



## STUDENT LIFE

## Knit, Purl . . . Boom

A student group brings “yarn bombing” to Rochester.

Interview by Kathleen McGarvey

The student group SOCKS, or Society of Knitting and Crocheting Students, is turning fiber art into street art with “yarn bombing”—a kind of needlework graffiti that has become a global phenomenon.

SOCKS president Bonnie Nortz '15, a double major in mathematics and linguistics from Fairport, New York, has helped guide Rochester's take on the colorful and cozy practice since its beginning.

### What is yarn bombing?

Contrary to what you might think, a yarn bombing is not strands of yarn thrown everywhere in a stringy mess. Instead, picture sweaters made for trees.

### How do you do it?

The first step is to measure the tree—or lamppost, bridge, statue, car, etc. Then, we knit and/or crochet a roughly rectangular piece of fabric that fits those dimensions. To install the piece, the sweater is simply sewn around the tree.

### Do all SOCKS members participate?

Each tree sweater is usually done by an individual member. But for our lamppost sweaters, and for our bench sweater this coming fall, it's easy to divvy the pieces up into smaller, more manageable parts that virtually any SOCKS member can make. Lastly, everyone is invited to help us install the yarn bombing, because the more people we have, the faster and easier it is to do.



**TREE COZY:** For the 2013 edition of Meliora Weekend, SOCKS created yarn installations incorporating the University's mission statement, “Learn, Discover, Heal, Create—and Make the World Ever Better” (above). Bonnie Nortz '15, Phil Moulton '15, and other group members have been gearing up for this fall (opposite).


### What's the biggest challenge for a successful yarn bombing?

It's planning an event far enough in advance. Tree sweaters are around 5 feet tall and 30 inches wide for the trees we've been using, so they take a long time to make, especially if the pattern is complex. One sweater I made for our 2012 Meliora Weekend yarn bombing had over 30,000 stitches and incorporated a lace and cable pattern. It's imperative to have the trees measured and the sweaters assigned to members well in advance, usually the summer or semester before.

### Do you have plans for Meliora Weekend?

We are definitely yarn bombing for Meliora Weekend! We plan to replicate last year's theme of the “Learn, Discover, Heal, Create” mission statement, with at least one lamppost sweater and, hopefully, some sort of bench sweater. It will be our third Meliora Weekend installation.

### What makes it fun?

My favorite thing about yarn bombing is how unexpected a sight it is to most people. I think many people consider knitting and crocheting to be something that only grandmothers do, and only out of sheer boredom. I love to challenge that preconception. I love to show people that knitting and crocheting are fun and vibrant crafts. I love to brighten people's day with something so colorful and out of the blue. I love the look on someone's face as they walk by and realize, “Wait, is that . . . yarn?” 



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