

Sharing among the generations at Martha & Mary

By **LESLIE KELLY**
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Don't be surprised if next time you drop by Martha & Mary Health and Rehab Center in Poulsbo, you see young children and seniors creating art together. Or sharing a dance. Or even eating ice cream.

It's all a part of the Intergenerational Program at Martha & Mary. The program couples children from the learning and child care centers with seniors who reside at the health care facility.

"The program allows the kids to share with the seniors, and vice versa," said Tracie Walthall, residential life services director with Martha & Mary.

"But what they all learn, is that love and affection can come from anybody," said Berni Booher, program supervisor at Martha & Mary KIDS Child Care Center.

It doesn't matter whether they are sharing an arts and crafts project, enjoying music, or just sitting and sharing a book or magazine, the children and the seniors are interacting.

"The love they give each other has no barriers," said Booher. "When they sing together it is the most beautiful sound."

It was more than 20 years ago when the program began, according to Walthall, who has worked for Martha & Mary for 26 years.

"It was the brainchild of Joanna Carlson, who was then director of children's services," she said. "She worked with Randee Schmidt, the activities director, on creating an intergeneration program that would serve both the children and the residents."

Staff at Martha & Mary were aware that some of their residents didn't have grandchildren, or didn't get to see their grandchildren very often. And they knew, too, that some of the children in their childcare



A resident at Martha & Mary shares time with a student from Martha & Mary's KIDS child care center as part of its intergenerational program. Contributed photo

center didn't get to visit their grandparents much, or maybe didn't even have grandparents.

So the idea of getting those two groups together seemed very appropriate.

Children, up to age 5, come in groups of six to 10 and visit the residents on the short term and long term residential care units and those in the Alzheimer's unit daily.

"Sometimes they'll make crafts including hand-decorated paper bags that are used in the gift shop," said Booher.

Other times the children will sing and dance for the seniors. They take part in "Show and Share," where the children bring special toys to show the seniors and the senior bring special items from their rooms to share with the kids.

On holidays, the children make cards for their senior friends and deliver them room by room. They have holiday parties

and, of course, trick-or-treating.

The children take special care to make birthday cards for the residents, and on each senior's birthday, they deliver the cards and sing "Happy Birthday" to them.

At Thanksgiving, some of the residents take a trip to see where the children attend school and are treated to a Thanksgiving dinner.

There also are some older children who attend the M & M KIDS Before and After School program, who take time to visit with the senior residents.

Currently there are 98 children in the child care center and 30 at the children's learning center. There are 168 seniors who are residents at Martha & Mary.

Sometimes the kids and the seniors share memories, like the time an elderly resident was asked about what kinds of games she played when she was young.

"She told them 'Red Rover,' where

they'd throw a ball over the roof of a house," said Booher. "The kids were like 'Wow you did that?'"

Booher said she's seen some children be timid or reserved at first.

"They aren't sure how to act around older people," she said. "But that goes away and the kids warm right up to them. There's an acceptance of the aging process."

In some cases, the sharing isn't even verbal.

"I saw once where a little girl was sitting with an older lady and she'd look at a page in a magazine and then slide it over to the lady," said Booher. "And then the lady would do the same thing. It was just their way of sharing."

The children also learn what behavior is needed when they go to "grandma and grandpa's house," she said.

As for the seniors, there are some who don't partake in activities at the health center. But they are always there when the kids come to visit, said Walthall. She added that there are those residents who don't want to take part in exercise programs, but they'll participate in the music and movement (creative dance) time with the kids.

"The kids get them to try things," said Booher. "There was this one time when the kids were making (paper) snowflakes with the residents and one lady said 'Oh I can't use scissors.' A child stepped up and said 'I'll help you.'"

"There's just an acceptance between the kids and the residents. They know they can be friends and there are no barriers."

To learn more, call Martha & Mary, 360-779-7500, or go to www.marthandmary.org. Martha & Mary is celebrating its 125th anniversary this year.

Attitude and gratitude: ways to stay positive in 2016

By **LESLI DULLUM-TUTTERROW**
Special to Healthy You

We are immersed in chaos and mayhem both at home and abroad, as exemplified by numerous mass shootings. We have economic uncertainty. Political self-interest often takes precedence over what is best for the majority. And of course, we have our enemies acting as the devil incarnate in the form of ISIS, wreaking havoc all over the world.

It can be said we are living in challenging times. And yet, since the beginning of humanity there has been no shortage of greed, evil, and mayhem, dating back to Adam rolling Eve under the bus, or Jacob stealing Esau's birthright.

None of this chaos is new, rather it has taken on new and more tragic forms.

So how do we avoid becoming fearful, joyless, negative, powerless, and pessimistic in the midst of what can certainly feel like overwhelming personal, local, and global problems?

The answer, I believe, lies within us. Since many of our circumstances are beyond our control, we must learn to develop new habits that will help us cultivate healthy, positive attitudes.

There is an old Native American tale that speaks of a young boy conversing

with his grandfather. The grandfather shares that there is a battle of two wolves living inside each of us; one is good and the other is evil. The little boy inquires as to which one wins. The wise elder replies, "whichever one you feed."

We need to pay attention to which thoughts we feed, as they will form the basis of our feelings, attitudes, and ultimately, our actions.

Since our circumstances encompass both elements we can influence and control, as well as things we cannot, we must choose where to focus our thoughts. Many of us experience a black cloud that ominously hangs over our head because we are so consumed with things we cannot control, we fail to see what we can control.

To be clear, I'm not suggesting we put our head in the sand to the tragedy, chaos, or problems that befall us. I am suggesting, rather, that we identify and take action in areas we have control over, and surrender those we cannot control. This allows us to maintain more positive attitudes and is actually better for our mental, emotional, and physical health.

In other words, becoming more positive is less about our external circum-

stances, and more about how we choose to think about them. This may necessitate retraining our thinking. Learning to focus on what we think and feel internally, rather than over-focusing on what is happening externally, is a process which requires effort and energy to become habit, yet will ultimately yield great rewards.

In addition to developing the habit of tuning in inwardly, another beneficial habit we can cultivate is adopting a heart of gratitude.

Research has shown that people who choose to feed their "gratitude bank," i.e. optimists, are actually happier than those who feed "the other wolf." Gratitude is not something that comes naturally for many of us. Rather, it needs to be practiced. One simple exercise is to purposefully begin every morning by thinking about something you're thankful for. Keeping a daily gratitude journal is another way to form the habit of gratitude.

Many things in life will inevitably remain beyond our control. Ultimately, when we choose to let go of what we cannot control, take action where we ought, and cultivate a heart of gratitude, we will make optimism our new norm. Start the year working on attitude and gratitude

and you'll likely enjoy many positive days in 2016 and beyond.

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