



AFRH-WASHINGTON

AFRH residents receive COVID-19 vaccinations

D.C., Gulfport campuses prioritized by DoD for protection from virus

By Christopher Kelly | AFRH Public Affairs Officer
Photos by Carolyn Haug and Becki L. Zschiedrich

Just days after federal regulators authorized emergency use of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine, AFRH residents, staff and contractors received some of the first inoculations in the United States. At the direction of the Department of Defense (DoD), on Monday, December 21, medical personnel from the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, Md. began administering the vaccines at AFRH-Washington (W), D.C., while medical personnel from Keesler Air Force Base in Biloxi, Miss. did the same at AFRH-Gulfport (G), Miss.

At AFRH-W, Chief Executive Officer Stephen T. Rippe received the first vaccination – and served as a reminder to our community that the inoculation is safe, effective and the right thing to do. “The fact that our residents, staff and contractors are getting vaccinated is a wonderful step forward,” he said. “And we are really thankful to DoD for giving us this support for getting the vaccine. I encourage everyone to get vaccinated.”

At AFRH-Washington, the first vaccinated residents were both World War II veterans. Norma Rambow, 97, said it was a “privilege and an opportunity” to take part, and Rafael Lopez, 93, said it “went real well – I’m glad I got it!”

At AFRH-Gulfport U.S. Air Force veteran Larry McAnally said, “I’m glad to get it. It’s a step forward to getting rid of COVID 19. Once we are all inoculated we’ll be back to a new normal. This virus is something we weren’t ready for or expecting. Now it’s been a year and we are on our way to getting the cure out to the rest of world.”

Gulfport’s RAC Chairman and U.S. Army veteran Art Jones stated, “I think that this vaccine will be the key that opens the door for 2021.”

AFRH Chief Operating Officer James M. Branham also spoke after receiving his inoculation. “It could not come too soon. This is such a thrilling opportunity finally to get our residents and staff vaccinated,” he said. “We now see a light at the end of the tunnel. We are hoping that by March 1, we can actually be opening the doors and get back to business as usual.”

For total protection provided by the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, two doses are required. The second inoculation will take place beginning January 11, 2021. Agency Medical Director Etheldreda Collins, M.D. described the first day as very exciting. “The vaccination campaign kicked off smoothly and efficiently. Hopefully, there’s relief on the horizon,” she said. “This was a massive, coordinated effort with tremendous support from the medical experts at Walter Reed and Keesler.”



AFRH-GULFPORT



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AFRH COMMUNICATOR

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The AFRH Communicator is an authorized publication of the Armed Forces Retirement Home. Residents and employees are encouraged to submit photos, art, news items, and features. Materials will be edited by the *AFRH Communicator* staff for journalistic style and length. The articles included in this publication do not necessarily reflect the opinions or views of the management, staff, or residents of the AFRH.

Serving America's Veterans

AFRH is not just a place to live but a place to live more. Our model retirement communities are designed for residents to maintain an independent lifestyle in an environment designed for safety, comfort and personal enrichment.

Eligibility: Military veterans from each service branch can live at AFRH. The following persons who served as members of the Armed Forces, at least one-half of whose service was not active commissioned service other than as a warrant officer or limited-duty officer, are eligible to become residents of the Retirement Home:

- who are 60 years of age or over; and were discharged or released from service in the Armed Forces under honorable conditions after 20 or more years of active service.
- who are determined under rules prescribed by the Chief Operating Officer to have a service-connected disability incurred in the line of duty in the Armed Forces.
- who served in a war theater during a time of war declared by Congress or were eligible for hostile fire special pay were discharged or released from service in the Armed Forces under honorable conditions; and are determined under rules prescribed by the Chief Operating Officer to be suffering from injuries, disease, or disability.
- who served in a women's component of the Armed Forces before June 12, 1948; and are determined under rules prescribed by the Chief Operating Officer to be eligible for admission because of compelling personal circumstances.

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AFRH-G resident highlight - Dexter Marchman

By Lori Kerns | Librarian



Dexter Marchman was born in 1945 at home in a rural area outside of Villa Rica, Georgia. His grandparents raised him and his siblings, in addition to other family members, in a three-room house that had no indoor plumbing, central air, or heat that was situated on a 40-acre farm. His grandfather took care of their family by farming and caring for animals. He also added to the family's income by working as a root doctor and diviner. There were times when his grandpa had to rely on himself and other black families in their community to come protect his family and their property from the Ku Klux Klan. Thankfully, to Dexter's knowledge, no one was ever harmed when this happened. In 1950, the family moved to the city of Villa Rica into a former funeral home. The basement was converted into a café

where they served sandwiches and soft drinks like Coca-Cola, which was a big deal at that time. Upstairs in the two front rooms of the house, Dexter's grandpa operated his root doctor and tarot reading businesses. While Dexter attended school, Jim Crow laws were still in effect so schools, businesses, etc. were still segregated. In eighth grade he began attending a segregated county school that was more modern with great teachers. He was bussed about sixteen miles to school each day. In the afternoons he would hang out at the café or work unloading trucks or picking cotton until sunset. Wednesday nights and Sunday were devoted to church. Throughout his schooling, education was never stressed at home. However, Dexter still managed to do well enough in school that when he took both the Air Force and Army entrance exams he passed them both. He consulted with his brother who advised him to join the military since there were not many career options in Villa Rica. He was not eighteen after graduating high school so both his parents had to sign giving permission for him to join the United States Air Force.

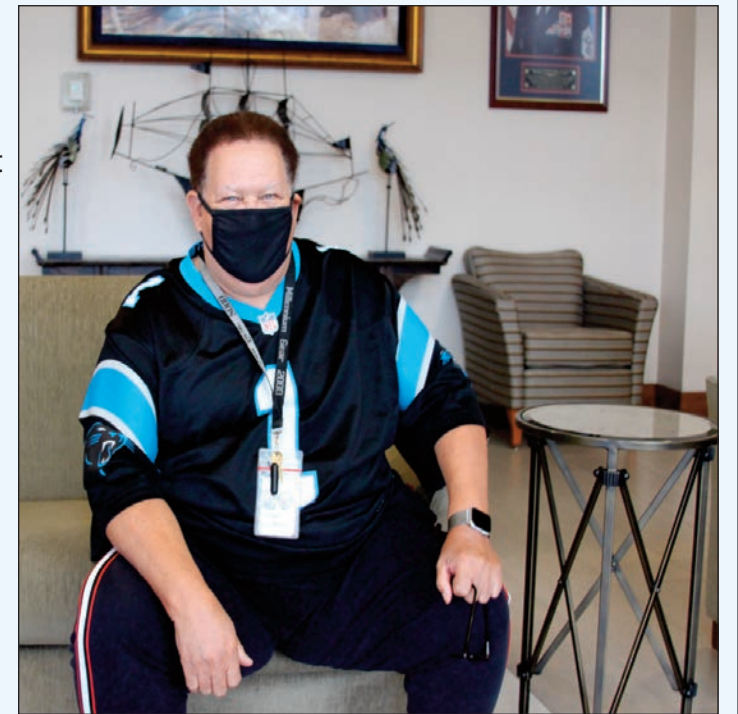
Two days after graduating high school, Dexter left by airplane (his first time flying) for basic training at Lackland AFB, Texas. After basic, he was sent to security police technical school where he learned law enforcement, weapons training, judo, and more. He received his first duty assignment for Whiteman AFB in Missouri but was quickly assigned to guard McConnell AFB's missile sites. Dexter stayed in the field of security for a while until receiving a special duty assignment as a military training instructor (MTI). While working as an MTI, he attended technical school to qualify as a medical administrative specialist so that he could eventually leave the security police field. He was stationed at Sheppard AFB when he met Shirley, his future wife. The two were married after he completed a tour of duty in Korea.

The couple moved around the country for his duty assignments. While working for the command surgeon's office at Andrews AFB, Dexter and Shirley had a baby girl, Lorri.

The family followed Dexter to his next station at Brooks AFB in San Antonio, Texas until the couple decided their marriage was not working and divorced. While assigned at Brooks AFB, he finished a bachelor's degree in business management at Southwest Texas State University then was assigned to the U.S. Air Force Academy Hospital where he supervised the resource management office until his retirement in 1983. He retired as a young senior master sergeant with 20 years of service.

Dexter began looking for jobs back in Villa Rica. He continued his search, while working odd jobs, until he called a friend at Eglin AFB in Fort Walton Beach, Florida to see if there were any open positions there. He became the quality assurance coordinator, in addition to risk manager, at Eglin AFB Hospital. He stayed there for ten years before taking another civil service position in the same field in Bitburg, Germany under the condition that he had return rights to his position at Eglin. He stayed in Germany for three years working and enjoying the local culture before making it back to Eglin. Upon his return, he found that he could not have his original position but was given the position of chief of manpower function. He would later become the chief of the financial and management element, where he worked until his retirement in 2007. After retirement, Dexter built a 3,000 square foot custom home in Crestview, Florida. When the maintenance and upkeep of his house got too hard to maintain on his own, he made the decision to move to AFRH-G.

Dexter has been at AFRH-G since 2019. He enjoys the food and the solitude of his apartment. He also enjoys the friends he has made. AFRH-G is very proud to have such a remarkable and accomplished veteran living among its residents.



Flanders flowers

Story & Photos by Carol Mitchell | Recreation Therapy

AFRH-W resident Sherman Flanders has been keeping busy during the pandemic. Starting this past summer he expressed he would be interested in gardening on the Scott 2 outdoor terrace. Wow, did we have a great garden! Recreation therapy could not have done it without the hard work and dedication of residents Sherman Flanders, Ino Sylman, and other fellow residents. When the tomatoes, corn, squash, cucumbers, roses, and herbs were gone for the season that did not stop Sherman. He is enjoying maintaining an indoor flower garden, miniature clementine and lemon trees along with some outdoor seasonal plants to include radishes, spinach, and garlic. Mr. Flanders truly has a green thumb.



The military life of Henry Phillip Sharum, Jr.

Story & Photos by Dan Ellis | Resident



Henry Phillip Sharum, Jr. was born to Henry and Elizabeth Sharum, Sr. on August 22, 1942 at Ft. Smith, Arkansas. He attended Saint Boniface Catholic School for all grades from kindergarten through eighth grade.

He was enrolled at Subiaco Academy at Subiaco, Arkansas for four and a half years with his last year in the Subiaco Abbey, a Roman Catholic Benedictine monastery, studying for the priesthood. Being the eldest of his siblings, he was the first to assist in his father's trade in remodeling homes. By circumstance, while remodeling the home of a local navy recruiter who was a submariner, Henry's disposition became geared in that seaworthy direction. Henry enlisted in the U.S. Navy on April 19, 1961, indoctrinated at Little Rock, Arkansas and took his boot camp drills in San Diego, California.

With his trade background he was assigned to Machinist's Mate School in Great Lakes, Illinois for 12 weeks before heading for an eight-week session in submarine basics in Groton, Connecticut. He was ready for his first ship, where he spent a year on the submarine USS Diodon. On completion of this duty, he was elevated to E4 and was enrolled in the Nuclear Power School for six months at the Mare Island Naval Shipyard. This was the first U.S. Navy base established on the Pacific Ocean, and is located 25 miles northeast of San Francisco. Henry pursued more nuclear training on the land-based nuclear reactor at the National Reactor Testing Station near Arco, Idaho. The plant was the prototype for the USS Nautilus, the world's first nuclear-powered submarine. After completing six months training on this prototype, he was raised in grade to E-5 and singled out for instructor duty during which time he re-enlisted. After completing two years of instructor duty, he advanced to E-6 and was reassigned to Welding School in San Diego, California for three months before his assignment to sea duty on the USS Snook.

Nearing the end of his second enlistment, he was reviewed for employment as a reactor operator at the fast breeder reactor in Fayetteville, Arkansas, where he remained for two years before reenlisting with the Navy in April 1971. Henry received a four-year assignment with the USS Gurnard submarine, gaining grade of E-7 before being reassigned for instructor duty again in Idaho. In 1975, he applied for warrant officer and was accepted to grade chief warrant officer 2. In Washington, D.C., Admiral Rickover personally interviewed Henry for retention in the nuclear Navy. He was then assigned to the Naval Reactors Representatives office in Charleston, South Carolina, monitoring the overhaul of the nuclear submarines

and ships. Henry was then transferred to Bremerton, Washington, performing the same duties until retirement in June 1983.

While stationed in Idaho, Henry was made aware of the saying among sailors that, "If you got stuck in Idaho for more than six months, you end up getting married!" Henry married Sammy while in Idaho and they had four children, a daughter and three sons, enriching Henry with fourteen grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren.

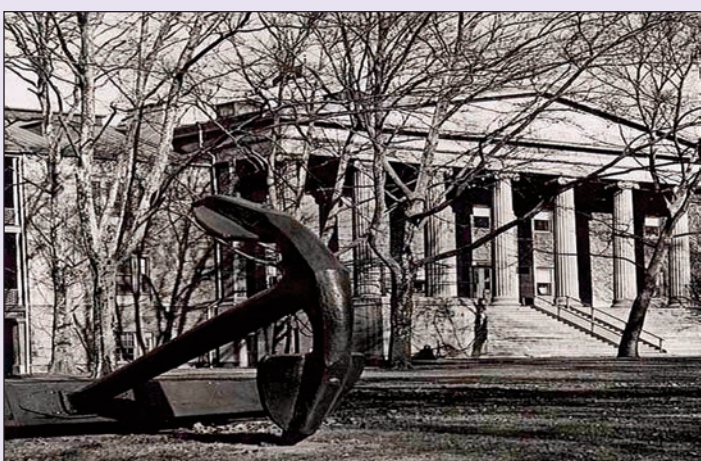
Always planning ahead, Henry interviewed with the Chubb Insurance Company. He was offered a position in the Boiler & Machinery Department as an inspector. The inspector performed boiler and pressure vessel inspections required for state licensing, equipment surveys for insurance purposes, and loss inspections. After a year and half as an inspector, Henry accepted a position as an underwriter. With meritorious work, Henry was offered the Boiler & Machinery Department manager position in San Jose, California and then in Chicago, Illinois. He then became a claims adjuster, evaluating the legitimacy of claims as covered by the Chubb insurance policy. He retired from this firm after 23 years in December 2005.

In his second retirement, he was involved with home remodeling for himself, family, and friends. Henry became aware of the Armed Forces Retirement Home while in the Navy and after his wife had died, he applied for his new retirement abode. Henry always kept true to his faith and participates as a church volunteer here at the Home.



Anchors aweigh

Story & Photos by Dan Ellis | Resident



"Anchors Aweigh" is the fight song of the United States Naval Academy composed in 1906 by Charles A. Zimmermann with lyrics by Alfred Hart Miles. Zimmermann was the bandmaster of the Naval Academy Band and Miles was a Midshipman First Class at the Academy.

The song was first played during the Army-Navy football game of 1906, when Navy won the game 10-0, their first win in the match up since 1900. Later, with a change to some lyric's lines, the song became the United States Navy march song.

In attempting to gather historical data for the AFRH-G anchor, which is displayed at the eastern end of our entrance circle, there are several weighty issues that are yet to be revealed to us. The anchor's weight is unknown and the ship that mastered the anchor is also not known.

The AFRH-G originated from the Naval Home that was located in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The Philadelphia complex was originally built as a hospital in 1827, and expanded to accommodate the Philadelphia Naval School, in addition to serving as a home for retired sailors for the United States Navy from 1834 to 1976.

During the seven years that the campus housed the precursor to the United States Naval Academy, likely, that is when the anchor shown in the photo was placed. A 1956 photograph shows the anchor on the broad lawn in front of the Naval Home's grand building.

The Admiralty Pattern anchor consists of a central shank with a ring or shackle for attaching the rode (the rope, chain, or cable connecting the ship and the anchor). At the other end of the shank there are two arms, carrying the palms (flukes), and the long stock which is affixed below the shackle.

The basic design of the Admiralty anchor remained unchanged for centuries, with the most significant changes being to the overall proportions, and a move from stocks made of teak wood to iron in the late 1830s and early 1840s, which indicates that our anchor was cast prior to 1835.

Our anchor appears to be of wrought iron construction, missing its wooden stock.

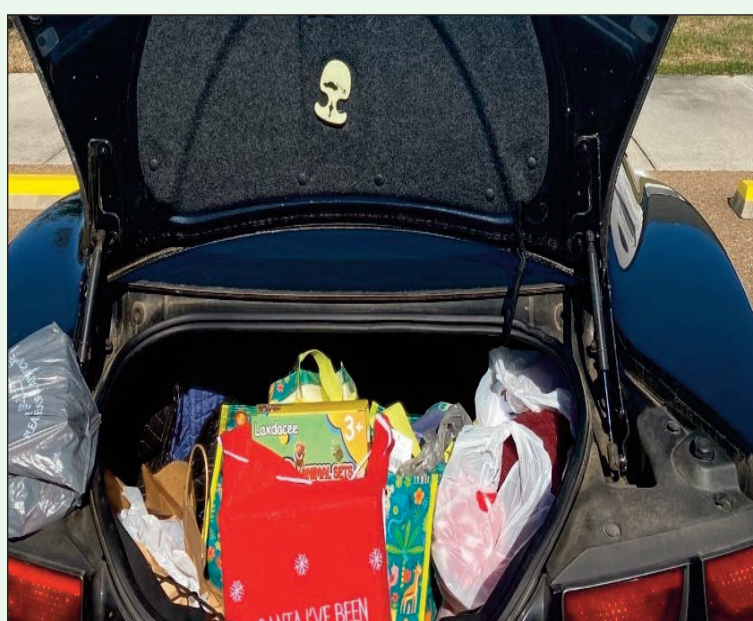


Donations from a distance

Story & Photos by Taylor Chamberlain | Volunteer Coordinator

Typically this time of year is very busy for me with many groups coming in to help deck the halls and bring holiday cheer to the Home. Despite this year being very different for all of us, the calling to spread cheer and warm wishes still remains. This week I've had the pleasure of working with Girl Scout Troop 4626, The Roy Anderson Corporation and a few individual community volunteers, all whom shared the same sentiment - wanting to bring the spirit of the season to AFRH-G. These groups graciously donated items as stocking stuffers for residents in upper levels of care. As we approach Christmas, I'll be working with additional groups from Keesler Air Force Base, who will be adding to the stocking stuffers.

2020 has been anything but normal but I'm so happy that with some collaboration, creativity, and understanding we are able to provide holiday stockings full of goodies for our residents in the upper levels of care.



From the AFRH-W administrator



Once again, another month seems to have come and gone. It is hard to believe we have been fighting COVID-19 for most of 2020. Thanks to our great residents, staff and contractors, the holiday spirit is alive and well. Everywhere I look, there are decorations and lights. At night, the campus is extra beautiful with the lights brightly shining. It really gives a sense of peace, which is what this time of year is all about. The best part is that we can have that peace even though we are living in the middle of a global pandemic and times of political upheaval. We have continued to do robust testing and have been fortunate to have few that tested positive for COVID. As I am writing this, thankfully, we have no positive reports for this week.

The biggest news this month, was our COVID-19 vaccinations. Thanks to the Pentagon leadership, we were given the highest priority for the precious vaccines. We will have all who live and work on campus vaccinated this month with the first dose of vaccine and will complete the second doses in January. We all want to thank the Defense Health Agency (DHA) and the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center staff for their support during this process. We are still receiving great support from the Walter Reed testing unit as well. To add another level of testing, DoD assisted us to purchase a rapid testing system that we are now using in tandem with our lab testing to ensure we have a good sense of our campus health.

While we could not have in-person holiday parties with volunteers this year, they still made us well aware they were thinking of us. We received large donations from various units of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR), nicely wrapped and addressed with resident names. Our Costco Santa and his elves did not forget us this year either with their many wonderful gifts. Friends of the Soldiers Home (FOSH) gave us lovely decorations and had a special concert video made. German Embassy staff brought gift boxes full of German treats and a video to show their appreciation to our

veterans. Our German born residents were very happy to have a taste from home. Because we had to curtail live festivities, we received videos from many others, so the residents could view wonderful shows during the Christmas season. Our resident services team was busy this month making sure we kept the campus festive. We had daily elf spottings and other fun events. A masked Santa rode a most creative sleigh, powered by a motorized wheelchair to present gifts and cards following CDC safety guidelines. And our unsung heroes on the healthcare team, worked diligently caring for all of us as they swabbed and vaccinated in addition to all of the great care they do each day.

I am sure I missed some generous community members; it is hard to capture all of the donations we received, but all were appreciated. As I walk around, I see donated holiday masks on residents and staff that bring a smile to those who see them. As always, I am thankful for our many blessings this year, even though life was not normal, but overall, we have had good health and safety for our residents and staff. I am thankful for each one of them. Here's to a new year in hopes of more normal times. May the blessings of the season be upon all!

Susan Bryhan



AFRH-W Administrator Susan Bryhan receives the COVID-19 vaccine from Employee of the Quarter Tobias Hinnant.

Power of technology

By Carol Mitchell, ADC | Recreation Therapy
Photo by Marine Robbins | Volunteer Coordinator

Special thanks to the DC Daughters of The American Revolution Constitution Chapter and Regent Amanda Murphy for keeping the residents of AFRH-W in their thoughts and hearts! The chapter just provided the healthcare residents with a portable DVD player and radios enabling recreation therapy in further delivering some self-directed social distancing activities. MOVIES, MUSIC, AND FAMILY & FRIENDS DVD VIDEOS!



Sharing the Yuletide

By Christine Baldwin | Librarian
Resident Daniel Gallucci always decorates his room for the holidays. This year he is sharing it with everyone in the Scott Showcase window!



Three weeks before Christmas

By Linda Bailey, Christine Baldwin,
Marla McGuinness and Marine Robbins

Twas three weeks before Christmas and all through the Home

Due to Covid 19, we were feeling alone.

*No groups could be held to keep socially distant,
No volunteers in to be Santa's assistant.*

*But Christmas is Christmas, as well we all know,
We still needed to make sure the holidays glow.*

*Recreation was ready to deck all the halls,
But there would be no tree lighting, no holiday ball.*

*No Defender's Inn, no bowling, not even pool,
No New Year's Eve bash, no party for Yule.*

*It seems so unfair with the work we've been doing,
To keep Covid out and stop viruses brewing.*

*The cleaning crew, mask making and washing of hands,
Distancing, quarantine and no outings to plan,*

*Fred and Bill kept 'a wrapping gifts coming in,
Donations from Costco and D A R to begin,*

*Though the recreation crew was trying, this was getting
them down.*

*More work on top of this, we all had to frown.
All the things that we love to do in December,*

*Find a way for a holiday for us to remember,
Was harder this year with restrictions and such,
It was all getting to be a little too much.*

*Twas two weeks before Christmas, the wear it was
showing,*

*The trees were all up, and lights they were glowing,
The help that we needed came from resident crews,
Many hands make light work when you're fighting the blues.*

*But holiday spirit was what we all need,
It seemed to be lacking, but we couldn't pay heed,
Everyday tasks must be accomplished and ended,
Health checks and papers and e-mails attended...*

*One day all the rooms on the list had to be checked twice
Health checks for all! said that darn fangled device.*

*Press that button three times... It's the devil's machine!
All this work to do, and the rest in between,*

*Every room must be checked, no door left unexplored,
We're bringing you cheer, What'd you think we're here
for?!*

*But not cheer, but just stress, seems the tone of our
voice,
Cheer would be preferred, if we had our choice.*

*Behind one door to a room we all thought was empty,
Marla found a strange toy, a small elf, in room 2020.*

*She carried it down to her desk where it sat,
But the following Monday, it was gone, think of that!*

*Little Elf was discovered far from her desk,
off having fun now the Home's newest guest.*

*And each day was returned, and each night out she
went,*

*found in a new place, enjoying time spent
In all the places that make AFRH a Home,
the library, swimming pool, gym, outdoors it did roam.
But each staff member noticed with each trip of the elf,
they felt better, more cheerful, more like them self.*

*'Twas a week before Christmas, it was now getting
closer,*

*Virtual programs, décor, and panic taking over
When outside the dining hall there grew such an uproar,
I took the elevator down to see what we were in for...*

*Away to the patio, I drew such a glare
Tore open the door and looked out with a stare
When what to my wondering eyes did I laugh,*

*But a miniature car, Santa, and seven recreation staff,
Out he called to his crew, all the ladies you know,
If you don't know who they are, listen hard, listen close,*

*Hey Carol!, Hey Linda! Hey Marla! Christine,
Amanda!, Marine!, Don't forget Annemarie!*

*Then out on the greens, there arose quite a clatter
But we are so deaf that it just didn't matter...*

*That strange man in red, PMD speeding by
"YOU'LL MESS UP THE GRASS" yelled Ron at the guy.
"Hold on, slow down! Where does he think he's going?"*

*But the man zoomed around him, No chance of him
slowing.*

*A shiny red scooter and seven sweet elves
Had arrived to our campus, chuckling to themselves.
Now who would've known that the man with the speed
Would turn out to be none other than Steve...*

*A man with a mission, presents to deliver,
In exchange for this deed, we promised him dinner!
So up to the rooftop the couriers they flew
with a car full of gifts, and Steven Briefs too*

*From building to building, leaving gifts in his wake,
Check his special lists twice to ensure no mistake
Along with his reindeer and all seven elves,
handing out presents, and laughing themselves.*

*It wasn't the gifts that made people smile,
It was the joy, the jingling, the holiday style.
Where we're safer than most, in all kinds of weather,
It's a year to be glad we're all here together.*

*The gifts under the tree, like the Grinch pointed out
Were not all that makes Christmas, we had not a doubt.
It's the people, the cheer, the songs of the season,
That can make you feel good, if you need a reason.*

*That's why recreation does what they do every year
Bringing parties, a beer, a laugh, some good cheer.
With that thought, we'll leave you, it's a lot to recite...*

Happy Christmas to all, and to all a good night!

Notes from the AFRH-W resident advisory committee chairman



While putting my thoughts to paper I just learned the Covid-19 vaccination has been approved and the first batch will be distributed before Christmas. This really puts a new stronger meaning to HAPPY NEW YEAR!

I would like to thank all of our staff for the hard work they put in this last year to help us get through this pandemic, especially the wellness center and security. They have scheduled and made over 3,800 trips transporting residents to their medical appointments. We all need to thank the 67 residents that put in over 8,000 hours of volunteer work this year and the Covid-19 resident volunteers that spent over 1,000 hours cleaning, delivering packages and newspapers, tray assistance and dining hall monitoring. Take a minute and let them know they are very much appreciated. I do wish everyone a Happy New Year!

Fred Layman



On behalf of Washington Headquarter Services
please accept this gift in appreciation for your service

From the AFRH-G administrator



As we wind down the year and head into the holiday season, I think we can agree on a few things:

- 1. 2020 has been a darn hard year.
- 2. We are excited and hopeful for the COVID vaccine and grateful to be at the front of the line.
- 3. We are all looking forward to the hope that 2021 brings.

We all know that words have power. They can harm or they can encourage, heal, and motivate. I looked up a few definitions as I reflect on this year and next year. Each of us will interpret the word and its definition differently but the concept of each word is universal.

The first word that comes to mind is fortitude. It is a noun and is defined as mental and emotional strength in facing difficulty, adversity, danger, or temptation courageously. Facing the challenges that COVID has brought has required great fortitude from all of us.

The next word that comes to mind is grateful. An adjective, its definition is warmly or deeply appreciative of kindness of benefits received; thankful. Thankful seems like a hard word to embrace in a year with restrictions, and challenges. I am thankful for the people around me who inspire me to better, who lift up others, come up with new ideas, and give their best every day. I see that in residents, staff, and family. The world is not perfect, but I am grateful for those who make it better.

Lastly, I think of the word hope. It can be a noun or a verb. As a noun it is the feeling that what is wanted can be had or that events will turn out for the best. As a verb it means to look forward to with desire and reasonable hope. Hope is what helps you get to the place where things begin to improve and life begins to resemble what we want it to be.

So as we end 2020 I say please don't lose the fortitude that has gotten us so far; remember to be grateful and share that with those around you; and embrace the hope for the future. And two more words, Thank You.

God bless,

Jeff Eads

Never fear - USM History, Ed Summer's stocking project, community partners & more - to the rescue!

By Susan Bergman, MT-BC | Recreation Therapy Services
Photos by Becki L. Zschiedrich | Public Affairs

So, what do you do when COVID-19 keeps you from volunteering in person? Never fear, USM history, IL resident Ed Summers stocking project, community partners & more to the rescue! A tradition that began in 2012 and now in its ninth year, the University of Southern Mississippi Phi Alpha Theta (History Honors Society) had to change their yearly plans from an in-person volunteer event of personally decorating healthcare stockings to a virtual Zoom event of holiday greetings and veteran appreciations to ring in the New Year. The group also completed over 65 personalized holiday cards for each healthcare resident. And how do you personalize all the healthcare stockings without a team of college students and professors? Never fear, Ed Summers is here. In order to complete the personalized holiday stockings here at AFRH, Ed Summers took on the project to hand paint each stocking delicately, perfectly, beautifully, and so bright and cheery! The person-centered stockings were secretly filled by Carol Davis and Susan Bergman with the assistance of our many community partners and volunteers through our annual Veteran Stocking Project donations collected by Nathan McKissick (student at Gulfport High School), SrA Davis (Keesler Airman's Council), TSgt Riggleman (335th TRS), Roy Anderson Corps., Deb O'Brien, Kimberly Steiner (Girl Scout Troop #4626), and other anonymous contributors. The stockings were handed out to all healthcare residents on Christmas Day by recreation assistant staff member, Jen Biernacki. Where there is a will, there is a way!

Thanks to USM Phi Alpha Theta, Ed Summers, and our community partners for coming to the rescue to bring holiday cheer even at a distance!



Notes from the AFRH-G Resident Advisory Committee Chairman



"These are the best and worst of times" is a statement that truly is applicable to this month. The COVID virus, the vaccine and nine months of isolation. Those with plenty and those in need. With a loud "humbug" the spirit of Christmas could have been regulated to a back burner. Suddenly things began to change, the deeper we got into the month, the better our outcome. We began looking outside ourselves. Some provided "bikes for kids." Others donated to Christian charities to help those less fortunate in the community. We even had our very own Salvation Army Drive, red kettle and all. Our total gift was \$932.91. To the many who participated with donations and bell ringing, thank you for a highly successful donation drive. We also would like to thank recreation services and AbilityWorks for their outstanding work in providing a holiday atmosphere with decorations throughout the building,

especially in the main lobby and the "tree" reception area. The Department of Defense (DoD) and AFRH headquarters provided gift cards to the residents. The annual Christmas model railroad layout in the dining room was beautifully arranged by Dining Room Supervisor Stephanie Livermore. On December 21 we began receiving the COVID-19 vaccine. How appropriate this was the week of Christmas and on Christmas Day we ate in the dining room for the first time in nine months. The following week we completed the first phase of vaccinations and then it was New Year's Eve. You know, there just might be a Santa Claus after all!

Arthur "Art" W. Jones



RAC Chair Art Jones receives the first round of the COVID-19 vaccine by Employee of the Quarter Amanda Herold, RN on December 20, 2020.



Art Jones volunteers at lunchtime to raise money for the Salvation Army.

AFRH-Washington

Mischievous elf visits AFRH-W

By Marla J. McGuinness | Recreation Specialist

Photos by Carol Mitchell, Marla McGuinness, and Residents

The mischievous elf has invaded AFRH-W. She is having too much fun around the Washington Home. She has been spotted playing elf twister, elf bingo, and making snow angels. She has been quarantined and been caught in the library reading a book. What will tomorrow bring? Every day she moves to different locations and does more things that are mischievous. If a resident is to spot her, they can take an "Elfie" with her and send it to Marla.McGuinness@AFRH.Gov or let a recreation person know where she was found. Their names are added to a grand prize-drawing box, and each day names can be added as she is found. The more they find her, the better their chance of winning the grand prize. Sunday is the elf's day off because she is resting. Only one name per day can be added to the drawing.

She elf says, "HAHA They can't find me!!! I like playing games and hanging around here at the Home. SHHHH the grand prize is a gift basket with lots of goodies inside. I saw Marla putting it together. I overheard her say the drawing is a big GRAND PRIZE with lots of goodies." The drawing was moved up a day because the President gave the recreation staff Christmas Eve off. Hope everyone had a very nice Christmas.



Nutcracker heaven

Story & Photos by Carol Mitchell | Recreation Therapy

A transformation has occurred... the long term care houses of AFRH-W are now holiday Nutcracker heaven! Good will volunteers Jim and Sally Booth have been donating beautiful Nutcrackers to the Home for many years. With over 50+ nutcrackers, what better way to decorate the long term care houses than with beautifully detailed and all completely different nutcrackers. Every resident has a nutcracker on his or her doorway entrance shadow box. The fireplace mantles all have nutcrackers, the windowsills all have nutcrackers, and at the houses, front desk area and leisure lobby area, nutcrackers surround medical clerk Rena Barbour! Recreation therapy looks forward to next year in the hopes that Jim and Sally continue to collect nutcrackers to add to the LTC nutcracker heaven.



Oh Christmas tree

Story & Photo by Steven Briefs, CTRS | Supervisory Recreation Specialist

Patrick Benjamin, our campus ops chief, and his team planted a live fir tree behind the Scott building this year and decorated it for Christmas. It reminded me of that holiday carol that begins:

O Christmas Tree, O Christmas Tree,
Your branches green delight us!
They are green when summer days are bright,
They are green when winter snow is white.
O Christmas Tree, O Christmas Tree,
Your branches green delight us!
O Christmas Tree, O Christmas Tree,
You give us so much pleasure!
How oft at Christmas tide the sight,
O green fir tree, gives us delight!
O Christmas Tree, O Christmas Tree,
You give us so much pleasure!
O Christmas Tree, O Christmas Tree
Forever true your colour.
Your boughs so green in summertime
Stay bravely green in wintertime.
O Christmas Tree, O Christmas Tree
Forever true your colour.
O Christmas Tree, O Christmas Tree
You fill my heart with music.
Reminding me on Christmas Day
To think of you and then be gay.
O Christmas Tree, O Christmas Tree
You fill my heart with music.

I am sure this Christmas tree will bring many happy memories to our residents.



When you can't do what you do, you do what you can

By Linda Bailey, CTRS | Recreation Specialist

Photos by Marine Robbins | Volunteer Coordinator

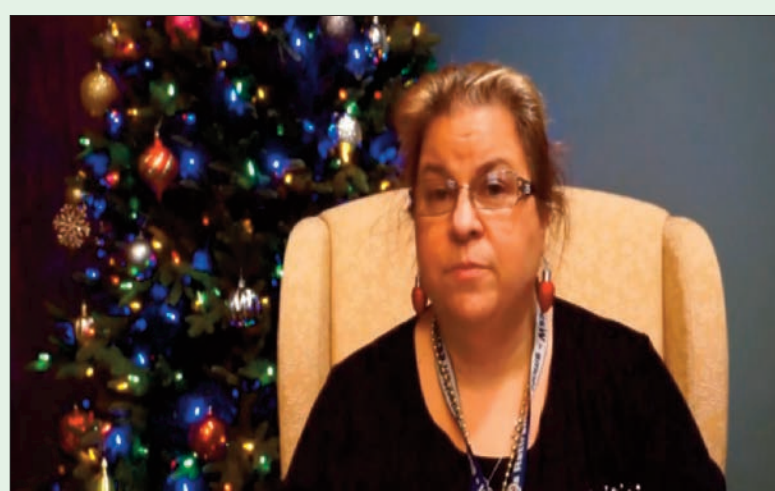
During various times in the past year, besides the restrictions placed on recreation programs put in place to keep everyone safe, there have been times when all group activities have been postponed. The recreation team still needed to reach as many of our residents as possible. But how? The answer lies with Senior TV. Having an in-house channel (Channel 4 on Senior TV) has been a blessing, and until now, an under used resource. In the past Channel 4 had been used primarily for replays of town hall meetings, trip meetings, and occasionally recorded special events. Now, new programming premieres weekly.

For every date on the calendar where special events would have taken place, we provide a virtual program. Our latest was the Holiday Tree Lighting. We try to re-create what we would have had at the usual annual event.

This year's Tree Lighting included a visit from Santa and Mrs. Claus, with Santa's secret arrival to AFRH-W, and Mrs. Claus reading "A Visit from St. Nicholas" with holiday music provided by the U.S. Air Force Band via the DVIDS video website. One pop-up concert video noted that residents from AFRH-W were in the audience. To add a little fun, a reading of a poem about AFRH at Christmastime, in the style of A Visit from St. Nicholas, written by some of the recreation staff was included in the tree lighting video. If you have a Facebook account, you can go to the official AFRH Facebook page and see the videos listed above.

Many of the recreation staff have had to learn how to use the video camera, and I think we have improved as the months have gone by. In addition to the special event programs, you will find video trivia, cooking demos, military band concerts, resident interviews, sermons from Chaplain Goodloe, videos sent in from members of the community and the town hall meetings. In between videos, we show photos taken of the grounds by our residents, holiday humor, and trivia questions. Look for the latest schedule of programming on Channel 2 on Senior TV.

We are all eager to get back to our parties and special events. Until then, check out channel 4 and watch for our upcoming New Year special.



AFRH-W Scott 3 holiday cheer

Story & Photos by Carol Mitchell | Recreation Therapy

The residents and staff of the Scott 3 East house have been feeling the holiday spirit by enjoying creating ornaments and watching and directing the set-up of the "Red Bow" Christmas tree. Dedicated employee Antoinette added some bling to the patriotic pumpkin, sang holiday songs, and enjoyed a good cup of hot chocolate! Everyone was making the best of the holidays in spite of this historically challenging year in 2020.



Billiards and beer

Story & Photo by Marla J McGuinness | Recreation Specialist

AFRH-W hosted an 8-ball tournament with double elimination challenge. We had a billiards and beer tournament. Six players were challenged with an 8-ball double elimination game. Richard Heinrich did not lose one game to his opponents. Richard Heinrich won 1st place, John Morris 2nd place, Bennie Anaya 3rd place, and top contenders were John Baker, Frank Lawrence, and Bob Farris.

Everyone had a chance to enjoy a cold beer or soft drink during the game. Even those who were watching the game enjoyed a very good showing of pool. This month AFRH-W hosted a 9-ball tourney, just to mix it up a bit.



AFRH-Gulfport

COVID Christmas tree at AFRH-G

Story & Photo by Becki L. Zschiedrich | Public Affairs



Residents Doug Carroll and Doris Denton both live in A Tower on the fifth floor. One day Doug said, "Let's do a COVID Christmas tree theme!" After Doug said that Doris took the ball and started running with it. Included as ornaments are masks, gloves, small bottles of hand sanitizer, toilet paper + toilet paper streamers, and cotton snowballs. Doug placed presents under the tree that included hand sanitizer, Clorox wipes, and a food delivery bag as Christmas gifts. Doug also put an X of blue tape, which is where you need to stand six-feet apart.

"This was just supposed to be a humor thing and it worked." Doug said more people commented on the blue tape than the tree. He was concerned about people taking the toilet paper but Doris said it's only one-ply (lol). "Everyone has said they love the tree. I just threw it together in a couple of hours. Boy, it looks pretty good," stated Doris. Doug claims his favorite part of the tree is the toilet paper streamers and he reiterated that Doris did a fantastic job.

Doug and Doris would like to thank Milton Williams for the tree skirt, snowballs and sponges. The Purell bottle was from Ability Works. Sheila Ford helped with the lights for the window. Blue tape was provided by Chris Alexander. Toilet paper was donated by Carol Davis.

When asked what they will do with the supplies on the tree after Christmas Doris said, "Anybody who wants the toilet paper can have it." The COVID tree will stay decorated until they get tired of it. Then, they will start on decorations for a Mardi Gras tree. They encourage all residents and employees to go up to the fifth floor in A Tower to see the tree. Many have said the tree is really great and funny, something we could all use during a pandemic.

It's holiday trickery

Story & Photo by Jen Biernacki | Recreation Therapy Assistant

Last year the AFRH-G received many donated beautiful poinsettias. Gulfport resident Bobby Farnam grabbed one that was not doing so well and brought it to his room. He repotted it, trimmed it and cared for it by bringing it in and out of his balcony for sunlight as the weather determined throughout the next year. The poinsettias are actually grown in the tropics. For optimal growing, the plants require 12 hours of darkness and 12 hours of daylight each day. In order to accomplish the daylight to darkness regimen, Bob tricked the plant by putting a cardboard box over the poinsettia every night at 6:00 PM, then removing the box every morning at 6:00 AM beginning on October 1, 2020. He continued the box ritual for the next month and on December 1, 2020 all his pampering paid off as the most beautiful red flowers blossomed. Just UNBELIEVABLE what he did to actually make a poinsettia blossom! The flowers represent the holiday season creating the warm feelings we all get during this time of year. What a great accomplishment. Thank you Bobby for sharing your story.



The Bergman family bring virtual holiday music to AFRH-G!

By Susan Bergman, MT-BC | Recreation Therapy Services



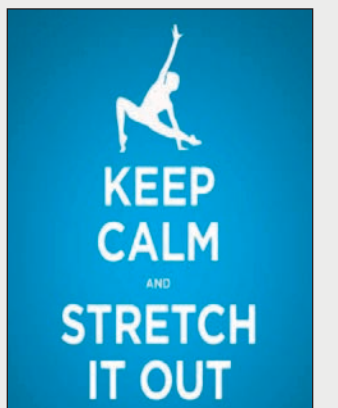
After hearing resident comments such as "Oh, I miss all the holiday music, the Egg Nog Social Sing-a-Long, the music at the Beau Rivage that your family played" with Lynn Meadows WINGS Performing Arts, the Bergman family gathered around their Christmas tree and recorded some holiday favorites. Even though "It is just not the same this year," the holiday songs will be brought to residents throughout the building virtually on AFRH-G Senior Television Channel 4.

With Tim Bergman on 12 string guitar, Ryan Bergman on cello, and Susan Bergman on tin whistle, the holiday concert begins with a medley of "Bring a Torch, Jeannette, Isabella", "O Come, O Come Emmanuel", "Good Christian Men, Rejoice", & "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing." The second medley of songs includes, "Angels We Have Heard on High", "Rondeau", "The First Noel", & "Joy to the World." On small Scottish bagpipes, Susan added "Going Home" & "Amazing Grace" in remembrance of our comrades and those affected by COVID-19 this year. Other holiday favorites on small Scottish bagpipes were added such as a medley of "Good King Wenceslas", "Ding Dong Merrily on High", & "Jingle Bells" followed by "Simple Gifts", "When Irish Eyes are Smiling", & "Auld Lang Syne" to ring in the New Year. A grouping of "Up On the Housetop", "I Saw Three Ships", "We Three Kings of Orient Are", & "Away in a Manger" concluded the bagpipe portion. Then, six Christmas Sing-a-Long songs including "Angels We Have Heard on High", "Deck the Halls", "Jingle Bells", "Rudolph, the Red Nosed Reindeer", "Silent Night" & "We Wish You a Merry Christmas." To round out the selections, cello & tin whistle duets included "Christmas Day in the Morning", "Angels From The Realm of Glory", & "A Caroling We Go." The Bergman trio concluded with "Deck the Halls" & "A Holly Jolly Christmas." From our house to your house, wishing you a Merry Christmas, a Happy Hanukah, Happy Kawanza, Happy Holidays & a very, very Happy New Year!

Stretch it out!

By Carol Davis | Recreation Assistant

We've all experienced it (even though I hate to admit it!): we slow down as we age. Weakening muscles and joints, decreased range of motion and increased pain are just a few examples of the aging process. That's why it is important to have a stretching routine. Stretching improves flexibility and blood circulation and helps relieve stress and muscle soreness. Come join us in the exercise room on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 0900 for a fun Stretching Class. We have to remember to social distance and wear our masks, but we can still have a good time! Feel free to come see me in Room 1209 if you have any questions.



The Hurricane Zeta crew

By Pat Smith | Resident

Photos by Becki L. Zschiedrich | Public Affairs

Every morning and periodically throughout the day I wander out front, sit on the white wall next to the reflection pool and look out towards the water and enjoy the view. The morning after Hurricane Zeta I wandered out to see the debris. Branches, leaves and a few "other" items had found their way to the grounds. As I visited "the wall" on the days following Zeta I gained an appreciation for the crew that handles keeping our grounds maintained. Their efforts to remove the debris were constant throughout the next few weeks. Every day the crew was cutting, mowing, raking and hauling, never missing a step and always showing pride in their work. So, to Carolyn, Marlon, Jerri and Daniel I wish to express my gratitude for your hard work at returning our grounds to the neat, clean campus it always is as you work throughout the year. I hope that I am expressing this for all residents. We appreciate you!

I feel I also need to recognize Kieth (this is the correct spelling of his name), who always does an excellent job maintaining the reflection pool. After Hurricane Zeta the pool was loaded with branches and a thick layer of leaves. Kieth worked diligently for several days removing many things with the pool net, a slow process, so as not to damage the pools liner. He showed a great deal of pride in his efforts also and should be recognized for that. Thank you Kieth! The Hurricane Zeta Crew t-shirts were provided by an anonymous benefactor.



Beat the winter blues

Story by Carol Davis | Recreation Assistant

Roughly ten million Americans suffer from Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) especially in the winter months. Thanks to COVID, that number will likely increase. Quarantine, shorter days, and colder weather may aggravate the symptoms of SAD. But, minor changes in our lives can make a major impact on our disposition. A few ways to help lighten your mood are: 1.) Develop a routine. 2.) Exercise. 3.) Eat a balanced diet. 4.) Get vitamin D.



We will get through this together. Hope is on the horizon! "It might be stormy now, but it can't rain forever."

NSSC hosts virtual veterans day event at Stennis Space Center

By Zack Pohto, Communication Specialist | General Dynamics Information Technology (GDIT)



On November 10 the NASA Shared Services Center (NSSC) hosted the 2nd Annual Veterans Day Appreciation Event. This year was a little different than last year's celebration as it was presented virtually on WebEx. The theme of the event this year was "What It Means to be a Patriot" which tied into the presentation, as several speakers referenced the theme.

Along with the incredible list of speakers this year was a very special guest from the **Armed Forces Retirement Home, PV2 JB Atchison, U.S. Army.**

Even though we were not able to get together this year in person, the NSSC put on a wonderful event that was enjoyable for everyone. A sincere thank you goes out to all that made this virtual event possible. It surely was one that we will never forget!

AFRH-G Crazy Christmas Sweater Day

Story & Photos by Becki L. Zschiedrich | Public Affairs

While no one may want to take the credit for ugly clothes, this tacky kind of holiday cheer has become a widespread festive tradition. On Wednesday, December 16 AFRH-G held Crazy Christmas Sweater Day! Residents and staff pulled out those ugly Christmas sweaters and some got creative and made "COVID" sweaters while we tried to spread some more Christmas cheer during this difficult year.

An ugly/crazy Christmas sweater is any Christmas-themed sweater that could be considered in bad taste, tacky, or gaudy. And in this situation the uglier + tackier the sweater, the better. It's hard to say who invented the first ugly Christmas sweater. As a matter of fact, we can presume that ugly sweaters were designed with the original intention of being fashionable. It's only because of ever-changing fashion trends that sweaters once deemed acceptable are now considered ugly.



Christmas mask pickup

Story & Photo by Dennis Crabtree | Recreation Specialist

So after some thought and pondering about how to change up the masks from Veterans Day and Thanksgiving Day I had to come up with a Christmas Day mask design. Instead of doing the work on figuring out the mask design I decided to contact the Big Man (Santa Claus) himself. Santa had to look at the naughty list to see if recreation services was there. To his surprise recreation services was not there since they are the best recreation services in the federal government. Santa Claus gave it some thought and decided to bring the masks down to AFRH in Gulfport on December 9 to be given out at lunchtime. Residents were seen picking up their Christmas masks and all were happy. There were a total of eight designs.



GULFPORT

Santa surprises Gulfport residents

Story & Photos by *Becki L. Zschiedrich* | Public Affairs

Santa Claus must have been hungry on December 15 because he showed up at lunchtime! What a coincidence because we were having the December Birthday lunch + wine and spirits. He sure did bring a lot of happiness and cheer to our residents and employees. Happy Birthday to all of our residents born in the month of December and thank you Santa for showing up at AFRH-G.

While Santa was at AFRH-G he saw a vibrant community full of veterans getting fed very well + getting wine and spirits if they desired. He noticed the building full of beautiful and colorful Christmas decorations that were everywhere. He saw the NEX stocked with all kinds of goodies. He saw the Barber/Beauty shop open. He saw residents smiling and joking around. Thank you Santa (aka Chris Alexander) for being such a joyful Santa and for making so many residents and employees smile.



WASHINGTON

AFRH-W Christmas sleigh-by

By *Carol Mitchell* | Recreation Therapy

Photos by *Carolyn Haug* | Public Affairs & *Carol Mitchell* | Recreation Therapy

On December 18, Santa "Skinny Steve" Claus came early to visit AFRH-W residents! The morning was sunny, bright, and chilly when Santa in his sleigh and his staff in their reindeer and elf gear converged upon the healthcare houses and independent living floors to spread good cheer and gifts to all.

Wanting to give the residents a fun-filled socially distanced event, an idea evolved... let's have a Santa Sleigh-By! Utilizing the Home's extensive woodshop, I went to our resident certified woodshop manager Ivan Saucier and asked for his expert professional assistance in designing a sleigh. Providing Ivan with a picture, a battery powered chair on loan from our rehab services, wood, nails, screws, and paint, he went to work. Ivan put me to work with painting the sleigh and provided me with his very own smock in the hopes that I would not get paint all over myself... only got a little bit in my hair and on my shoes.

While Ivan and I were working on the sleigh, the Home's elves (Master Elf Bill Jentarra and Senior Elves Fred Layman & Bert Spangler) were busy wrapping the wonderful donated gifts from the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR). DAR has been donating gifts every Christmas for the past 35+ years! The John Alexander Chapter Regent Christina Mumm organizes the 15 Virginia chapters and holiday donation drives each year, enabling residents of all levels of care to receive a gift.

New resident Fred Ebner graciously allowed us to use his miniature portable speaker with the BIG sound to let everyone know we were coming with upbeat holiday tunes. Special shout out to CNA's Anntonette, Valerie, Nakeisha, and all the AFRH-W Nursing staff on Memory Support, Long-term Care, and Assisted Living that helped our healthcare residents by making sure the residents were up in holiday attire and ready to receive Santa!

It was a happy and heartfelt event bringing joy to all residents and staff. Recreation Therapy and Recreation staff... Steve, Annemarie, Carol, Amanda, Linda, Marla, Christine, and Marine want to wish all residents and staff a wonderful 2021 New Year!

