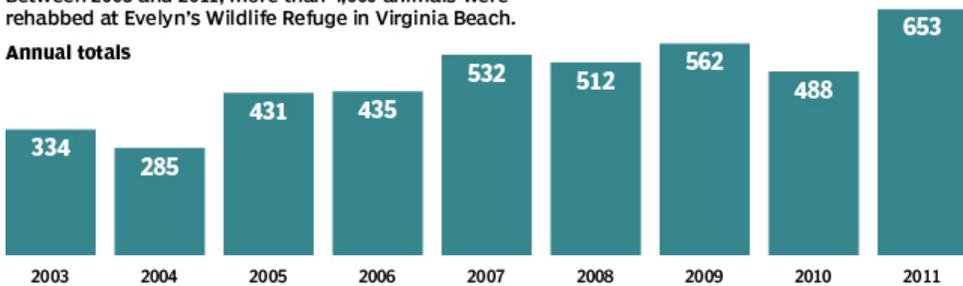
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ANIMALS REHABBED

Between 2003 and 2011, more than 4,000 animals were rehabbed at Evelyn's Wildlife Refuge in Virginia Beach.

Annual totals



SOURCE: evelynswildliferefuge.org

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