



Photo by Doug LaRocque

Nursing home residents take in the spectacle of the partial solar eclipse.

When the sun hid behind the moon

By Doug LaRocque

Perhaps the colloquialism “you don’t see that every day” is the most apropos to describe the April 8 solar eclipse.

Washington County was not in the so called “path of totality,” but close enough. In fact, in the northern town of Putnam, the eclipse was 99.4% complete. The further south and east you went in the county, the lower the percentage of totality occurred.

At the Washington Center nursing home in Argyle, residents of the 122-bed facility joined everyone else in heading outdoors to enjoy the celestial spectacle.

The staff started bringing people out on their patio about 1:30 that afternoon, partially to make sure there was time enough to facilitate everyone who wanted to witness the event and also because it really was, according to Recreation Director

Tonya Barnes, the first time the residents had the chance this spring to enjoy a warm day outside.

As the eclipse began and the sky darkened — it never got completely dark, more like a nautical twilight — and residents began to move out from under the shelter, look up at the sun and talk about the event. Some said they remembered a previous partial eclipse, in the 1970s, they thought.

The staff provided everyone with glasses, but one man, kidding said, “I don’t need them, I am already blind.”

Another remarked, “It looks like Pac-Man,” a 1980 video game she remembered playing.

There was a noticeable drop in temperature as the eclipse occurred, rated about 98% in Argyle, enough so that some of the residents decided to move back inside the common room and watch the action on the large screen TV, where it was considerably warmer.

Those that stayed outside, however, thoroughly enjoyed the afternoon, one jokingly asking staff, can we do it again tomorrow?

The answer, unfortunately, is no. The next total eclipse to occur in the United States is slated for Aug. 23, 2044.

New York state saw an influx of tourists for the eclipse, particularly in the western and central portions of the state, with the Adirondacks cashing in as well. They were all in the “path of totality.”

Washington County did not get in on action, other than a few spillovers who were too late to find a hotel room closer to the action.

No matter, in Washington

County, like the rest of the state and the nation, being outside and looking up at the sun on April 8, was the happening thing to do.



Photo by Doug LaRocque

Washington Center resident Loretta Morris enjoys watching staffer Jeanine French dancing to “A Total Eclipse of the Heart.” The 1983 song by Bonnie Tyler was one of the most requested songs on the airways that day.

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