ROOSEVELT
CARE CENTERS

Local Church Brings Holiday Cheer, Gifts to Elderly

OLD BRIDGE – Waking up to a Christmas tree towering over treasures, neatly wrapped or hidden under piles of tissue paper, is often just a distant memory for many nursing home residents.

Much in part to the efforts a local Catholic churches' parishioners, that wasn't the case for the residents at Roosevelt Care Center at Old Bridge.

It's been a long-standing practice of St. Thomas the Apostol Church in Old Bridge to hold a seasonal drive for the region's elderly, this year collected more than 500 gifts that it divvied out among four area nursing homes. "It's a pretty big undertaking," said Justine Durstewitz, who coordinates the churches' communications. "Part of the church's mission is for the lonely and forgotten. There are people at the nursing homes that no one visits, and they don't get any presents for Christmas. This is our way of giving back to them."

Durstewitz also noted that the giving has been a gift in and of itself with many of the younger parishioners partaking in the yearly collection.

"Our religious education program spearheads it," she said, offering full credit to program Director Debbie Yesis. "In a way, it's actually from the children."

The cheer was difficult to contain Wednesday and Thursday afternoon, as Roosevelt staff hand-delivered St. Thomas' bags, boxes and goodies to some 135 residents.

"As a public nursing home, we open our doors to some of the most vulnerable residents," said Roosevelt Care Center at Old Bridge Administrator Alan Fialka. "There are times we find that our residents have no family or

nearby friends to speak of. This generous gesture from St. Thomas' gave many of those residents something to smile about this year."

For more information on Roosevelt Care Center at Old Bridge, an operation overseen by the Middlesex County Improvement Authority, log onto www.rooseveltcarecenter.com or call 732-360-9830.

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