

# Pensioners' Christmas lunch rescued



**STAFF at community transport organisation Atwest helped save the day for West Somerset pensioners who were in danger of missing out on their annual festive lunch.**

The group stepped in to find an alternative venue for the district's annual senior citizens' lunch, which is cooked and served by West Somerset Community College students at the Minehead college.

This year the college hall had been fully booked and the lunch looked set to be cancelled.

Atwest manager Brian Worrall sought assurances from the college that students were ready and able to cook the lunch and provide entertainment at an alternative venue, providing one could be found.

He then called on local businessman Paul Merson who was more than happy to host the annual event in the newly-refurbished ballroom at his family-owned pub, the Hobby Horse.

Atwest staff then hit the telephones and contacted local residential and care homes to pass on the

good news.

"Two or three of the care homes had already arranged something else, but Lloyd Parry, our schedule manager, rang everyone and organised nine of our buses to pick up 115 residents and carers to get them to the Hobby Horse in time for their lunch," Brian said.

Once again, year 12 students from the college took responsibility for the party, decorating the ballroom and putting crackers and floral centrepieces on all the tables.

There was musical entertainment from a jazz band while lunch was being served, followed by more singing and games after the meal was finished.

Mia Briggs, public services subject leader at the college, said: "After lunch there was singing and dancing led by Louise Doolan, a couple of games of bingo and a visit from Santa.

"There were presents in his sack for everyone before the band led some Christmas carols.

"Everyone had a great time and the students were really pleased to have given their guests a fabulous start to the Christmas season."

Brian thanked the Hobby Horse staff and Merson family for their generosity and praised college staff and students for helping to make the lunch a success.

Pictured at the lunch, from the left, are (back) Luke Cutler, Harrison Fletcher-Paige, Santa aka Jake Davies, Frances Jones; (front) Dene Lodge residents Nancy Filley, Pat Huckbody and Margaret Wyatt.

Photo: Steve Guscott