

# The Inter-Mountain

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## ERCC partners with Old Brick Playhouse Playhouse



Submitted photo The Elkins Rehabilitation & Care Center and The Old Brick Playhouse Company have partnered to bring various art forms to the residents of the long-term care and rehabilitation facility in Elkins, including singing, puppet presentations and more.

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ELKINS — The Elkins Rehabilitation & Care Center and The Old Brick Playhouse Company have partnered to bring various art forms to the residents of the long-term care and rehabilitation facility.

For many years, art therapist Linda Zimmer created original programming that enriched the lives of ERCC's residents through music, puppetry, dance, painting and various other disciplines. When Zimmer retired, ERCC and The Old Brick Playhouse Company representatives were on a mission to carry on the innovative torch, and the two collaborated to launch the *"Merrily We Go Along"* program.

*"This new program continues to bring the arts to our residents to enjoy,"* said Tara Shaver, interim administrator for ERCC. *"Through this partnership, individuals at our facility have the opportunity to be exposed to a wide range of arts appreciation, arts participation and self-expressive experiences."*

In addition to the bi-weekly programming, The Old Brick Playhouse's Apprentice program has a *"Care Crew,"* which visits ERCC weekly.

Members of the youth-led group volunteer their time and abilities to provide a plethora of varied and entertaining antics such as singing, monologues, puppet presentations and even stand-up comedy for residents to experience, said Old Brick Playhouse Executive Director Missy Armentrout McCollam.

*"The goal of the program is to first provide residents with opportunities to participate and appreciate the arts, but secondly to connect area youth to a multigenerational audience. Both demographics can grow from this exchange,"* Armentrout McCollam said.

*"It is very moving to experience the residents and our youth volunteers singing and dancing to the same songs,"* she continued. *"I am extremely emotional about the dual benefits of this effort — we all look forward to our weekly visits and hopefully the residents share our excitement."*

Thus far, residents have participated in Amateur Hour (a variety show), a Hymn Hop, a Day of Clowning with balloon animals, puppets and circus treats, rock painting, poetry readings, songs from The Lion King, oral histories and hours of conversation.

*“The team here at ERCC is always looking for new ways to bring adventure and excitement to our residents,”* said Shaver. *“This wonderful opportunity helps us deliver on that goal and expand on our mission to provide complete compassionate care.”*

Merrily We Go Along is parallel to a national trend in programming that highlights the attributes of arts exposure for senior citizens. Practicing art offers participants a platform on which to share their inner emotions, accept challenging situations and embrace their personalities.

*“The Activities staff and I are excited to collaborate each week with the Old Brick staff and youth to bring this original and unique national arts programming to our residents,”* said Donna Jones, director of activities. *“It is truly something special.”*

*“Personally, I find the partnership to be rejuvenating, not only for residents, but also for myself,”* said Old Brick Playhouse Assistant Director Phil Smith. *“We really enjoy working with the ERCC team each week; they are kind, professional, and willing to try alternative programming.”*

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