

EXPLORING NEW WORLDS

TAKING ACTIVITIES TO THE NEXT LEVEL

Trips to the Des Moines Botanical Center, mad scientists and drive-through doughnuts are just a few of the activities CNAs, RNs, volunteers and aides put together for their residents during National Nursing Home Week.

An experiment in the ages

The afternoon was filled with explosions, scientific wonders and amazement from all members of the audience. The Mad Science of Central Iowa program visited the St. Francis Manor in Grinnell during National Nursing Home week for residents and area school children.

"I saw the Mad Science program at KidsFest in Des Moines and I saw all ages of people were really enjoying the show and getting into it," said Dion Schrack, SFM administrator. "I thought our residents would really like it as well."

In conjunction with the Grinnell public schools and some area homeschoolers, SFM brought in the Mad Science program from Des Moines. About 20 residents and around 60 children enjoyed learning about science in a hands-on setting.

Sharry McDonald, fifth-grade science teacher at Grinnell, saw the day as a great way to bring together the youth and the elderly. "We've really been working on community," McDonald said.



Dr. Blast unrolls toilet paper over the audience with the help of her leaf blower and some air pressure. Check out more Mad Science at www.madscience.org/centraliowa. Photo/Laura Dillavou

Aside from a day of bonding, the Mad Science program was something completely new to SFM. It was, in fact, the very first nursing home performance given by the Mad Scientists.

"We do everything from company picnics to birthday parties, classroom experiments and now nursing homes," said Jim Birkel, president, owner and chief scientist of Mad Science. "This is our first intergenerational show, but anytime you can do something like this, it's fun."

"I've never seen anything like this," said Ruth Gause, SFM resident. "The toilet paper experiment was something else."

For Birkel and his staff, the opportunity to bring science, youth, education and the new element of elderly people, presented a fun and rewarding day.

"To combine this all at a nursing home is really great," Birkel said.

"My staff greatly appreciated the atmosphere created by SFM's administration, staff and the Grinnell school officials."

At the end of the day, students, residents and staff left with a better understanding of science and a better understanding of each other. One might say it is the fine balance of social elements, education and experimentation.

"The residents and children really enjoyed this program," Schrack said. "I feel any program that involves kids and the elderly is a win/win situation."

Blooming with activity

Even though the flowers hadn't peaked out of the ground and the leaves still weren't budding, residents and staff of the

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