

State Wires Indiana

105th birthday celebrated with honoree dressed in pink

By ASHLEY SLOBODA - 3/13/18 5:02 AM

FORT WAYNE, Ind. — In a room decked out in pink, Mardell Breedlove watched Sunday as her mother celebrated an unimaginable milestone: her 105th birthday.

“I never would have believed it,” Breedlove said over the din of music and chatter at Heritage Park, a senior health and living community operated by American Senior Communities.

Guest of honor Dora Ross, meanwhile, basked in the festivities from her seat near a sheet cake trimmed in pink icing as attendees continued to arrive.

“She’s talked about this for months,” said Sherrie Murphy, activities director of the Hobson Road facility.

Other centenarians live at Heritage Park – one resident is 104 – but Murphy couldn’t recall when the community last celebrated a 105th birthday.

To mark the occasion, Heritage Park decorated the party room with Ross’ favorite color, pink. No detail was overlooked; pink foil even wrapped the Hershey’s Kisses.

Ross also wore pink – and a little sparkle.

“I even got her a little tiara,” Murphy said.

Ross doesn’t shy from the attention, said Breedlove, her mother’s last surviving child.

“She’s happy,” Breedlove said, looking at Ross, whose mouth was moving. “When she sings, she’s happy.”

Born March 11, 1913, in northeast Indiana, Ross spent her childhood in Oklahoma, where her family worked in the oilfields, according to a biography Heritage Park compiled. She later moved to Fort Wayne and worked for General Electric, a phone company and, for 21 years, Fort Wayne National Bank, now PNC.

Her friend Waunett Lovett asked her to share stories about her childhood, but the reminiscing was soon interrupted by a rendition of "Happy Birthday" and refreshments – punch and cake.

Carrie Boedeker, Heritage Park customer care coordinator, pre-empted a need for Ross to make a wish.

"We're not making her blow out any candles," she said.