

Arbor Rose and Y Camp Sloper collaborate to make fishing wishes come true



Reflecting on a fond memory of an earlier time in life, Arbor Rose resident Terry Baillargeon wished aloud that she could go fishing. That simple comment resonated with Elaina Letendre, program director for The Gardens neighborhood at Arbor Rose at Jerome Home, an independent and assisted living community with memory care in New Britain.

Letendre and recreation aide, Sandy Brown, activity assistant, agreed it was a great idea especially after other residents also said they would love to fish. However, it wasn't a matter of just getting on the bus and going; preparation and coordination was essential. Even if everyone had fishing licenses and tackle including poles, an appropriate pond or lake would have to be located. The terrain would have to be even with minimal brush to navigate, the weather would have to cooperate and there were concerns about insects and ticks.

"I thought this could be a daunting task but wasn't it worth all the trouble? Of course it was," Letendre said.

Locations first considered were Crescent Lake and YMCA Camp Sloper, both in Southington. After contacting the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, Letendre realized getting licenses would be difficult and called Camp Sloper. With a certificate of insurance in place, the day trip was planned, coordinated with family members.

When June 16 arrived, the group boarded the bus with chairs, fishing poles, coolers, jackets, bug spray, suntan lotion, sunglasses and hats. En route they stopped for two dozen worms.

“When we got to the camp, we couldn’t believe our eyes. The staff at the Y had mowed and cleared the weeds for us. They had even brought picnic tables,” Letendre said. “A Y staff member, just coming out of the pond, assured us that if we needed anything he would try to help. Everyone at the camp was more than gracious.”

The day started a little rainy but not long after the sky turned blue with picturesque clouds. All day residents and staff caught and released fish – and an occasional turtle. Arbor Rose’s centenarian Francis “Chet” Giorgetti caught the largest fish, a big-mouthed bass. He was thrilled all day and the next by his expertise as an angler,” Letendre said. Baillargeon brought her best friend and her son, perfecting “a dream come true,” she said.

“We are glad that Arbor Rose residents and staff had the chance to experience Camp Sloper’s 19-acre pond and enjoyed our beautiful facility,” said Justin Hubeny, camp program director. “It makes us very happy to know that the property is being shared with others in a positive way.”