



ANNETTE LEIN staff photographer

Anne Giglia, left, and Florence Vogt, both St. John's Home residents, high five after competing in the St. John's NASCAR wheelchair race Monday. Children from Generations child care decorated the residents' wheelchairs.

'Every minute a blessing'

NICOLE LEE
STAFF WRITER

The wheelchairs of several senior residents at the St. John's Home on Highland Avenue got an upgrade thanks to students from Generations child care.

NASCAR racing was the theme Monday at the senior living facility, part of "On the Move," a program of intergenerational activities planned this week for kids and the elderly.

Other activities for this week include pony and hay wagon rides at Heberle Stables, sailing on Lake Ontario and go-kart rides at The ClubHouse Fun Center.

The children were split into teams of "pit crews," who spruced up wheelchairs with balloons, ribbon, stickers and other decorations.

St. John's program brings together kids, elders

The seniors then individually raced in their wheelchairs from one end of the room to the next.

Balloons bounced off the back of Florence Vogt's wheelchair as she pushed herself across the finish line while her pit crew of children clapped and chanted, "Flo, let's go!"

Vogt's chair also had turquoise-colored butterfly stickers and blue ribbon strung between the arm handles, courtesy of Generations student Tessa O'Leary, 11, of Rochester, and others on the team.

"We've having fun," said Vogt, 82, smiling.

And the interaction

helps kids and seniors get to know each other better, Tessa said.

On the Move "teaches the kids that our elders have a lot to offer," said Dawn Thomas, a St. John's development associate who helped plan the event. "St. John's is a place where people come to grow."

Entering its fourth year, On the Move is entirely funded by Pittsford residents Bob and Mary Hastings. The money covers transportation, food, educational materials and five scholarships for children of St. John's Home staff members to participate in the program.

After touring the Generations child care facility on the St. John's Home campus, the Hastingses wanted a program to engage seniors and children that was both fun and educational.

"It's always good for older people to be around younger children," said Mary Hastings, who was a teacher for 20 years. "It's amazing the questions these kids will ask."

Other NASCAR Day activities included an obstacle course where Generations children pushed their senior teammate around several orange cones, stopping along the way to compete in a bean bag toss.

"Just being with the kids, that's what it's all about," said Anne Giglia, 78. "And every minute has been a blessing." □

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