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Cameo Club women tell Oak Meadows residents: You're never too old to live



Photos by Mark Brouwer

Members of the Minnesota Senior Cameo Club sang and danced for Oak Meadows residents in honor of the facility's 10th anniversary.

Following more than an hour of entertainment, which included old favorites like "New York, New York" and "I'm Glad I'm Not Young Anymore," the women poured into the audience, shaking hands, asking questions, and never forgetting to utter the words "You're beautiful."

"It's good for seniors to see us doing these things," said Jeanne Rogers, 77, Ms. Minnesota Senior 1998 and assistant executive state director for the Minnesota pageant. "Sure, you might have some limitations, but so what? There's no reason you can't still do the things you love. That's our main message, I think: 'You don't have to quit.'"

Marian Misemer, 85, a former Atlanta, Ga., resident who lives at the facility with her husband, couldn't have agreed more.

"It liked the singing, especially," she said. "I think it's wonderful to see what they do. It's inspiring."

Among the event's highlights was an appearance by Bud Kraehling, 89, longtime WCCO-TV weatherman, who told the group one of his favorite weather phenomena—the rainbow—as his wife, Shirley Lockwood,

stood by. Dressed in a multi-colored evening dress, the former Ms. Minnesota Senior 2004, had earlier sung "Over the Rainbow."

"It went all the way from Bloomington to Never-Neverland, which is right next to Edina," Kraehling joked.

Appearing also was the reigning Ms. Senior America, Linda Wagner. The 61-year-old Bemidji resident sang "Juliet's Waltz," an aria from the opera "Romeo and Juliet" and was the center of attention in a closing dance number, "You Make Me Feel So Young."

A year ago, Wagner had never heard of the Ms. Senior America program. However, after reading about it in her local newspaper last August, and recalling that she had a relative who had competed in the program, she called the organizers for information.

The good news, she said, was that she was qualified to enter. The bad news was that she had two days to prepare for an audition. In October, she competed at the state pageant in Mille Lacs, and after winning, she competed a month later against 34 state winners in Las Vegas. Competing in the pageant was a

dream come true, she said.

"I love to perform and I love to dress up, and I like meeting new people. And this was just tailor made for each of those things," Wagner said.

Performing is integral to any Ms. Senior pageant, Rogers said. All contestants must demonstrate performance skills and participate in an interview, as well as explain their philosophy of life. While modeling in evening dresses is a requirement, it is not weighed as heavily in judges' point tallies.

"We don't do bathing suits; we're too wise for that," Rogers cracked.

Kim Payfrock, Oak Meadows' community relations director, is decades from becoming a senior. Nevertheless, she was inspired by the performance, she said.

"It's just so easy to feel like you're too old and like you can't do anything, but you can," she said. "You're never too old to live."

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Linda Wagner, of Bemidji, sings an aria to Oak Meadows retirement community residents last Wednesday in the evening dress she wore when she won the Ms. Senior America contest in Las Vegas last November.

BY MARK BROUWER
Staff Writer

Women in their 60s.
Women in their 70s.
Women in their 80s.

When are women supposed to take a break and retire from life? "Never," say the women of the Minnesota Senior Cameo Club.

A group of 10 current and former senior pageant queens representing the club brought this message to residents at Oak Meadows retirement community in Oakdale last Wednesday. Oak Meadows is in Oakdale near the Lake Elmo and Woodbury borders and serves residents from both communities and

elsewhere.

The performance was chosen both to honor the Minnesota sesquicentennial as well as Oak Meadows' 10th anniversary. Further, it was one of several that Cameo Club members perform each month at senior facilities, day care centers and other community venues throughout the metro area. In Minnesota, the club is open to women age 60 and older who have competed in Ms. Senior Minnesota competitions.

An afternoon presentation in the facility's community room included dances, songs, and poetic readings, each intended to entertain and inspire their mostly elder audience.