

Breath of life fills new care center

Moving day deemed a success

By Kathy Tandberg

Saturday, Jan. 26, was a big day for the Knife River Care Center. After years of planning, fundraising and construction, it was finally moving day to the new facility.

The weather was perfect as it topped 40 degrees with a light, spring-like breeze. But it wasn't weather alone that made it a perfect day for moving. It couldn't have happened without the more than 150 volunteers who appeared at the doors of both the old and new facilities that morning.

By 7 p.m., within 12 hours, almost everything was moved to the new facility, the volunteers had left and the residents spent their first night in their new home.

Administrator Neil Ostlie said the day couldn't have been better. By 7 a.m. Saturday, Ostlie saw at least 15 pickup trucks with trailers pulled up and waiting in front of the old nursing home and the line-up continued around the block.

"It just went smooth. I just can't believe the response from the whole county and the surrounding area. It was truly amazing," Ostlie said.

Administrative Assistant Alice Grinsteinner said the first group of residents arrived at the new home at 8 a.m. Employees, volunteers and many family members were standing by at the front doors waiting to greet and assist them to their new rooms.

Grinsteinner said everything went better than planned and things were ahead of schedule.

"We had expected to have all the residents moved in by 6 that night, but everyone was moved in by 3 p.m. It was thanks to all the wonderful volunteers," Grinsteinner said.

Volunteers also provided meals for all the workers: WRT provided breakfast, Hazen Chamber provided lunch and Beulah Chamber provided supper.

Families of residents had been moving what they could for the past week, but much, including the beds, were the last to go.

While residents were being loaded into vans at the back door of the old facility, volunteers loaded beds out the front door. Another group of volunteers unloaded the beds at the new facility and ran them through an assembly line of cleaning before the beds were rolled into the new rooms.

By the time the residents arrived at their rooms, their bed was set up, made and ready.

Saturday, amidst the controlled chaos that goes with any move, an excited hum seemed to fill the new space as it came alive for the first time.

Besides the many volunteers, the new care center was filled with family members hanging pictures, filling book shelves, putting clothing and toiletries away.

Some came from near and others as far away as Fairfax, Va., the home of Wynne Tisdal, a Beulah native and daughter of Herb and Catherine Scherbinske. Tysdal was in awe of the moving machine that was in motion. She was up bright and early to help her parents move that morning.

"When I came around the corner and saw all those pickups lined up it was just incredible," Tysdal said.

"It's incredible here, the people just hustling around the halls. Only here at home could this happen. In the city this would all have been hired, done and finished but this is all about caring. You could sense that right away last year when mom and dad moved in."

Esther Eustice came from Hazen to help her mother, Helen Karges, with the move a week ago and was also on-hand for the final move Saturday.

When asked what she thought of the new care center, Helen replied, "It's better than I thought it would be."

"That's saying it's like 100 percent better," Eustice explained with a laugh.

Ostlie has heard many such comments since the beginning of the move. On Saturday he heard of one resident who thanked his family for "buying me a new house."

Ostlie said this week has been a busy one as employees are still trying to find their way through all the boxes, looking for little things, like straws and garbage bags.

“This week we’re just trying to get our breath. It’ll still take us a couple months to work all the glitches out but we’ll get there. But we can’t thank our many volunteers enough. There are no words,” Ostlie said.