

“While we try to teach our children all about life, our children teach us what life is all about.”
–unknown.

As a teenager, going through multiple surgeries and specialized therapy, her heart became touched by those around her, particularly of handicapped and disabled individuals. Her experience brought her to a career decision to help children feel good about themselves. She received a degree in recreational therapy. At her first job working as a recreational therapist she began to see her vision for the need to provide intergenerational programming. She began investigating the possibility of a site to meet her wishes. In 2001 she became this retirement community’s licensed daycare director. Immediately, she began developing bonds between the children and the residents.

The daycare center is currently licensed to serve 50 children ages 6 weeks to 6 years of age Monday through Friday. Over the past ten years the daycare center has provided care to over 250 children. In 2010 this director saw a need to provide care to school aged children during the summer. She began working on grants to receive funding to make this program a possibility. For the past two years the daycare center has been able to offer programming to children 6 years to 12 years in age during the summer.

On a daily basis this director plans a variety of educational and recreational activities with the children to encourage residents to engage life to the fullest, continue personal growth and development, and maintain wellness. The children engage residents through, playing games, making crafts, singing with residents in the dementia unit, participating in classroom activities with residents from residential and independent living, and delivering the mail to those living in healthcare. For many healthcare residents mail is their last contact with the outside world. This director organized a way for the residents to receive their mail from the children each day. Many of the residents live for these visits with the children. They talk with the children, show appreciation to them and share and tell stories.

Mixing the generations is beneficial to both age groups. It helps the children learn to appreciate senior citizens, teaching them to see beyond their disabilities, while the presence of children helps the residents in numerous ways.

Over the course of the past ten years this director has observed many special experiences between the residents and the children. These children bring a smile to the elderly when no one else is able. One resident who rarely speaks held a child and began singing ‘Jesus Loves Me’ while holding the child in her arms.

A resident volunteer considers it a blessing to spend time with the children. She enjoys rocking the infants to sleep twice a week and said, “Children are so precious. They are gifts from God and I feel God’s presence in their midst.”

As the director of the daycare her main goal is for the children to leave her doors with empathy and compassion for those with need. Her hope is that the children that she serves today will become tomorrow’s leaders in our area schools and the community.

