

SHOWERED WITH GIFTS

Community blesses Autumn Grove residents with holiday cheer

By **Derek Pyda**
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HARRISVILLE — The season of giving has arrived at Autumn Grove in a big way.

The Transitions Healthcare facility includes 85 residents who have had limited, if any, contact with loved ones since the outbreak of the coronavirus in March.

It's a difficult time of the year for seclusion, but a small gesture has gone a long way to bring smiles to the faces of the residents.

In late November, Mary Ann Hughes, wife of Harrisville Mayor Gary Hughes, posted a message on the sign outside their business, Penn Gold Ice Cream, just across Route 8 from Autumn Grove.

"We just wanted to reach out to the community, let people know that donations of any kind would be greatly appreciated," Mary Ann Hughes said. "We collected the donations here before delivering them to Autumn Grove.

"It's always a good time to help places like that, but especially this year."

The message remained for three weeks and the response has been "overwhelming," according to Hughes.

"Each year, the residents come up with a list, what they want for Christmas," said Connie Stauber, human resource generalist at Autumn Grove. "We've gotten everything on those lists this year, three times over."

Those items include puzzles, books, games, socks, underwear, snacks and personal hygiene items. One group dropped off 75 handmade afghans.

"Someone dropped off a bunch of handmade Christmas ornaments," Stauber said. "This is the most we've seen the community come together to support us."

Dispersing of the gifts began last weekend, but will last through this week.

"We're going to do it in little increments," Stauber said.

Some of the donations came from

known residents or businesses in Harrisville, Slippy Rock and Grove City. Others were left anonymously as a collection box was placed outside of Penn Gold.

"We had people donate money, and others left Christmas cards for the residents to open," said Mary Ann. "The call was definitely answered."

Autumn Grove's staff was not forgotten. Four trays of cookies and hot chocolate were recently delivered for them.

"The staff has been so taxed this year," Stauber said. "Outside of here, they're husbands, wives, mothers and fathers. But they've been handling the residents with more care and love than ever before."

Stauber said she gets emotional just thinking about the effort made by so many.

"Sometimes, I think we get overlooked here," she said. "But with all this, I'm in awe."

"I have tears in my eyes and joy in my heart at the same time."



Autumn Grove staff members, from left, Jordan Walker, Vicky DeHaven, Jennifer McFadden and Lisa Fonner sort through some of the recent donations that will be given to residents.

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