


# Silver Bells project makes Christmas brighter for personal care home residents

 By Steve Vied Messenger-Inquirer

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The Christmas spirit of giving and helping people who could use a bit of cheer will be on display next week when volunteers with the Silver Bells Christmas Project head out for three personal care homes in Daviess, McLean and Henderson counties, bearing bags of gifts for all 118 residents of the facilities.

The Silver Bells Christmas Project is a program of the Green River Area Development District (GRADD) ombudsman office. Every December, project volunteers on the GRADD staff collect items to fill "goody bags" to be given to the residents of personal care homes in the GRADD region. This year the homes selected for the project are Sunny Acres in McLean County, Henderson Manor in Henderson County and Bishop Soennecker Home in Daviess County.

The goody bags are actually red canvas shopping bags imprinted with the GRADD logo. And they hold a lot, too. Into each bag goes two soft drinks, flavor packets for bottled water, peanut butter snack crackers and cheese snack crackers, chips, instant coffee, snack cakes, raisins, fresh fruit, chapstick, socks, gloves and tissues -- all of it donated to the project by individuals and businesses.

"We have had a lot of support on this project," said GRADD Ombudsman Shelia Howard. "We've had donations from GRADD staff and GRADD board members and the Aging Council board and several businesses."

St. John Paul II Middle School in Morganfield filled 50 of the 118 bags, Howard said.

The Silver Bells committee is comprised of Howard, Jennifer Williams, Kim Wurth, Libby Watson and Steve Joines -- all GRADD staff members. On Thursday afternoon at the GRADD office, committee members, with help from Owensboro Cub Scout Pack 611 cub scouts Connor Wurth, 10, and Tanner Wurth, 8, sorted the donated items and filled bags.

Committee members planned to go shopping for a few more items for the goody bags, using more than \$1,000 in cash donated to the project.

The bags, each packed with a handmade Christmas card, will be distributed to the residents on Wednesday, a day Williams is looking forward to.

"They are so pleased to have us come in," Williams said. "Last year we sang Christmas carols and we plan to do it again if anybody can carry a tune. A lot of the residents are isolated in some ways and don't get a lot of company. They are thrilled to see us come. The items are things they don't have the money to buy themselves. They are treats not readily available to them like you and I. Last year they were digging in even before we left. It is definitely a gratifying experience."

"We have a lot of staff wanting to go with us this year," Howard said. "We have been overwhelmed with the generosity."

Kim Wurth is Cub Master of Pack 611 and she wanted her boys Conner and Tanner to be involved in the project. Their part, in addition to helping sort the items and fill the bags, was collecting socks and gloves.

"I think it helps them," Kim Wurth said. "They are serving their community and seeing the value of helping other people. You would not believe the excitement of picking out socks and gloves."

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