

# Volunteers give, receive cheer at Holiday Social

*Kelly Schloesser, Army War College Public Affairs Office*

## Volunteers give, receive holiday cheer at Senior Citizens' Holiday Social

*An Army War College student and his guest enjoy the holiday social in this file photo. This years event will be held Dec. 10 and 11. Public Affairs photo.*



Oct. 29, 2008 -- 'Thank you and all the people involved in the Senior Citizens' Holiday Tea.

My elderly mother attended your holiday

program and has been glowing ever since. The program truly touched her heart, I hope you and all your helpers know how important and appreciated all your efforts are.'

The sentiment echoed in this 2007 letter is a reminder that the holiday season is not complete without hosting the annual Senior Citizens' Holiday Social. On December 10 and 11, students, spouses, faculty, and staff can volunteer to bring holiday cheer and touch the hearts of local senior citizens.

"Everyone who participates has a positive and fulfilling experience because we all know that we really did make a difference in someone's life," said Lt. Col. Gerald Goodfellow, a faculty member and student participant last year.

This event has cheered both senior citizens and the thousands of Carlisle Barracks volunteers who have kept the tradition alive for 52 years. Each year, Carlisle Barracks hosts nearly 300 seniors from surrounding nursing homes for an event filled with holiday entertainment, visits from Santa Clause and Elvis, and of course, thousands of cookies.

Past participants have called it "the most memorable event of the year," and the "most fulfilling

experience" of their time here.

"For many of these seniors this is their only time out of the nursing home the entire year. This is their Christmas celebration," said Goodfellow. "You realize then that those couple hours you give them is the greatest gift you could give."

Volunteer veterans said that this is what the holidays are all about.

"You really get a better feeling for the holidays because you are directly making someone's life better," said retired Col. Bill Lord, a volunteer since 1991. Though the event is packed full of cookies, Christmas trees, and holiday tunes, participants have said that it is the act of giving that truly places people in the holiday season.

"I had a gentleman who didn't say a word the entire time and then suddenly he had the biggest smile on his face. And then I realized it's because Santa Clause just walked into the room," Lord said of his first time serving as an escort along with his wife 17 years ago.

It is moments like this that have Col. Mark Eshelman, a nursing home coordinator for several years, calling himself a "true believer" in the event.

"I make an effort to support it every year. It's a tremendous payoff and very rewarding," he said.

Those planning the event have said that this Holiday Social has been a success in the past because of the outpouring of volunteers from both the college and the barracks.

"This event doesn't exist without volunteers," said Lt. Col. Pat Sweeney, organizer of the social.

Whether you have time to escort a senior to the party, attend to them as they get in and out of cars, serenade them with a guitar, or simply bake cookies for them, the Holiday Social is looking for help.

The 53rd Annual Senior Citizens' Holiday Social will be held on December 10 and 11 at the Letort View Community Center.

For more information and to sign up to volunteer one or both days visit the Carlisle Barracks Garrison Web-site at <http://carlislebarracks.carlisle.army.mil/>

U.S. Army War College Archives - News Article - 01 November 2008