

# Neighbor to Neighbor

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## A Purrfect Christmas Surprise



Santa's crew looked a little different this year for a few special Howard County citizens. Instead of hearing Rudolph's hooves clatter the rooftop, they were greeted with a carol of meows and barks on their doorsteps. When asked to deliver gifts to these unsuspecting seniors, Jaetta Ferguson, her therapy cat Flash, and their group Love On A Leash, were quick to say yes. "[The clients were] all very surprised to see us and all our animals looking so cute in their holiday dress up," Ferguson recounts of her menagerie

costumed as Santa, Mrs. Clause, reindeer, and holiday helpers arriving at each client's home with presents in tow.

But these were no ordinary stocking stuffers. Kokomo's Walgreens, Home Instead, and Samaritan Caregivers secretly collaborated to decorate a Christmas tree with specific items needed by the organizations' clients for Walgreens customers to purchase as donations. Home Instead then wrapped the gifts for Samaritan Caregivers, with the help of Love On A Leash, to distribute.

Love On A Leash's Kokomo chapter boasts 9 pet therapy teams that visit nursing homes and Samaritan Caregivers clients each month. "I love to serve our seniors by visiting with them and bring them some comfort and joy that our therapy pets bring them. I feel very blessed to have met the seniors over the

past three years since I started this therapy work," shares Ferguson.

Even the simplest gesture like bringing your dog to visit or picking up extra supplies at the grocery store for an elderly neighbor can make a lasting positive impact, especially during winter months when depression rates are high and venturing outside the house is particularly difficult and dangerous. Even if the act is small, "... just go for it," Ferguson encourages, "you won't regret it," "It is the best volunteering you will ever do because when you see their face lights up, it is the best feeling ever."

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Freelance Writer



## Change the world one smile at a time!

- **Live near NW Plaza? 96 yr old woman asking for a friend to read or play games. This person has been waiting since fall.**
- **Have office skills? Available Friday, noon-4 to answer the phone and help solve problems? Weekly or occasionally.**
- **Enjoy fun & sun? Individuals or mature student groups needed for Duck**

**Derby, June 18. Get in the water & help with duck races, serve pizza/ Coke, help vendors set-up/take down, assist with Papa Duck display, dump trash, herd ducks & more.**

**Call the office or sign up online to share your smile with a needy senior.**

**[www.samaritancaregivers.org](http://www.samaritancaregivers.org)**

**765.453.7611**

### OFFICE NEEDS

- Copy paper
- First class stamps
- Large black trash bags
- 3/4" tape dispenser refills
- Keurig cups—assortment
- White lined legal pads
- Ice Mountain bottled water
- Spring water—gallon jugs