

SPECIAL DELIVERY



Noah Freeman, left, leans in to listen to resident Florence Yost as members of the Freeport High School football team attend a Christmas party Friday at Concordia in Jefferson Township. The players took part in the Adopt-a-Resident program at Concordia this year as a way to give back to the community.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVE PRELOSKY/BUTLER EAGLE

Freeport football team adopts Concordia residents

By Amanda Spadaro
Eagle Staff Writer

JEFFERSON TWP — Residents of the Concordia personal care home were joined by Freeport High School's football team for the residents' annual Christmas party last week.

The football players made for an upbeat, if perhaps unusual, addition, bringing presents for the residents through the Adopt-a-Resident program.

"I think it's a wonderful thing," Dolores Dietz, 81, said. "There's so many people here who have nobody, so this makes them feel more welcome."

The program is helpful for the residents, some of whom may be lonely during the holiday season, said Shirley Freyer, director of public relations at Concordia.

"I don't know if (my family will) be in to see me," said Irvin Hanson, 93. "I hope somebody would come visit."

Hanson has four children in the Butler area, but with the busy holidays, residents at Concordia don't always get to spend as much time with loved ones as they would like.

"With the death of loved ones, it is difficult around the holidays," said Garnet McCall, 89. McCall's husband passed away in 2004.

In the past, the Adopt-a-Resident program, which started in 2000, was an employee- and family-driven event, according to Freyer. It has grown to include community members and area churches, but a football team is a new twist, Freyer said.

"This is the first year that a football team has adopted us," she said. "It really started with the (Freeport football) coach. He wants to teach them more than football."

John Gaillot, Freeport head coach, has tried to create a culture of giving back to the community within the football program. The team previously helped out at Concordia over the summer, organizing activities and talking with the residents, he said.

"It's not all about football," Gaillot said. "It's about their academics and how they treat other people."



Helen Puko talks Friday with Freeport High School football player Jacob Goldinger during a Christmas party at Concordia. The players were there as part of Concordia's Adopt-a-Resident program.

In Gaillot's eight years as head coach, he has seen the players grow, even having two previous players working as assistant coaches.

"Tough guys on the field, but off the field, it's 'What did you do to help somebody today?'" Gaillot said.

Ryan Kadyk, a Freeport ninth-grade player, said the experience feels a little different to him because his own grandmother is a resident at Concordia. Kadyk understands what the residents go through during the holidays.

His grandmother, LaVerne Kadyk, 87, sneaked out of her own Christmas party to see her grandson give presents to the other residents, she said.

"There's a bit of generational gap, or two or three," McCall joked.

But for Freeport junior Noah Freeman, the generational gap is not too

difficult to overcome. For him, talking to the residents is easy, especially when the residents can bond over football with the students.

Freyer stressed having young people at Concordia around the holidays helps the residents by bringing in optimism and energy.

"Bridging the gap between generations is healthy for our residents," she said. "To have a younger person take an interest in you and talk to you, it's just healthy and nice."

The residents aren't the only ones who benefit though, Freyer said, because the young people can learn respect and gain a greater perspective on the world.

As the party wound down, Kadyk, in a wheelchair with a present on her lap, added, "Go Yellowjackets!"

POTPOURRI

Jennings center offers events to celebrate the new year

SLIPPERY ROCK — Jennings Environmental Education Center, 2951 Prospect Road, will have several events in the new year. Register online or call the center at 724-794-6011.

■ **First Day Hike**, 1 to 3 p.m. Jan. 1: This hike on Oakwoods, Jennings' longest trail, is rated "easy" for those who can cover the two-mile distance under winter conditions.

■ **Winter Trails Day Snowshoe Clinic**, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Jan. 9: This will be a free introduction to snowshoeing. Snowshoes will be provided, although personal equipment is welcome. Register by Jan. 6.

■ **Prairie Improvement Day**, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Jan. 16: Individuals will help the Jennings staff manage the unique prairie ecosystem. Register by Jan. 8.

■ **Scout Stewards Prairie Improvement Day**, 9 a.m. to noon Jan. 17: Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts from the Junior Girl Scout and Webelo Scout ages/levels and older will participate in a seasonal learning and volunteering experience. Each scout will receive a commemorative patch.

■ **Full Moon Snowshoe Experience**, 7 to 9 p.m. Jan. 23: Snowshoes will be provided (weather permitting) to experience the magic of a winter forest under a full moon. The program is free. Register by Jan. 20. Participants must be 9 or older.

BULLETIN BOARD

TODAY

FREE COMMUNITY MEAL, 5 to 6 p.m., Saint Andrews United Presbyterian Church, 201 E. Jefferson St. Use the Cliff Street entrance.

WOMEN OF THE MOOSE CHAPTER 260 meeting, 7:30 p.m., Moose Lodge, 225 W. Jefferson St. For more information, call 724-679-8579.

CARD PARTY, 7:30 p.m., Unionville Grange, 150 N. Benbrook Road.

AL-ANON MEETING, 8 p.m., Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, 2217 Chicora Road, Chicora.

THURSDAY

CANCELED — CHRISTIAN BUSINESS PARTNERS breakfast meeting, Mac's Route 8 Café.

CANCELED — TAKE OFF POUNDS SENSIBLY CHAPTER 1674 weigh-in and meeting, Concordia Visiting Nurses.

CANCELED — KATIE'S KITCHEN FREE COMMUNITY MEAL, St. Mark's Evangelical Lutheran Church.

CANCELED — GROVE CITY AMERICAN LEGION BINGO, American Legion Post 220, Grove City.

CANCELED — TAKE OFF POUNDS SENSIBLY CHAPTER 0181 weigh-in and meeting, North Street Christian Church.

CANCELED — AMERICAN LEGION POST 683 BINGO, Saxonburg American Legion, Cabot.

CANCELED — GENERAL BUTLER VAGABONDS BINGO, Vagabond Center.

CANCELED — BUTLER DUPLICATE BRIDGE CLUB, B'nai Abraham Synagogue.

AL-ANON MEETING, 24-hour meeting, 4 p.m. to 4 p.m. Friday, Grace@Calvary Lutheran Church, 123 E. Diamond St.

FRIDAY

CANCELED — NAMI CONNECTIONS, Butler Mental Health Association.

FREE COMMUNITY MEAL, noon to 2 p.m., Connection Center of First United Methodist Church, 232 E. North St. Reservations required, call 724-256-9111.

CANCELED — GENERAL BUTLER VAGABONDS BINGO, Vagabond Center.

CANCELED — REFORMERS UNANIMOUS ADDICTION PROGRAM, Hannahstown Road Baptist Church.

Notices of local club meetings, card parties and dinners should be received by the Focus Department one week in advance of the event. Entries should include the name and phone number of the person providing the information and be sent to: Focus, Butler Eagle, P.O. Box 271, Butler, PA 16003, or focus@butlereagle.com.

BIRTHS

Butler Memorial Hospital

Born Dec. 9:

To Alicia (Cotten) and Jacob Rowley of Karns City, a daughter named Kenzie Marie Rowley at 2:32 p.m. Grandparents are Richard and Susan Cotten of Butler and John and Cindy Rowley of Mill Hall. Great-grandparents are Jeanette Hollinshead of Cleveland, Texas, and Frank and Audrey Dietrich of Renfrew.



Kenzie Marie Rowley

Forms for birth announcements are available at the Butler Eagle, 114 W. Diamond St., P.O. Box 271, Butler, PA 16003, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday; at www.butlereagle.com on the Focus page under Neighbors; or forms will be mailed if a self-addressed, stamped envelope is provided.

For questions about birth submissions, contact the Focus office at 724-282-8000 or focus@butlereagle.com.

Advice

Check out what Dear Abby says daily in the Eagle