

Christmas therapy

BY DERREK TIPTON dtipton@tmnews.com
0/15/2016

BEDFORD — The sound of Christmas songs filled Westview Nursing Home and Rehabilitation Center Wednesday as 90 children delivered a dose of cheer to its residents throughout the day.

Called “Adopt a Grandparent,” 3- to 5-year-olds from Hoosier Uplands Head Start visited 25 residents — some in the morning and some in the afternoon — and belted out tunes, such as “We Wish You a Merry Christmas,” “Jingle Bells” and “Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer.” In turn, the residents gave the morning visitors mittens, and candy canes to the afternoon visitors.

The stop was the first in an upcoming series of monthly visits to folks in the memory care unit. Each month, residents and students will participate in different activities.

Tracy Hall, memory care coordinator at Westview, said the program is a good idea for finding extra, willing volunteers.

“I’m always trying to recruit new volunteers,” Hall said. “... One of our residents here, her daughter works for Head Start. So, one day I asked her, “Would your kids be interested in coming over and seeing us at Christmas?””

The interactions between the children and residents, who all suffer from dementia, are special, Hall said. Some of the residents participate in doll therapy, Hall said, which can almost feel lifelike for them. But having children visit, especially during the holidays, can help fill a void.

“The residents love kids,” Hall said. “Sometimes, they might get tired of things, but if I say ‘Do you want to make something for the kids?’ They are on it. ... It gives them a sense of purpose. These residents ... some of them were mothers and stay-at-home mothers, so it does give them purpose. I think when you have dementia, you never forget about the love you have for children, love for the Lord and love of Christmas.”

Head Start teacher Krista Blevins said students practiced their singing a lot before coming to Westview.

“We’ve been practicing for well over a month,” Blevins said. “We built it up at school, and they were excited for today. We practiced every day. They were a little shy when they came in, but I think it went great.”

In addition, Blevins said some of the kids don’t have grandparents, so it gave them opportunity to connect with an older generation.

“It bridges the generations,” Blevins said. “... It’s nice to get out and doing something good for the holiday season. ... And some of the residents might not have grandchildren either.”

Hall said she’s excited to see how the program will evolve over the coming months.

“This helps,” Hall said. “We just want to keep (the residents) as busy as we can. ... They’re loving it.”

Contact Times-Mail Staff Writer Derrek Tipton at (812) 277-7262 or dtipton@tmnews.com.

Christmas therapy



Christmas therapy

