

Bridging the generations

Children from St. John's bring hugs and smiles to Trinity Oaks



Since October of 2018, Trinity Oaks health and rehab has been partnering with St. John's Child Development Center in Salisbury on an intergenerational program called EngAGE Together.

Led by Deana Burris, Trinity Oaks life enrichment director, the program helps health and rehab residents enjoy activities with the children of St. John's. The inspiration for the program came last September, when the "Sugar and Spice" class at St. John's visited Trinity Oaks and took a tour of the health and rehab facility, with staff providing education about nursing homes and the aging process. During the tour, children stopped and visited with residents.

The residents and the children both enjoyed the experience, with children hugging and laughing with residents, as



well as engaging in an energetic game of noodleball.

Since then, thanks to the EngAGE Together program, the children of St. John's have visited Trinity Oaks health and rehab numerous times, joining residents in making crafts, painting pumpkins, making hats, listening to live music, dancing, singing songs, and creating music together.

er. Residents seem to enjoy the goodbye hugs from the children as much as any of the official activities.

Trinity Oaks residents have also traveled to St. John's several times to visit the "Little Lambs" class of infants, where they hold and rock the babies.

Both children and residents cherish the warm bonds formed during the visits.

"The impact of the EngAGE Together program has on the residents is phenomenal," Burris said. Residents who tend not to participate in activities are eager to attend and

enjoy the EngAGE Together program, she says. After interacting with the youngsters, residents are often more cheerful and alert and likely to reminisce fondly about the visit.

EngAGE Together is supported by an enhancement grant from the North Carolina Culture Change Coalition.

Trinity Oaks independent living has also forged a similar relationship with the children of St. John's through an activities program called "Little Branches, Deep Roots," supported financially by St. John's.