

## **Local Residents Donate their Time, Effort, and Love to a Great Cause**

Residents of Spring Mill Senior Living's Compass Program (a secured section of the community geared towards those with memory impairment) recently began a long-term commitment to local charity organization Pajama Buddy. Pajama Buddy is a grass-roots effort started in 2007 by Chester County resident Arlene Romano. This program provides new pajamas for children in local homeless shelters, along with other necessities such as toothbrushes and toothpaste, as well as comfort items like books and crayons in a hand-sewn fleece bag.

After reading an article in a local paper Nancy Schuett, Spring Mill's Compass Program Director, noticed one item that was distinctly absent from these bags of goodies – blankets. “No matter the season, every child should have something warm to snuggle up to. Blankets not only keep a child warm, but provide feelings of comfort and security in uncertain times,” says Ms. Schuett. “Helping Pajama Buddy has three different, but equally important, benefits for residents of the Compass Program: emotional, physical, and cognitive,” she continues.

This project was lovingly undertaken by Activity Assistant, Carolyn Thomas – also familiar with the Pajama Buddy program and more than willing to help the cause. Blankets are made using two large pieces of fleece. Carolyn begins the project by cutting flaps along the perimeter of both pieces. Residents then tie the coordinated flaps from each piece to create one finished fleece blanket. Emotionally, residents enjoy the sense of accomplishment they gain when they see the finished product. Taking one hour per blanket, it is a short-term activity that they are able to see through from start to finish. The physical action of tying the blanket together provides exercise in manual dexterity as well as hand-eye coordination. Cognitively, it is also an opportunity for residents to reminisce with each other and discuss the good deed they are doing.

Some may wonder if this activity is truly beneficial. People not educated on the subject of dementia may even suspect that residents are not able to understand the scope of their efforts. Nancy and Carolyn know otherwise. “When we first started this project, one resident asked me: ‘If they don't have a home, how will they use the blanket?’ I simply replied ‘because of the blanket you are making, they are bringing a little piece of home with them wherever their travels may take them.’ It was in the glint of their eye after that statement that I knew we were doing something valuable. Not just for the child receiving the blanket but for the residents themselves,” Carolyn says.

To date, ten blankets have been donated to the Pajama Buddy Program; by Christmas 2011 they hope to complete at least 40 more. If you would like to donate fleece for Spring Mill residents to use in their contribution to the Pajama Buddy Program, please contact Nancy Schuett at (610) 933-7675.

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