

# WYCKOFF SUBURBAN NEWS

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Anthony and Ryan assist in the junior volunteer program at Christian Health Care Center.

## Program puts teens on the job - helping their elders

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**WYCKOFF** - Dominic Lim strode across the wide corridor of the Christian Health Care Center, passing several residents who were watching "The View." He waved in recognition as his volunteer coordinator, Dot Faasse, greeted him in the entrance of the central dining room.

"That was quite a game of pok-

er you were playing yesterday," Faasse said.

"Yeah, we were having a good time," Dominic, 15, said, noting that all the winnings were doled out in spoons.

Dominic is among more than 40 volunteers ranging in age from 13 to 17 who have been helping patients on a daily basis throughout the summer.

The program, which runs from July through August, has been

going strong for more than 20 years and each year, said Melanie Anthony, the center's marketing director, "more and more youth are eager to sign up."

"This program is so great because teens can't work at a young age," Faasse said. "Therefore, they are able to use their time doing community service which they can also receive

SEE TEENS, PAGE 2

## TEENS

FROM PAGE 1

school credit for or recognition at their churches.

"The program is such a success," she said, "that many junior volunteers look to return the following summer."

Teens are able to volunteer in different areas throughout the center, including the Child Day Care Center patronized by members of the staff.

In fact, some of the junior volunteers participated in that very day care program.

Chelsea Steinberg, 16, for example. Now in her second year volunteering with the junior program, she gets a ride from Monroe, N.Y., every day with her mom, who works at the center.

Fresh from a summer trip to China where she applied her knowledge of Mandarin, Chelsea said her favorite part of the job is talking to residents.

"They tell me about movies they like and a lot of times, their families — things like that," she said.

And you never know when a poker game, with spoons serving as currency, might break out.

Volunteers help residents during activities such as art, most recently a project creating tulip vases out of clay, and music classes as well as at special events.

Chelsea's 17-year-old sister Cara volunteers in the program, as well, and along with Kenny Baez, 13, says her favorite part is working with the children in day care.



MARION BROWN/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Madison Dabakian serving cupcakes.

"They're really cute," Kenny said.

Residents who need help getting around rely on the volunteers the most, especially on nice days.

"Oh, look, a deer!" Dominic said, pointing toward the woods from the patio. "My mom told me there was a bear sighting, too."

Dominic is in his second year in the program, as well. He said spending time with his grandfather in a nursing home before he died encouraged him to take advantage of such an opportunity. And while he needed only 15 hours to meet his church community service obligations, he had put in "many, many" more, according to Faasse.

"Even during the school year, when they have days off," Faasse said, "many of the kids come in to help out for the day."

Cheyenne Quijano, 13, said her

favorite part of working at the center is the "friendliness."

"Everyone is so nice," she said.

Among those on the receiving end of the volunteerism, Esther Beekman, 84, a lifelong resident of Midland Park who has lived at Christian Health Care Center for the last seven months, said it is nice seeing kids doing productive things with their time.

"This is such a wholesome thing for them to do," she said. "And we like seeing their young faces around, even if we don't always necessarily talk to them."

Ryan Lane, 14, takes his work as a volunteer seriously and said he treats it like a job.

"But the best part," he said, "is that you're getting to help out people who need you."

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