

Remembering elderly Personians at Christmas

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As the spirit of Christmas swoops in and out of the hearts and homes of America, does it reach out and touch senior citizens with the same effect?

Wendy Brown, nutrition manager at Person County's Council on Aging, explains that seniors certainly benefit with time spent away from an adult facility or the home they occupy. The freedom of getting out for a visit can certainly lift spirits. Brown also stressed that any holiday visits with a loved one be done with relaxed dignity so there is no feeling of "tasking" or it being an obligation.

Canada's Mission Partners International Senior's Ministries on-line explained, "Many seniors remember a day when life was not so hard. A time when they were not as restricted to a tiny pension. A time when they could afford better food. A time when they did not need so much medication. A time when family and friends would gather together for a meal and laughter."

Mission Partners goes on to suggest "a basket of Christmas goodies will certainly turn heartaches into joy. Making sure there are nutritious staple foods like tea, rice, cereal and sugar along with several treats such as cookies, candies and chocolates that give each food parcel a holiday flare."

At Person Memorial Hospi-

tal's (PMH) Extended Care facility, the activities director, Shelly Torain, puts the name of every patient on a huge Christmas tree. Then Santa comes in, selects each name off the tree, and each PMH employee becomes "an angel" who buys a Christmas present for that particular person.

During this week's Angel Party, pianist Yohanna Yubwannie performed several Christmas songs for staff members and patients.

Jill Strickland, director at Roxboro's Healthcare and Rehabilitation Center (RHRC), said to make Christmas special for their residents, "they have been celebrating the whole month of December."

"We have had groups coming in singing Christmas carols and bringing gifts," Strickland added. "We enjoyed a big party and lunch last Tuesday and always encourage 100 percent family participation for every event. We send out schedules to each family so they can plan on joining in the fun."

Linda Frazier, RHRC activities director, added that residents enjoy "hot chocolate socials," while sitting around the giant wide screen television.

Last Thursday, residents were treated to an added holiday manicure — "to make them feel special" — from the staff while watching the movie, *The Santa Clause*, with Tim Allen.

Frazier listed other special programs coming up for the new year such as Crazy Hat Day, Chi-



Santa Claus visits with patients at Person Memorial Hospital's Extended Care facility Thursday afternoon.

nese New Year, Valentine's Day and even a Derby Day theme "where the residents can bet on the horses by using the big TV screen."

For Christmas Day at the center, Pastor Philip Chryst, of Warren's Grove United Methodist Church, will be there delivering a special Christmas service at 10

a.m.

"This is my 12th year going to different nursing homes in the area," Chryst said. "They have been some of my most tender

moments while being with the seniors. We have the service, we sing hymns and I read from Luke, chapter 2, which is about the birth of Jesus."

PHS' Peer Group Connection provides unique bonding experience

BY GREY PENTECOST

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A group of freshmen and upperclassmen at Person High School have been bonding in a unique way this semester as participants in the new Peer Group Connection (PGC) leadership program.

Through the program, developed to help ninth-graders with the transition to high school, 25 juniors and seniors began serving this year as peer mentors to a group of approximately 130 high school freshmen.

The program is being funded through a dropout prevention grant Person County Schools received earlier this year.

The student mentors went through an application process to become members of the year-long PGC leadership class, in which they are trained to facilitate weekly discussions and activities with freshmen.

The freshmen are divided into groups of 10 to 15, with each group assigned two peer mentors.

Adult mentor Angelas Hunt, who serves to connect freshman with various services, said the student mentors were doing a "great job."

She continued by saying not only do the mentors conduct hour-long activity sessions with their groups each Thursday, but they also check in with their mentees throughout the week.

Peer mentor Cinzia Petty, a senior at PHS, told *The Courier-*

Times she has "a good group of kids" who listen and want to learn. She said they as mentors are like friends to their mentees, reminding them to stop them in the hallways if they need help or someone to talk to.

Petty shared that one student gave her a note about something she had wanted to tell her, and later the two were able to discuss the issue together.

The group culminated the first semester by hosting a family night on Monday at PHS.

Families of the freshmen and upperclassmen in the PGC program were invited to the PHS library Monday to learn about some of the things their children had been doing over the semester.

PGC teacher Allison Bowers explained to parents that the peer mentors had been working this past semester with freshmen on things like communication and test-taking skills.

Other skills peer mentors learn through the course include team-building, group facilitation, problem solving, decision-making, time management and handling academic pressures.

After viewing a skit put on by some of the student mentors demonstrating the importance of parent/teen interaction, attendees were divided into two groups to participate in an activity similar to ones the students had done during the semester.

During the "fish bowling" activity, in which a group of people is involved in a discussion while another group listens, parents



A group of parents, assisted by Peer Group Connection student mentors, discuss parent/child relationships while student attendees listen on, during a "fish bowling" exercise Monday as part of the PCG family night.

were given the opportunity to participate in a guided discussion while student attendees listened. Next, students discussed while parents took on the roles of observers.

Parents discussed questions

such as, "Why do parents repeat themselves a lot?" and "What is the most important thing you have learned from your children?"

Student questions questions included, "How do kids handle being compared to brothers and sisters, either negatively or positively?" and "What do teens like to talk about with their parents, and what topics do they avoid?"

Mentor Corey Bailey told *The C-T* he loved working with his mentees, and that he looks forward to seeing them graduate high school.

Tomease Higgins, one of the freshmen mentees, said the program offered him and his fellow freshmen participants a place to talk to other students their own age, and a place to talk about their problems and learn how to fix them.

Higgins said he's learned more about having better relationships with friends, and how to make new friends.

He said it's also been helpful having a mentor to talk to and get help with homework.

Higgins also said he hopes the program will be available to other ninth-graders in the future.

Mentor and PHS junior Allison Daye shared that she thinks

the program is a great experience for both mentee and mentor, as it gives mentors the chance to learn about themselves and ways to improve their leadership skills.

She added that parent participation in their children's lives is key to the program's success, and said she hopes the program will be continued in the future.

"I've seen tremendous growth in the kids," said mentor Tyrell Perry.

He said that bonds had been created between mentors and

mentees.

Mentor Jasmine McCullum said it had been interesting hearing her mentees' points-of-view, and said participating in the program has helped her to be more understanding and considerate of perspectives different from her own.

If it weren't for the program, McCullum said, she probably wouldn't have gotten to know most of the freshmen she's been working with.

She added, "I wish them all luck."



Giving Santa a helping hand

Person County Sheriff's Office officials recently delivered over 200 toys to the Person County Office Building to assist Santa's Helpers. The toys were donated by sheriff's office employees as well as participants in the G.R.E.A.T. program, which is led by the sheriff's office.

Early paper today, no paper Wednesday

In order to give the staff time with their families for Christmas, today's edition of *The Courier-Times* was published one day early.

Also, as is customary, *The C-T* will skip an edition next week. Therefore, the lone edition that will be published in the upcoming week will be on Saturday,

Dec. 30.

The C-T office will be closed Monday through Wednesday, Dec. 26-28. The office will open for regular business hours on Thursday, Dec. 29, at 8 a.m. The office will be closed on Monday, Jan. 2, in order to allow the staff a holiday in observance of New Year's Day.