



JAVIER MANZANO/ROCKY MOUNTAIN NEWS

Rita Alrozo, 53, a resident at Barth Hotel in Denver's lower downtown, puts on lip gloss. She is a participant in a holiday giving program in which residents of the hotel donate to the Colorado Coalition for the Homeless.

Not much to share, but sharing

People without much are giving to folks with even less this Christmas.

Residents of the Barth Hotel in LoDo are gathering stuff they have outgrown, don't need or want or even pitching in cash to donate to Colorado Coalition for the Homeless.

"It gives people an opportunity to give and others a chance to partake," said Barth resident Bruce Somerville, 54.

Barth residents are mostly low-income themselves. Some have health problems — mental, physical or both. Their apartment complex is run by Senior Housing Options, a nonprofit.

Barth resident Rita Alrozo, 53, said she is happy to participate in the Christmas giving.

"There are so many people here who have been homeless," she said. "I'm just thankful I've never been homeless. I could have been."

Somerville said he heard about the Barth when he was getting shelter at Denver Rescue Mis-



Gary Massaro

Barth residents are mostly low-income themselves.

sion. One of the other guys there told him about it. His sister helped get him in.

Alrozo's doctor suggested she move to the Barth. She said most residents she's talked to are supporting the Coalition gift program.

"People are really poor and are still willing to give," she said. The residents came up with

the idea. They wanted to give back to the various groups that help them out during the year. So they planned a Valentine's Day celebration for them. But some insisted that they wanted to do something for Christmas.

Some have given clothing. Some personal items, like a new toothbrush. Some have given a buck or two.

Residents also pitch in to help each other. They gather periodically to swap clothing.

"The Barth Bunch is family," Alrozo said.

In the lobby, some search and fit pieces of a communal jigsaw puzzle. Some sit in chairs and visit. A few nod off and nap.

Some take a morning exercise class. Some get together to play bingo or Horse Derby, "betting" on one of six plastic horses they move around a board by rolling dice. There are a bunch of activities. As an incentive, participants can get Barth Bucks, which they can redeem at the general store.

Somerville said he usually gets a razor. Alrozo likes powdered sports drink to add to her water.

"I couldn't afford to buy it on my own," she said.

Barth residents will also be receiving. They're going to enjoy a feast next week. Eight or 10 LoDo restaurants are pitching in — the number isn't firmed up yet. Chefs are going to cook a gourmet meal.

"If I go out to eat, it's the McDonald's \$1 menu," Alrozo said. Somerville doesn't get out to eat much, either.

"I'll grab a hot dog here and there on the Mall," he said.

The meal is courtesy of LoDo Cares, a group of businesses helping neighborhood nonprofits. LoDo Cares also sends birthday cards to Barth residents, enclosing a \$5 bill in each.

"That's like a fortune around here," Alrozo said.

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