

4 horses and a dog bring smiles for Edgewater Woods residents

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Wes Jackson and his therapy horse Bonnie visit residents through the windows at Edgewater Woods in Anderson on Friday. “Oh, my goodness – it was all smiles for hours after they left,” said marketing and admissions director Sandy Montgomery.

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ANDERSON — Pressing his face close to an Edgewater Woods window, Wes Jackson peered inside. Bonnie, a sorrel colored therapy horse, was pressed close to his side.

“Those horses would get right up to the window,” said Sandy Montgomery, director of marketing and admissions at Edgewater. “It was a great time. Everyone’s spirits were so lifted by it.”

Wes and Marci Jackson brought the Horses of Hope to visit with the nursing home residents. Montgomery said the furry visitors included a total of four horses and a dog.

“They also brought their dog who ran around loving on everyone,” said Montgomery. “He liked his share of the attention also.”

American Senior Communities owns Edgewater and arranged for the window visits by the ASC Cavalry, Horses of Hope to provide comfort, hope and entertainment to residents during visitation restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Horses of Hope has already visited 43 American Senior Communities sites with many more scheduled in the coming days and weeks, said Montgomery.

“They were really good at engaging the residents with the horse even though they couldn’t get together,” said Montgomery.

Window visits at local nursing homes during the COVID-19 pandemic aren’t necessarily uncommon, but Montgomery said this is the first time in the seven years that she has worked at the facility that the horses have visited Edgewater.

“Dorothy and Margaret said it brought back so many memories from their childhood,” said Montgomery. “They were both raised on farms.”

A resident named Jim told Montgomery he used to spend “hours and hours” with horses growing up and he used to drive them in racing buggies.

“Jim followed the horses going to several windows to see them again,” she said.

She said about 63 of the residents were engaged with the horses that walked all the way around the building stopping at each window along the way.

“Normally they would be able to pet them and things, but the state we are in now they can’t do that,” she said.

Montgomery said the staff has been working hard to keep the residents engaged and entertained while maintaining social distance. Movies are played all day with a few residents in attendance instead of all at once with everyone present.

Other activities at the facility have included hall bingo where residents can be stationed at their room doors and spirit week where hero and pajama days are celebrated, she said with a laugh.

Montgomery said the horse visit was a positive experience for everyone, including the horses who were able to munch on longer than normal grass that couldn’t be mown before their visit.

“Oh, my goodness – it was all smiles for hours after they left,” she said.