

FEATURE



Nettie DeFiore and Harriet Miller (standing left to right) celebrate Nick Bruno's birthday during an afternoon picnic behind the 8 Prince St. offices of the Touch of Home program.

Matthew Scott/Staff photographer

Special bond forms at adult facility

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — They look forward to meeting each Tuesday and Thursday for board games, laughter and conversation.

When they don't see each other at A Touch of Home, they keep in-touch frequently by telephone — even though one of them struggles with her speech.

The friendship between Nettie DeFiore and Harriet Miller has served as an inspiration for other adults who attend A Touch of Home, an adult day-care facility.

"I think Harriet and Nettie often set the tone for the group. If they're having a good day, the rest of the group has a good day," said Kari Tracy, program director for A Touch of Home.



Harriet and Nettie share a game of lawn darts, a game that involves both mental and physical skills.

According to Miller, the good heavily outweighs the bad.

"I always have a good day," she stated, prompting a big laugh from DeFiore.

The two have been friends "from the first day we were introduced," Miller recalled. Miller, 85, became a client at A Touch of Home two years ago. DeFiore, 75, has attended A Touch of Home, at 8 Prince St., for four years.

"I call her my little sister," Miller said. Miller has developed a special way of communicating with DeFiore, who has speech difficulties brought on by a stroke she suffered in 1991.

Despite DeFiore's handicap, the two friends are able to sustain meaningful conversations through Miller doing most of the talking.

"All I say to her is 'Say yes or no,'" explained Miller, a parishioner at St. Stanislaus Church on Rochester's northeast side. DeFiore belongs to St. Anthony of Padua Church on the city's west side.

Tracy added that Miller patiently encourages DeFiore to finish her sentences during their twice-a-week gatherings.

A Touch of Home is in its sixth year of operation. In addition to its Prince Street location, A Touch of Home operates branches in Brockport at the Concordia Lutheran Church, 6601 Fourth Section Road; and in Fairport at St. Luke's Epis-

Seniors

MONTHLY FEATURE



copal Church, 77 Country Corner Lane. Each facility is equipped to serve between 10 and 20 people daily.

A Touch of Home is operated by the Rochester-based Episcopal Church Home. It is open to people of all religious denominations, Tracy said.

The service targets seniors who have increasing care needs, but who choose to remain living at home rather than move to a permanent adult facility. The program also offers a break for the seniors' caregivers.

Activities, according to program coordinator Kathy Rains, focus on physical, mental and social stimulation. Events include games, discussion groups, baking, arts and crafts, day trips and exercise sessions.

These forms of socialization for seniors hold an incalculable value, Rains and Tracy noted.

"One of the reasons (A Touch of Home) is so important in their lives is that it gives them something to look forward to," Rains remarked.

"Seniors get so isolated at home. If they're isolated they can become depressed, which can lead to other problems," Tracy added.

Many of the friendships that develop at A Touch of

Home are between people who had never known each other, such as DeFiore and Miller.

"It's quite common to link up with people from the community that they wouldn't be able to meet otherwise," Rains said.

Miller is one person who obviously appreciates the bonds she has formed with staff members and fellow participants.

"It's just like a family. I really love it here," she said. "If I had my way, I'd come every day."

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EDITORS' NOTE: For further information about A Touch of Home, call Kathy Rains at 716/256-1160 (Rochester location), Marlene Kramer at 425-1610 (Fairport) or

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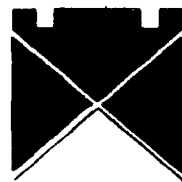
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