

Grand 105th party for extraordinary lady

By Barb Charzuk
Times Reporter

Congratulate Elsa Welcker Fry for reaching her 105th birthday on June 22.

Her lifespan is a remarkable feat considering the average life expectancy for a U.S. woman is 81.1 years, according to the latest U.S. Census.

Relatives gathered a day early to celebrate the event. Daughter Marcia Krane of Rio Verde and Denver attended the luncheon festivities with two granddaughters, Kathi Rank of Longmont, Colo., and Kristin Hansen, Kansas City, Mo.

A son, William Jr. of Kingston, Wash. underwent quadruple bypass heart surgery a week ago and could not be present.

Chef Matt Hastings presented Elsa with a birthday cake to share with all diners.

A five-man contingent of Rural Metro Fountain Hills firefighters surprised Elsa by stopping by. She is known to be fond of firefighters and blew kisses to them.

Her family described Elsa as an "independent spirit" who spends her days in activities that she chooses.

As her birthday approached, Elsa told Fountain View Village staffers that she did not want to be constantly reminded about her age.

"Don't tell me how old I'm. I'm sweet 16," she would tell them.

She enjoys playing solitaire, watches ice skating on television and loves

sweets.

Elsa was among the first four residents to move into Fountain View Village's independent living units when the facility opened. She has lived in an assisted living apartment for the last two and a half years.

She navigates with a walker but lately depends upon a wheelchair because of balance issues. Her main ailment is hearing loss and a few memory lapses.

When Elsa was born in Ohio, William Howard Taft was the 27th U.S. President. As a grade school pupil, she moved to St. Paul, Minn. where her father worked for the Minnesota Mining Company.

During high school, she was a champion high school hurdler and trained with an Olympian competitor.

She graduated in 1930 from the University of Minnesota. She married William Fry on Aug. 2, 1930, and the couple later moved to Fairfield, Ohio. He died in 1982.

During World War II, she served as a Gray Lady, a term applied to American Red Cross volunteers who wore gray uniforms. The women acted as hostesses and provided recreational services and non-medical help to sick, injured and disabled patients.

"She continues to be a joy in our life," said Rank.



Senior Lifestyle Corporation facility in Greendale, Wis., of which Fountain View Village is a community, sent Elsa a Wisconsin cheesehead novelty hat to wear at her birthday party.



Centenarian Elsa Fry celebrated her 105th birthday on June 21, one day ahead of the actual date, with a birthday cake baked by Fountain View Village chef Matt Hastings. Elsa's daughter, Marcia Krane, and two granddaughters, Kristin Hansen and Kathi Rank, joined in the festivities.



Rural Metro firefighters Capt. Don Deasy, right, and Engineer Bill Murphy surprised Elsa Fry by making an appearance at her birthday party. They later were joined by three more firefighters to wish 'Miss Elsa' many more years. She responded by blowing kisses to them.



An early childhood photo of Elsa Welcker Fry was posted on a bulletin board in commemoration of her 105th birthday. Fry received 350 birthday cards in response to a community-wide request to remember the special day. Fry is the oldest resident of Fountain View Village.

Buy a bench, honor someone

Donating a bench in the Centennial Circle is a wonderful gesture to honor the memory of a loved one and residents are invited to consider the donation of such a bench.

The Community Services Department is offering this as a thoughtful way to honor a loved one and make a meaningful contribution to the community.

The town has the objective of placing 18 benches in the Centennial Circle.

These are six-foot black contoured benches with a ribbed pattern. They are steel construction with a one-quarter-inch Plastisol coating.

The cost of a bench is \$1,500 and includes the concrete pad where the bench will be placed.

For information about participating in the memorial bench program, individuals may stop by the Community Center to obtain a form to fill out. Additional questions may be directed to Nancy Walter at 480-816-5148 or email nwalter@fh.az.gov.

School

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for their hard work through the interview process, as well as his fellow candidates.

"I enjoyed spending the day with the other finalist candidates during a nominee seminar," Gaardsmoe said.

"Most of the other districts going through the same process only had one candidate for each open position. That we had [several] contenders willing to step up was impressive to me and to those presenting."

Gaardsmoe said his selection to the board is an honor and a privilege, the culmination of an effort that began a year ago when he decided to have his name placed on the November 2012 ballot.

"My first participation as a board member will be [this evening], at which time there will be an important vote on the budget," Gaardsmoe said.

"But what I'm really looking forward to is the board retreat on July 9. This will give me an opportunity to weigh in with my colleagues on setting board goals for the upcoming year."

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