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Seniors to receive Christmas-themed care packages through Adopt a Grandparent

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LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

An Orangeville woman wants to make sure seniors in Dufferin and Caledon are remembered during the holidays, so she set up a gift-giving program to help make it happen.

Enter Marcia Amaral's 4th Annual Adopt a Grandparent Program25.

She saw a need in the community and stepped up after being inspired by the company she works for, Mary Kay.

?Mary Kay has really opened my heart and mind to the community,? she said. ?I love my home and the community, and I saw a need for a program like this. It's really a program of the heart.?

Amaral delivers Christmas-themed care packages to seniors in long-term care homes, including a pair of socks and a Mint Bliss energizing foot and leg lotion. The items in the care packages are sourced through donations, and she gifts them to seniors in need of holiday cheer. Amaral hopes the care packages' products help seniors, especially in winter, when the air gets drier.

While she said her idea is not unique, and similar initiatives exist, it's her personal touch that sets hers apart.

Amaral insists on personally delivering the gift packages of lotions and socks, spending time with the seniors she visits.

This year, Avalon Care Centre in Orangeville, Sorrento Retirement Residence in Bolton, and

Dufferin Oaks Long Term Care in Shelburne are receiving the gift packages.

?It's not so much about the items themselves, I feel,? Amaral said. ?It's the measure of the fact that they feel like someone is thinking of them, that there's something waiting for them during the holidays.?

?That's why I do what I do,? she added.

Amaral works closely with the seniors' homes she visits, catering her visits with the help of staff. She said that her visits are to treat the seniors.

?Most, if not all, times, I reach out to the coordinators, and we work out what it is that I'll be doing,? she said. ?Sometimes I might have a table where seniors can come in, and I'll share my products with them. A big part of my service is going [into the long-term care homes].?

Amaral said that the reception is always positive. Some seniors she's visited weren't expecting any gifts for the holidays, and were happily surprised and shocked when she visited them.

?For the most part, they are very surprised,? she said. ?They're always welcoming and deeply affected by it. They usually put on the socks right there. Then I'll sit with them and have a coffee, and ask them about their day. It's my contribution to them. These seniors have stories, so it's a wonderful experience.?

Amaral said that the seniors appreciate the human connection the most. There's a big difference between packages arriving by mail and a personal visit with a smile and a gift in hand. Someone who's willing to sit with them and make them feel heard and valued.

?I have found that when I get into these homes, men and women are looking for these products,? she said. ?They're looking for something hydrating for their skin, so I can help there.?

Amaral is encouraging anyone interested in helping her initiative to contact her and donate. She can be reached by phone at 416-809-0914.

Amaral will also be a vendor at Hollyfest 2025, which takes place at the Orangeville Fairgrounds on Nov. 22 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Nov. 23 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.