

Print page

Close
window

Longmont, Colorado
Monday, December 17,
2007

DAILY TIMES CALL

Publish Date: 12/17/2007

Holiday Stars

By Scott Rochat
Longmont Times-Call

LONGMONT — Rehearsals were done. The audience was in place. The cast was nervous, but ready.

All that was left was to get out there and perform the best “Christmas Carol” ever presented by an assisted-living facility.

“We’re amateur theatrics at best, but it’s a lot of fun,” said Cinnamon Park administrator Debbie Setlock, the director of Sunday afternoon’s Christmas show. “If we can show they can still do things like this, even in their 80s or 90s, that’s great. And the families are always impressed that Mom can do something like this.”

Cinnamon Park mostly houses people in their 80s or older who need some help, but not a nursing home. And each year at the holidays, Cinnamon Park tries to do something special: Christmas dinner for the residents and their families, say, or a holiday sing-along.

This year, everyone decided to take it one step further. The Christmas show would include an actual play, a 10-minute modern-day adaptation of Charles Dickens’ “A Christmas Carol.”

As personal care provider Charlotte Lindquist remembered it, some casting decisions came more easily than others.

“We were sitting around the table and trying to decide who was going to be what, and I said ‘Who’s going to be Scrooge?’” she said. “And everyone suddenly turned and looked at me.”

That’s Smooge, actually — Cruela Smooge, a bitter waitress who has spent most of her life scheming for her next dollar, and doesn’t mind taking out her frustrations on her customers.

“I hope I don’t have to remind you about our policy of tipping for parties of six or more,” Cruela tells a party of Cinnamon Park residents out for a meal. “You may be seniors, but I still have to pay my bills, y’know.”

“It’s all I can do to keep from saying ‘Kiss my grits,’” Lindquist said, referring to a sassy waitress in the old TV sitcom “Alice.”

Rehearsals spanned about a week and a half, lasting an hour and a day. For resident Raymond Johnson, the ghost of Christmas future, the part came naturally — his phantasmal character has no lines but a bone-chilling glare and an out-thrust finger.

“I used to be too shy — I can’t believe myself now,” said Johnson, a three-year resident of Cinnamon Park. “I said, ‘Gee, you should have given me some lines. I could really come out with a mean streak.’”

Ah, well. Meanness wouldn’t have lasted Sunday anyway. Not in the same room with Christmas carols, Hanukkah demonstrations, and quotes of love and peace from sources ranging from Mother Teresa to Jimi Hendrix.

And of course, the story of the reforming Smooge, which couldn’t end on any note except “God bless us, every one.”



Rick Weingarten performs holiday songs during the Cinnamon Park Family Holiday Program on Sunday in Longmont. **Times-Call/Lewis Geyer**