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# As beauty school student practices, nursing home residents sport nicest nails around

19-year-old nursing home worker finds willing fingers while she earns her nail certificate.



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HOPKINS, Minn. — The young woman unpacking her well-stocked nail kit has done this before.

A beauty school student needs a lot of reps.

"I graduated in December," Marielle Smith says as she sets up her worktable. "I went to the Atelier Academy of Beauty in Hopkins."

Turns out the newly certified nail technician had an ace in the hole. Marielle's part-time job at a nursing home meant scores of willing fingers on which to practice.

"We're going to have our nails done today," Toots Holland proclaims as she rolls up to Marielle's table next to her friend Dee Lowell.

Both women are in wheelchairs. They couldn't be more tickled to be here.

"We're going to be beautiful," Toots says.



Credit: Devin Krinke/KARE  
Toots Holland (left) and Dee Lowell look on as Marielle Smith does their nails. (Devin Krinke/KARE)

Over the next three hours, in a small nursing home salon, Marielle will file, polish, and intricately paint Toots' and Dee's nails.

Patience is all it will cost them. Fortunately, time, they have plenty.

"She can be here till midnight," Toots says. "I'll be here."

Toots makes note of Marielle's attention to detail. "See how she takes care of each nail," Toots says. "Now this is a talent, it truly is."

They are the kinds of compliments a grandmother might give.

"Yes, she is like a granddaughter to me," Toots says.



Credit: Devin Krinke/KARE  
Toots Holland displays her Easter nails. (Devin Krinke/KARE)

The 19-year-old was hired at Good Samaritan Society Ambassador two years ago as a certified nursing assistant. More recently, Marielle has transitioned into health information management and working the front desk.

"She's caring," Toots says. "That's what she is, she's a caring person."

When Marielle first started painting residents' nails, Toots and Dee encouraged her to go to beauty school — then kept cheering her on.

"They definitely, encouraged me to keep going, because I was not good when I first started," Marielle says.



Credit: Devin Krinke/KARE  
Toots Holland shows off her newly completed nails to residents and staff at Good Samaritan Society Ambassador. (Devin Krinke/KARE)

As Marielle practiced, nursing home residents began sported ever more stunning nails.

"This was Mary," says Marielle scrolling through her iPad portfolio to reveal the hands of resident after resident.

During the holidays, Marielle decorated their nails with painted holly berries, candy canes and gift wrap.

Last month, Toots sported valentines.

This month, Marielle is decorating the 85-year-old's nails with Easter bunnies.



Credit: Devin Krinke/KARE  
Dee Lowell displays her Easter nails. (Devin Krinke/KARE)

"They're looking good," Toots sings to her own tune as she admires the progress. "They're looking good."

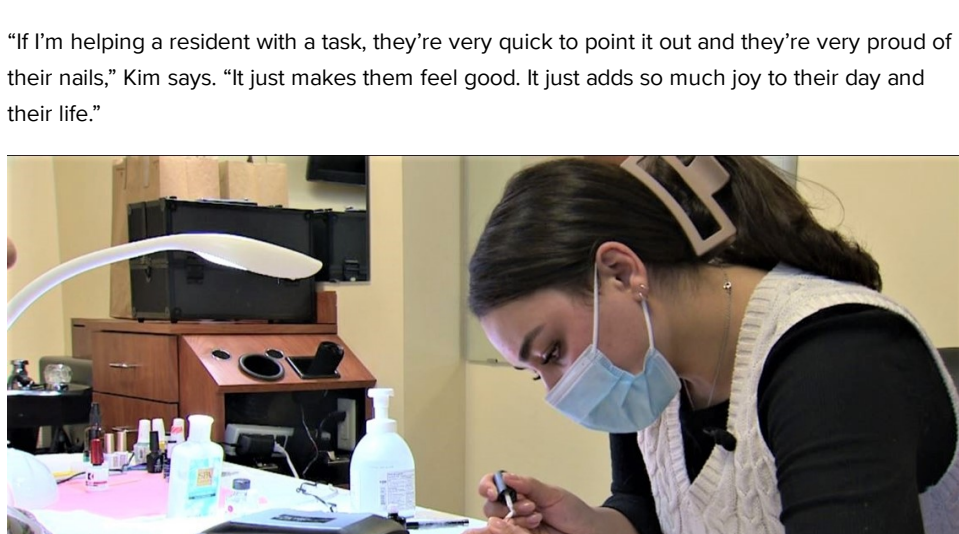
Toots used to work in a machine shop. She never considered a manicure.

Marielle did her first.

"I've never been to a beauty shop to watch the ladies," she says.

When Good Samaritan's director of nursing Kim Stoltzman hired Marielle as a nursing assistant, she didn't know the other benefits the teen would bring.

"If I'm helping a resident with a task, they're very quick to point it out and they're very proud of their nails," Kim says. "It just makes them feel good. It just adds so much joy to their day and their life."



Credit: Devin Krinke/KARE  
Marielle Smith works intently on a nursing home resident's nails. (Devin Krinke/KARE)

One day, Marielle hopes to open her own salon.

She says she knows she's not "saving lives" like the nurses she works with, "but it makes me feel like I'm doing something to change their lives."

The work complete, Toots and Dee are surrounded by a small group of nursing home residents and staff ogling over their nails.

The newly adorned women beam.

"Oh, I feel wonderful," Dee says of her afternoon with Marielle. "That's one of the best things I can do for myself."

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