

Greeley Tribune

'I want them to feel like they have a home': Rose Marie welcomes everyone into Greeley Place



Rose Marie stands with her tea towel outside of her apartment inside Greeley Place, 1051 6th St. Marie has lived in the community for six years and has given the towels to staff members and new residents. (Courtesy/Greeley Place)

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Just when we think we have life mapped out, someone comes along and presents us with sage words that alter our map. That changes our course.

Back in 1959, Rose Marie graduated from Arizona State University in Tempe, Arizona. She planned to start her teaching career as soon as possible until her friend's mother, the dean of women, presented Marie with a different path.

"She said, 'You've led a very sheltered life.' She said, 'Don't go teach right now,'" Marie said.

"Go do something where you find out what life is really like," the friend's mother told Marie.

That advice was to go fly, to go see the country and the world. So she did.

Instead of entering the classroom, Marie boarded Western Airlines and Trans World Airlines planes as a flight attendant from 1960-1962. In 1963, she arrived in San Francisco, where she found a Presbyterian Church whose choir dazzled her. She later joined as the organist.

Marie went on to meet her husband, and the two started teaching in South San Francisco.

In 1979, Marie once again took to the skies, but with her husband this time, as they headed to Germany where they taught for a decade.

Years later, Marie shares her experiences from the comfort of her recliner in her apartment at Greeley Place, 1051 6th St. Marie often unwinds in her recliner after a day of spreading happiness and tea towels.

Since she moved to the assisted senior community six years ago, Marie has given tea towels to staff members and new residents as gifts. Marie also gives out birthday cards, plays the piano for her neighbors and ensures new residents find their new dwellings welcoming.

"Some of these people have nobody. Nobody," Marie said. "No family. No Friends. They just come in here ... I just want them to feel like they have a home. That's why I do it."

In addition to the cards, towels and musical numbers, Marie has been handing out miniature LED lamps in case the power goes out. With Wednesday being National Senior Citizens Day, Marie is one of many community members at Greeley Place making sure everyone feels welcomed and appreciated.

Sarah Jenkner, assistant general manager of Greeley Place, said on her first day on the job last year, Marie welcomed her with a towel and a shower of praise. She likened Marie to someone at a high school who goes out of their way to make the freshmen or new students feel welcome.

"For me, it meant a lot to have that welcoming presence," Jenkner said.

Marie estimated she has given out more than 100 towels. She is also a resident ambassador who is in charge of giving tours of the grounds. Marie feels blessed, she said, so she passes those blessings on to others.

Just like her friend's mother did 65 years ago, Marie passed out some sage advice to those young, old and in between.

"Everybody should try at some point to go abroad. I don't care where they go," she said.

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