

Class Act: Students Create Pen Pal Program for the Elderly

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FRISCO, TX — The way we care for our elders might define a generation more than anything else, and Class Acts like Katie Bigalow and Lily Vandermark are giving a good name to this one.

Katie and Lily are sophomores at Reedy High and when they're not in class, they're volunteering at Mustang Creek Estates, an assisted living neighborhood in Frisco.

“We just kind of hang out with the residents, we play games with them,” said Lily. “We make crafts for them outside of school and give it to them when we go there and we do crafts there as well.”

“I just think it’s very rewarding,” Katie agreed. “I just like helping people out, and I’ve always like helping people out, so I think it’s really rewarding to go there and I do really enjoy it.”

Being around Mustang Creek, the girls became aware of another very personal way they could help out.

“Penny Tipton, the activities director, was about to pass out mail and she started talking to us about how some of the residents ask her if they have mail, and she really hates saying no to them,” Lily recounted. “So that kind of sparked the idea. ‘Well, what if we just write to them ourselves and we connect the Reedy students to them and they can write to each other?’”

And this Pen Pal program that connects high schoolers and the elderly can be just as beneficial to the students as it is to the residents, and these two only see the idea growing.

“We want to spread it to not only Reedy but other schools as well. And not even just around Frisco, hopefully, to other cities, to other states,” said Katie. “Just because I feel like hanging with the older generation can give you a sense of wisdom, and I feel like that can really inspire change in lots of different ways.”

And all it takes is a little time and care to make that multi-generational connection. Thanks to students like Katie and Lily, that example couldn’t be clearer.

Know of a Class Act at your school? Let us know about them: