

By Sabrina Garrett

The Wilson Post

The upcoming holiday season is a joyous occasion for most families. However, for many senior citizens faced fin, it can be one of the most trying times of the year. That is why Home Instead Senior Care is teaming up with non-profit agencies and area retailers to sponsor Be a Santa to a Senior. The annual program collects, wraps and delivers gifts to lonely and needy seniors in Hermitage and in Wilson and Smith Counties.

Maggie Julian, owner of the Home Instead Senior Care office serving these areas, said that financial hardships are not the only issue. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, nine percent of U.S. senior age 65 and older are living in poverty and 27 percent are widowed. "Personal needs may become magnified for so many living alone with no one to share their problems," Julian said.

The program kicked off on Friday with the first tree being placed at CedarStone Bank in Lebanon. Other trees will be placed in local businesses featuring the names and gift requests of area seniors. Holiday shoppers are asked to pick up an ornament off special Be a Santa to a Senior Christmas trees, buy items on the list and return them unwrapped to the store, along with the ornament attached.

Julian said the gift requests are usually small, everyday items that most of us take for granted. "They want things like soap, socks, blankets – it is very inexpensive. These are all things that you can pick up at your local drugstore," she said.

Home Instead Senior Care has participated in the program for four years and served 3,500 seniors. In Julian's second year, she said she witnessed just how much Be a Santa to a Senior means to the elderly. "We had an individual and all he wanted was pajamas. We delivered the pajamas and spent probably an hour with him. He ended up dying the next day," she said. "He was buried in those pajamas because it was the best day he had in years. It wasn't about the pajamas – it was the time that we took out of our day. A lot of these individuals don't have anyone that comes to visit them all year."

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Tuesday, November 13, 2012

Participating tree locations in Lebanon are: the Wilson Post, 216 Hartmann Drive; the Lebanon/Wilson Chamber of Commerce and the Crystal Couture Store, on the Lebanon Public Square; US Community Credit Union, CVS Pharmacy, Elmcroft of Lebanon Assisted Living and Memorycare, Southern Manor Living Center, Amedisys, CedarStone Bank and Star Physical Therapy.

Mt. Juliet locations are: US Community Credit Union, CedarStone Bank, Rutland Place and Star Physical Therapy. Trees will also be placed in Old Hickory at Life Care center and at Summit Medical Center in Hermitage.

The Home Instead Senior Care office will then enlist the volunteer help of its staff, senior-care business associates, non-profit workers and others to collect, wrap and distribute the gifts. The community is invited to participate in wrapping on Dec. 13, with gifts to be delivered to seniors later that day.

“Be a Santa to a Senior is another way to say ‘thank you’ to the many seniors who have made such important contributions to our community throughout the years. Helping a needy older adult can bring fulfillment to the giver as well as the receiver – it does make a difference,” Julian said.

For more information go to beasantatoasenior.com or call 553-4297.

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