

# Sewickley Academy pupils volunteer at Villa St. Joseph

- By Kirstin Kennedy [kkennedy@timesonline.com](mailto:kkennedy@timesonline.com)
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BADEN -- The sound of Bobby Darin's "Splish Splash" rang out with the voices of young and old inside the Villa St. Joseph on Friday morning.

Eleven seventh-graders from Sewickley Academy visited the nursing facility and volunteered to spend time with the residents as part of the school's annual service day.

The pupils, all girls, split up into two groups: One group joined Villa Voices and helped with singing exercises for their vocal therapy session, and the other met with residents to bake pepperoni rolls.

Pascale Spinelli, a Sewickley Academy seventh- and eighth-grade teacher, accompanied the pupils to the nursing facility. She said they enjoy the annual event and are able to choose where they want to volunteer. Those who selected Villa St. Joseph did so because they enjoy spending time with older people, Spinelli said.

The seventh-graders were particularly outgoing with the residents. As they prepared to bake pepperoni rolls, one resident said she was having a bad day. Seventh-grader Mary Kai Kalenak jumped at the opportunity to cheer up the woman she had just met.

"What's your favorite color?" Kalenak said, sitting down with the resident.

She pulled out her phone to display a picture of her dog, and, just like that, the resident was smiling with her.

"I just love hearing about how people were when they were our age," Kalenak said. "I think it's just fun to have a day with them, to get to know them, even if it's just for one day."

She and two other pupils helped residents put on hair nets and gloves for the baking activity. In the vocal therapy session, they sang with residents and chatted in between songs.

"I think talking to older people, you can hear so many cool, different stories about life," said pupil Mia Mangin. "I think it's just pretty neat."

Having the pupils around also helps the residents, said David Dix, director of development at the Villa St. Joseph.

"It's powerful," he said. "It's good therapy."

After the respective tasks of singing and baking, the group joined for an "intergenerational" luncheon. Throughout the day, pupils help residents to and from their rooms to the various activities.