

# Students sew reusable pads for girls abroad

By Brianna Wallen  
News Editor

In the Makerspace filled with fabric, thread and the steady hum of sewing machines, students are stitching together more than just cloth.

In the 380 Anthropology of Women and Health course, students are creating Reusable Menstrual Pads, RUMPS, to address a critical barrier that prevents many girls in parts of Africa from staying in school: limited access to menstrual products.

"It just seems so heartbreaking to me and so unjust that a basic necessity for women is putting their lives at risk," Kathleen Skoczen, an anthropology professor and department chair, said.

Skoczen said the initiative was inspired by course material that exposed students to the harsh realities many young women face in Nyanza, Kenya.

Through reading "Love, Money, and HIV: Becoming a Modern African Woman in the Age of AIDS" by Sanyu A. Mojola, students learned how something as basic as menstrual care can influence whether girls stay in school or are forced into dangerous situations to meet their needs.

"What really inspired it was this idea that the women that are at risk of HIV are needing money for luxuries to stay in school, and those luxuries are period products, which I just find so insulting," Skoczen said.

Young women are approximately six times more likely to be infected than men in South Africa and three times more likely in East Africa, according to the National Library of Medicine.

This stark gender disparity is driven in part by economic vulnerability, as young girls are forced into sex work or intergenerational sexual relationships in order to afford menstrual products.

Students moved beyond

discussion and swung into action by sewing reusable menstrual pads in the university's Makerspace.

Skoczen said she hopes students gain a sense of empowerment and learn that even small actions can help them grow into the best versions of themselves.

"They've read about this difficult situation, and here is an opportunity to make a little bit of a difference in someone's life on the other side of the globe," Skoczen said.

Skoczen stressed that this hands-on approach helps students better connect with the issue.

"I think an important part of it is that they're kind of getting experiential learning," Skoczen said. "Their understanding of why this is important is kind of reinforced through actually making those."

Skoczen also analyzed how these experiences can shape students beyond the classroom.

"I also think it's important for our students to think about people living in a different place and maybe doing even the smallest little thing to help them," Skoczen said.

This hands-on experience not only deepens their understanding but also allows students to make a meaningful impact that will reach communities abroad.

According to Skoczen, the pads created by students are expected to be sent to communities in Madagascar through the charitable organization Sustainable Environmental, Educational Development Madagascar.

The initiative is also shaped by the work of Tayler Page, an adjunct professor of the anthropology department and university alumni.

Page helped to carry out the RUMPS initiative in Zambia and Botswana during her time as a volunteer for Pact, a non-governmental organization.

"The women would just make the reusable menstrual pads, and then

they would sell them to generate revenue towards female empowerment, hoping to reduce the contraction rate of HIV amongst adolescent girls and young women," Page said.

Beyond sewing pads, the Pact program stressed the importance of education and sustainability through GLOW, Girls Leading Our World, camps where girls learned to make pads.

"Those girls learn how to make the reusable menstrual pads at those overnight camps," Page said. "And then they go back to their schools, and they create GLOW clubs so that they can teach their other classmates."

Page said she hopes the pads created by students can ease some of the challenges these girls face.

"I hope it can change some lives, and I really hope that the young girls don't have to rely on using their bodies to generate income. That they don't have to turn to sex work, or that they don't have to turn to favors from partners that aren't in their generation," Page said.

While the act of sewing may appear simple, students are not only learning about global inequalities but actively working to address them — one stitch at a time.



PHOTO | KATHLEEN SKOCZEN

Interdisciplinary studies major Lakshmi Garafalo, a junior, and anthropology major Sakura Stevens, a senior, stitching reusable pads in the Makerspace room on April 9.



PHOTO | BRIANNA WALLEN

Reusable pads made by students in the Makerspace room that will be sent to communities in Madagascar.



PHOTO | BRIANNA WALLEN

Kathleen Skoczen, an anthropology professor and department chair, sitting in her office in Englean Hall on Thursday, April 30.



PHOTO | KATHLEEN SKOCZEN

Interdisciplinary studies major Lakshmi Garafalo, a junior, and anthropology major Sakura Stevens, a senior, and Tayler Page, an adjunct professor of the anthropology department, stitching reusable pads in the Makerspace room on April 9.

# Assassination attempt occurred at White House Gala

By Victoria Cruz  
News Writer

The White House Correspondents' Association hosted their annual gala to celebrate journalism and the First Amendment, bringing together politicians, journalists and public officials.

This year's dinner, held on April 25 at the Washington Hilton, took an unexpected and alarming turn.

Shots were fired near the main security screening area outside the event.

According to reports, President Donald Trump was the intended target of the shooter. He was later identified as 31-year-old Cole Tomas Allen, a graduate of the California Institute of Technology.

According to investigators, Allen approached the main security screening area armed with a shotgun, handgun and knives.

He reportedly forced his way past security barriers and opened fire near the entrance, just yards away from where attendees were gathering, according to NBC.

Authorities quickly detained Allen before he could reach the main event space, preventing any further escalation.

Although no fatalities



PHOTO | FLICKR/TIM EVANSON

The Washington Hilton Hotel at 1919 Connecticut Avenue NW in Washington, D.C., on Sept. 15, 2013.

were reported, the incident has sparked widespread concern about the effectiveness of security measures, particularly among students observing the situation.

"In my time of understanding political climates, I have not seen a secret service this lacking before," finance major Julio Merced, a junior, said.

His statement reflected a broader frustration among observers who

believe the response was not as swift or organized as it should have been given the high-profile nature of the event.

Following the attempted assassination, a manifesto released by Allen's family surfaced online. The documents detailed his grievances with the current administration and outlined his intentions prior to the attack.

While the contents have raised questions about motive and mental state,

many are more focused on the apparent pattern of security lapses.

"Despite my frustrations with Trump's presidency, there is no sense of urgency when there should be. Trump was not even the first person rushed off the stage. The president should be the highest priority. This is the third time this has happened," communication major Angela Nappe, a sophomore, said.

The attack has

intensified scrutiny on event security procedures and raised broader concerns about the frequency of threats against political figures in the United States.

"Regardless of where you stand politically, it is becoming a public safety concern how often this happens. They should focus less on the shooter and more how security is being carried out. This is a pattern with secret service," Merced said.

Another point of

frustration among students is the public reaction following the incident. Despite the reality of the situation, some believe it is not being treated with adequate gravity.

"Everyone is posing it as a massive joke, and that's why no one is taking it serious," Nappe said.

Nappe shared a similar outlook, adding that public sentiments are taking away from productive conversation.

"Just because nothing serious happened does not mean it's not serious. People like Dana White made it unprofessional considering the events. And that's why no one is talking about it," Merced said.

While the immediate threat was contained, the incident has left lingering questions about security preparedness, public perception and how seriously such threats are taken.

The incident serves as a troubling reminder of how rising public dissatisfaction is beginning to manifest in ways that threaten both safety and stability.

This ultimately reflected a deeper sense of tension and frustration within the public that continues to surface in increasingly dangerous ways.