

Nursing home residents treasure community's gifts

December 20, 2019



Elegant Christmas wreaths hang in certain businesses in Crescent City, although their purpose is more than decorative.

Hanging from the wreaths are small brown tags bearing a room and bed number - plus three wishes - for each occupant at Crescent City's Skilled Nursing Home.

Local residents are helping Skilled Nursing Home clients enjoy the Christmas season through donations of new, cozy blankets, biweekly Christmas caroling, and other seasonal activities.

For three years, Tri Counties Bank, Coast Central Credit Union, Del Norte Office Supply and the nursing home have hung the wreaths in their offices to encourage those in the community to take a tag and brighten an elderly person's holiday.

“I just love it, you realize there is a community here. It’s that connection, people do care,” said Margarita Garcia, the nursing home’s activities director.

The tags identify the gender of the nursing home resident and three things he or she would like for Christmas. Whomever picks up the tag then purchases one or more items from the wish list and returns them, with their tags, either to the business where they found the wreath or directly to the Skilled Nursing Home.

Often, volunteers will bring their items already wrapped. If not, others will wrap the presents in decorative holiday paper.

Then, on Christmas Day, Santa arrives in full suit right after breakfast at the nursing home and delivers the presents to the occupants.

The program has become so popular that last year, each of the 78 residents received eight gifts during an emotional gathering. “It was awesome. It made us cry last year,” said Renee Porter, the home’s administrator.

“It was very generous. I’m from Los Angeles, and I’ve never seen anything like that. So, to see that last year, the room across the hall filled halfway up with gifts. It was awesome.

“It connects the residents here to the community,” said Porter, “because as much as we try to create this as their home environment, it’s still institutionalized and the residents can start to feel a little isolated.”

In addition to the gifts, the residents have been visited by carolers and showered with handmade blankets from Sunset High School students and Pelican Bay State Prison inmates.

Carolers, musicians and school bands have performed at least twice a week since the beginning of December, according to Garcia, which provides holiday company for the residents.

“One day, we had a ukulele band. Yesterday, we had Bess Maxwell’s after-school band. Last week, we had Redwood school, the kindergarteners.

“They all come in and sing Christmas carols,” Garcia said.

“The residents love it. They love to see little kids.”