

Miller’s spreading Christmas cheer

By Sean Douglas

While the fifth annual Breakfast with Santa event, sponsored and put on by Miller’s Merry Manor featured a bit of a twist this year due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, it still accomplished its goal — providing Christmas cheer and delicious treats to families in the Marion and surrounding Grant County communities.

The Breakfast with Santa idea came to fruition five years ago almost out of necessity. With the gutting of the Five Points Mall over the last 10 years, there was no place for the children of Marion to take part in those long-held Christmas traditions during the holiday season — taking pictures with and discussing their Christmas list with Santa.

To counteract this, Miller’s Merry Manor’s Admissions-Marketing Director Lisa Evans partnered with both the city of Marion and Dean Foods to create the event, setting aside one Saturday every December for families to enjoy a meal with one another, fellowship with others, and most importantly,



interact with Santa.

In a normal year, the event consists of a sit-down breakfast, and then, children are able to sit on Santa’s lap and tell him what they want for Christmas while parents snag a photo or two.

However, due to the surging cases of COVID-19 throughout Grant County, Evans and her team knew changes had to be made.

While events like the annual Christmas parade were cancelled, the Parks

and Recreation Department made it known to Evans that they wanted Breakfast with Santa to be held as originally scheduled.

After some brainstorming sessions and discussion, Evans settled on the idea of Drive-Thru Donuts with Santa. Essentially, families would pull up to a designated location in their vehicles and Evans, her team, and Santa would hand out donuts and other items through open windows on trays. Further, it was envisioned that once a



Photo on left: A member of Miller’s Merry Manor handed out donuts and other goodies on Saturday morning at Matter Park. Photo above: One youngster made sure to still tell Santa what he wants for Christmas. **Photos by Sean Douglas**

vehicle pulled away, all trays would be sanitized, and the process would repeat.

Leading up to the event, everyone involved was tested for COVID-19 twice a week, allowing them to serve the citizens of Marion freed from the worry that they could potentially spread the COVID-19 virus to anyone who stopped by.

“We got creative with a way that we could bring some cheer to the town safely,” Evans said.

“Safety was our number one priority.”

Over the course of nearly two hours on Saturday morning at the Garden House at Matter Park, Evans and her staff handed out various types of donuts, including glazed, cinnamon, and sugar, milk, and other holiday items such as stockings, candy canes, and even hand sanitizer.

While the children were unable to sit on Santa’s lap this year, Santa was still able to provide Christmas

cheer. With every subsequent family-filled car, the children’s eyes lit up as Santa handed them their donuts and stockings. Ultimately, the event provided children and their families, a small shred of normalcy in what has proven to be a tumultuous year.

“It gives us an opportunity to spread some holiday cheer to a fearful community,” Evans said. “If we can spread some joy in a safe way, I think it’s the most important event of the year.”


Community Foundation awarded \$100,000 grant

The Community Foundation of Grant County has received a \$100,000 grant as part of the seventh phase of Lilly Endowment Inc.’s Giving Indiana Funds for

Tomorrow (GIFT VII) community foundation initiative. This unrestricted grant can be used for any charitable purposes the community foundation chooses.

As part of this GIFT VII grant opportunity, each community foundation that achieved 100 percent board member giving during the period from January 1, 2019, through June 30, 2020, was eligible to receive an unrestricted grant of \$100,000 per county served. This grant is in recognition of the important role that the community foundation’s board of directors plays both in leading the foundation and serving

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