



December 21 2006

It's a cracker of a charity drive

Kind-hearted staff at Coventry's largest landlord got Christmas all wrapped up this week by helping out a number of local charities.

Employees at Whitefriars Housing Group have been wrapping parcels, collecting food, singing carols and decorating trees to help some of the city's most vulnerable residents.

One group set to benefit is residents at Norton House, Bird Street, Coventry. The home, established more than 25 years ago, helps homeless and lonely people cope with the pressures of life. It offers an open door to provide shelter, comfort and warmth to between 50 and 80 people a day.

A gift collection, food, and Sainsbury's vouchers, donated by Whitefriars' employees, were handed over on December 19.

Elsewhere in the city, staff were given permission to leave their desks for the afternoon to help Coventry City Mission wrap up thousands of presents donated by generous local shoppers and Whitefriars employees. Eight Santa's helpers got into the festive spirit by giving up time to wrap the goodies which are destined for some of the poorest countries in the world.

Staff in Whitefriars' independent living team are also giving up their Christmas Eve to put on a Christmas dinner for a number of residents in William Batchelor House who would otherwise spend Christmas alone.

A number of the block's most vulnerable or elderly residents have paid a minimal charge to cover the cost of food which will then be cooked by Whitefriars volunteers for free.

Other Christmas charity work includes organising a carol concert, a festive quiz and decorating a large tree - donated by the Chace Hotel - at the Chace Centre. The lights on the tree were provided by Willo Electrical.

The 200 residents at the Chace Centre, in Chace Avenue, Willenhall enjoyed carols around the tree thanks to the choir and congregation at St John the Divine Church, Robin Hood Road, Willenhall.

Howard Farrand, chief executive of Whitefriars, said: "Whitefriars is committed to helping local charities and community groups throughout the year, but it is nice to make a concentrated effort at Christmas.

"As a large, not-for-profit organisation and one of the biggest employers in Coventry, we recognise the valuable role we have to play in ensuring all residents can share in Coventry's success.

"We fulfill this role through our work with partners to narrow the poverty gap between the most disadvantaged areas of Coventry and the rest of the city, but this time of year also offers us the chance to chose a few local charities which impact on tenants' lives and are close to staff's hearts."

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