

Treasure Coast Hospice holds outdoor holiday party

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Determined not to let COVID-19 shatter the holiday hopes and spirits of the children being cared for by the Little Treasures Pediatric Program and Good Grief Counseling Services, dedicated Treasure Coast Hospice staff and volunteers were compelled to brainstorm a new vision for its highly anticipated annual holiday celebration.

Because 2020 brought a set of unprecedented stumbling blocks, the first and foremost priority became keeping the kids and their families safe and as germ-free as possible. By relocating the party from indoors at the Fort Pierce campus to outside at the Mayes Center in Stuart, practicing social distancing and requiring masks, that mission was accomplished.

The center island of the large rear parking area adjacent to the gardens was transformed into a veritable winter wonderland packed with holiday inflatables, lights and other festive decorations.

The early portion of the evening served as a drive-thru for those unable to stroll the grounds independently. Greeted by costumed staff and volunteers, the vehicles, with rolled-down windows and breaths of fresh, chilly air, proceeded through various stations designed to soothe, entertain and evoke smiles.

A little later, families walked the roundabout via a colorful chalk-drawn pathway. Stops included a hula/limbo spot, a Happy Hanukkah table with dreidel



Music therapist Liz Lung and friends performed at Treasure Coast Hospice's holiday party. PHOTOS BY MARYANN KETCHAM

del giveaways, a photo backdrop area, and a dice-rolling game with such challenges as "pat your head while rubbing your tummy" and dancing the floss.

Each family received an "ugly sweater" cookie-decorating kit, a gingerbread house to take home and construct, coloring books with crayons and other prizes.

Music therapist Liz Lung and her merry team of carolers serenaded the crowd with traditional holiday tunes, providing comfort and joy throughout the evening. And Santa, the Grinch, and Little Cindy-Lou Who extended warm wishes to everyone in attendance.

Thanks to Board Chair Jimmie Anne

Haisley and her Healing Hoofs Therapy Horses Inc., miniature horses Calvin and Banks, led by handler/trainer Barbara Neuman, posed for caresses and photos. The dynamic duo evoked ear-to-ear grins on each child's face.

Topping off the night's activities, guests indulged in cookies, hot cocoa and the enveloping ambience of warmth provided by their caregivers at Little Treasures and Good Grief Counseling Services.

"The annual Children's Holiday Party is one of the memorable experiences that Treasure Coast Hospice offers to children and families facing serious illness," said



John Choffin and Dave Seyffart, Martin Funeral Home .

Director of Grief Support and Pediatric Services Jacki Nardone. "This year, more so than ever, it was important to continue the tradition. The outdoor, socially distanced Winter Wonderland that our staff and volunteers arranged featured new surprises that made for a magical holiday evening for our patients and families. We are grateful to the many individuals and organizations in our community that have generously supported this program year after year."

Little Treasures, Treasure Coast Hospice's specialized pediatric hospice and palliative care program, provides comfort and support to children, teens and families facing serious illness. Good Grief Counseling Services help grieving children, teens and families work through their loss by connecting them with peers and engaging in family activities to help them cope with their grief.

For more information, visit <https://www.treasurehealth.org>.



Barbara Neumann of Healing Hoofs Therapy Horses with Calvin and Banks at Treasure Coast Hospice's holiday party.



Danielle Batton, Gabrielle McNally and Shannon Davis at Treasure Coast Hospice's holiday party.



Duska P. pets the miniature horses at Treasure Coast Hospice's holiday party.