



OPERATION SECRET SANTA FOR SENIORS IN NURSING HOMES
(If we put ourselves in their place, what would we want?)

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How were the residents living before they broke their hip, had a stroke, got hooked up to oxygen and were not dependent on strangers to manage their personal health needs? Who were they when they were independently living in their own cozy Home, Sweet Home?

I guess there are a lot of gifts you can give to nursing home residents. From my experience, it seems like the best gifts are the free ones: a smile, a handshake, a hug, a conversation, a visit, playing a game, a kind word, a compliment, and just some old-fashioned human caring and compassion.

Hope is a gift but honestly, I see a lot of older folks who seemed to have given up on that. Given up on expecting family to visit them. Given up on Christmas being like the old days with family gathered around and presents being opened.

But I have an idea that I think could make a difference. Would you like to pack a Holiday Gift shoebox with items that the elderly would like to have? Here's what I was thinking.

Just take a regular size shoebox and wrap the bottom of the shoebox and then the lid with pretty wrapping paper. Wrap each separately because after you do that, you want to fill the box with goodies. (We can't wrap the boxes like a regular present because the activity director has to look over the contents before I pass out the boxes to the residents; choking hazards, restrictive dietary issues.)

Or maybe you would like to fill a stocking, gift bag, or some other type of decorative container.

I know it sounds like something that is overused...but this little act of kindness might improve the life of an elderly person, might give a person HOPE, one senior at a time.

After listening to the stories of the lives of nursing home residents for the past two years, I can say with certainty that most of them have been through hard times. I just wish that their later years could be filled with joy not sadness and loneliness.

And you know what they say about the person that is the Giver. You get more out of doing it. You experience the Giver's High because you have stepped out of yourself and impacted another person's life.

What kind of things would delight an elderly person? (New items only, please!)

Box of all occasion greeting cards, stationery, pens, notepaper, stamps
Something soft to cuddle and hold on to – stuffed animal or small soft blanket
Christmas cards
Large print Bible, magazines or books
Magnifying glass for reading small print
Non-skid socks, slippers
Pretty housecoat, soft pajamas
Lap blanket for wheelchair -bound residents, approximately 24 inch by 30 inch
Shawl to keep warm
Sealed packages of cookies, crackers, gum, hard candies
Chapstick
New *with tags still on* sweaters, slacks and blouses – mostly needed in large sizes
Dry skin body lotion
Things that will liven up a drab room or nightstand table
Pretty little doo-dads for women (that start conversations, get attention, get compliments)
Crossword puzzle books
New magazines: Family Circle, Woman's World, People, Woman's Day, Good Housekeeping
Scented sachets for their drawers
Scented body sprays and powder because everyone wants to smell good when lying in a bed
Sun catchers to brighten up a room and to decorate the window
Sugar-free mints
Liquid soap not bar of soap
Nail polish
And maybe a five dollar bill for things that someone might like to buy at the facility gift shop.

How about a big decorative basket filled with snow globes purchased somewhere inexpensively? Anybody want to volunteer to do that? Wouldn't that be a pretty sight to see? Lots of people shaking their snowy scenes?

So not everyone has visitors? One activity director told me that in her facility, 65 percent do not have any friends or family.

I would really like to make this holiday extra special and give everyone a gift when I visit. So, what do you think? Would you, your family, your co-workers or your neighbors like to help pack some goodies that I will pass out to the residents that I visit?

Thank you very much!

Drop off collection point or mail to:

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