

Festival of Trees lightens hearts

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By Patricia Villers, Register Staff

It will begin to look a lot like Christmas at the United Methodist Homes this weekend as Valley Interfaith Caregivers at TEAM hosts its sixth annual Festival of Trees.

Valley Interfaith Caregivers is now affiliated with Training, Education and Manpower Inc., the Derby-based community action agency. All proceeds will benefit services provided by the agency.

The festival will be held from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. today and from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Sunday.

This year, the festival has been relocated to the Wesley Village and Crosby Commons campuses on Long Hill Avenue, Shelton.

Roger J. Spinelli of Shelton is chairman of the event. This week he is decorating Christmas trees that have been donated by area businesses. Also, representatives of more than 30 nonprofit organizations are decorating trees they have donated.

Spinelli said, "The Festival of Trees has become a special holiday tradition in the Valley. Last year, over 30 decorated trees, each with its own unique theme, were donated for the raffle. This event is the only major fundraiser benefiting the program and we are very appreciative to Wesley Village for hosting the event this year."

He said this year there are 21 trees in the festival, and one decorated mantel.

Last year, the festival raised \$5,000, Spinelli said, and this year, the goal is \$6,000.

Crafts made by residents of Wesley Village will be for sale, and refreshments will be available.

Festival committee member Mary LaBranche, director of the Derby Senior Center, thanked the staff at Wesley Village for its "enormous assistance" with the festival preparation. She said raffle tickets are \$5 for 12 and \$10 for 30. Decorated trees, wreaths, gift cards and more will be raffled.

The Valley Interfaith Caregivers at TEAM Inc. is a network of volunteers who provide free support services and companionship to elderly and disabled residents.

Since 1998, volunteers have provided more than 15,000 hours of services to 225 Valley residents. For information on the festival or on Valley Interfaith Caregivers, call 203-922-1201.

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