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CHRISTMAS IN ACTION!

Older people helping younger people and younger people helping older people. What could be a better Christmas story! It is a story of the Gift of Love Across the Generations and I have had the pleasure to witness first hand. It begins with older people looking beyond their own needs and their own problems and finding joy in helping students they don't even know personally. What they do know is that not all the students at the Spaulding Youth Center get to home for Christmas and for those students who stay at the Center our Members wanted to do something special. They felt a connection to these young people who they have never met. Based on that connection they had a great time collecting gifts and donations to help make the student's Christmas just a little more special. It was interesting to see how that over the course of the last few weeks that this effort that involved a number of different projects enhanced our Members and Staff Christmas Spirit. The interesting thing about a labor of love is how both the giver and the recipient benefit! Isn't it wonderful that our own Christmas is made better by helping to make someone else's Christmas better?

Now at the same time that these older friends have been busy with their efforts we have also been welcoming many youth groups who have come in to sing Carols for our Members who reside in The INN and The GARDENS which are our two assisted living centers. I've made it a point as I go around with my camera to carefully study the faces of both the children and our Members. It is difficult to know who is enjoying things more! While their music is of course appreciated it is their youthful enthusiasm that is their real gift. That enthusiasm is wonderfully contagious! The children leave not only having done a good thing – but also having had a great time doing it! It sounds pretty basic – but you cannot brighten someone else's life without brightening your own!

The gift of love across the generations goes both ways with Elders helping Children and Children helping Elders, each in their own way and each benefiting not only by what they receive --- but by what they give.

Older people are very concerned about taking care of the younger generation and the younger generation is concerned about taking care of the generation that is already here. We can never let ourselves fall into the trap of thinking that we can only be concerned about one group or the other. Taking care of our young people is taking care of our future and taking care of our elders is taking care of our history and heritage. We have to do both and what better way to do than by elders helping children and children helping elders.

One of our Members – Carolyn – says it perfectly: “Spaulding is not only happy with the presents but also with having been given an opportunity to get to know us as we have gotten to know them. They are so thankful for the outpouring of care.” The people at Spaulding understand that what was given is important – but that it is not more important than why it was given. These are good people.

We are accustomed to think that the reason behind giving is to please or to help someone else – that our sacrifice of time and/or money will benefit another. And while that is not a bad thing – it isn’t the reason for Christmas giving. Christmas giving doesn’t diminish or in any way take anything away from the giver. It provides an opportunity to help or serve in a way that benefits the giver as much as the receiver. Ask any volunteer why they volunteer and they will always respond that it is as important for them as it is for anyone that they help.

Giving with a smile is truly Christmas in Action and that is what Gifts Across the Generations is all about!

May you and your family have a very Merry Christmas!

Age Well!

Howard Chandler has worked in elder services for over 35 years and is Vice-President of Meredith Bay Colony Club along with being a Partner of White Mountain Eldercare Solutions. Your comments are always appreciated. chandler@metrocast.net and at chandler@meredithbaycolonyclub.org and on Facebook.