

The Pie Lady

Written by Elizabeth Barrett
Friday, 30 November 2012 14:46 -



Herndon spreads joy with homemade pastries

“Well pie lady, do you have my pie?” asks Jimmy Lavery as he shuffles into the activity room at Hilltop Estates Care Center.

“Apple?” responds Jane Herndon.

“No,” Lavery replies to apple, lemon and coconut.

“Guess again,” he tells Herndon.

“Peach?” she asks.

“Yea, I like peach pie,” Lavery says, settling himself into a chair as the aroma of pumpkin and peach pies baking in an oven waft through the room.

Welcome to pie day at Hilltop.

At around 11 a.m. every Tuesday, Herndon travels to the activity room at the care center and begins to mix and roll out pie crust.

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She then blends filling in a huge mixing bowl and pours it into five waiting crusts before popping the pies into the oven.

At this point, other residents walk or are wheeled to the dining room to eat lunch.

On the way, they smell baking pie.

Herndon takes a seat at the piano in the dining room and starts to play hymns.

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At 3 p.m., Herndon slices the fresh-baked pies in the dining room. Hilltop activities director LaDonna Brock squirts on whipped cream.

Forks ready, residents and their relatives and visitors wait at most of the tables.

Lavery is one of them.

“When Jane makes pies, the floodplains open,” said activities assistant Shellie Rossell. “Yesterday during snack time, only five or six people showed up.”

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Brock said the residents, and others, love Herndon's pies.

"And it promotes socialization with each other and with people from the outside," Brock said.

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Earlier, when Herndon was making pies, Alice Carlson showed up in her wheelchair.

Because of a stroke, Carlson cannot speak words but she's aware of what's going on.

Herndon said her pies entice outside visitors into Hilltop which she welcomes.

"Stop in and visit," she said. "The residents like to hear what's going on out in the world. Don't you Alice?"

Carlson's eyes are bright when she nods in agreement.

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The whole pie-making experience at Hilltop started when Herndon's father-in-law—Arthur Herndon—lived at the care center.

"He loved pumpkin pie so I would make one and bring him a piece," Herndon said.

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But she hated serving him pie without offering some to the other residents in memory care.

“It didn’t take long to figure out that I could do something for everyone,” Herndon said.

So she brought a pie and served it to all eight of the residents in memory care.



Because of state regulations, Herndon was told she couldn’t serve others home-baked goods.

But she learned she could make her pies at Hilltop and serve them to residents.

Herndon baked pumpkin pies until the day she thought residents might want a different kind and added fruit pies to her baking repertoire—cherry, apple, peach and strawberry.

She said she thinks the way older people love pie carries over from their childhoods.

“On the farm, we used to have coffee and pie when the man of the house would come in for something sweet,” Herndon said.

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Herndon grew up on a farm outside of Ansley where her mother taught her how to make pie.

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“She was a good pie maker,” Herndon said.

As far as favorite pie, Herndon is like her father.

“He said he always liked a little hot pie and a little cold pie,” she said with a laugh. “That’s true. I like all kinds but mincemeat.”

Making pies for Hilltop residents each Tuesday is easy for Herndon.

“I like to bake and do things with my hands,” she said.

But easy isn’t the reason she does it.

“It makes me happy,” Herndon said. “It takes so little to please the residents.”

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