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Volunteering is Her “Spice of Life”

Margaret Reilly, 89, is a walking testimonial for the Gulfport Multipurpose Senior Center. “It’s the spice of my life,” she says. “Whatever you want to do is there.” Margaret should know since she has volunteered at the Center for more than 25 years. She was named Volunteer of the Year in 1986.

These days Margaret is the Center’s “card lady.” She volunteers two hours a day to maintain the rack of like-new greeting cards for sale in the Senior Center lobby. Before that she staffed the Center’s information desk for 25 years.

When Margaret’s husband died a month after their move to Gulfport from Dearborn, MI, she was left with a car but no driver’s license. “I had to do something,” she said. Her mother and her aunt were both members of the Senior Citizen Club that met at the Gulfport Casino, so she got involved.

After the current Senior Center was built in 1983, Margaret’s first volunteer job was maintaining a



seasonal bulletin board with her aunt Ann Howay. She also got started by helping with the telephone Reassurance program.

For ten years, Margaret was one of 16 Ukelele Ladies who performed at mobile home parks, nursing homes and malls all over Pinellas County. Their colorful singing and dancing act was even featured in The Gabber, the St. Petersburg Times and on local TV.

As a member of the now disbanded Senior Center Craft Club, Margaret helped make Christmas stockings for disadvantaged children for five years.

Now she plays canasta, visits the Fitness Center twice a week and participates in the Wii Fit group Thursday afternoons.

“There’s no reason for anybody to feel lonely,” Margaret says. “Everyone is so nice and so knowledgeable. I’ve learned a great deal being involved at the Senior Center.”

-- by Amy Oatley, Newsletter Editor

A Salute to Senior Center Volunteers

“If you don’t have any charity in your heart you have the worst kind of heart trouble.” - Bob Hope

We are proud to report that there is a very strong, healthy, collective heartbeat at the Senior Center and it is found in the volunteers who serve at this great facility. It’s not for monetary gain that they volunteer in spite of the fact that they could be generously supplementing their income if they were in the work force. Receptionists, event organizers, fundraisers, Fitness Center assistants, clerical assistants, advisors, all put monetary gain aside and give their all for the good of the Senior Center and its participants. Take away that volunteer staff support and you would eliminate the friendly welcome at the front door, the computer classes, the Fitness Center, the art classes, the language classes and so much more. Staff would become seriously disabled and the Senior Center would become a body without a heart. Erma Bombeck once said “Volunteers are the only human beings on the face of the earth who reflect this nation’s compassion, unselfish caring, patience, and just plain love for one another”. So to our wonderful, caring volunteers (all 113 of you) - thank you for your generosity and genuine interest in keeping this Senior Center alive and well. -- by Sue Frank, Gulfport Multipurpose Senior Center Supervisor

From the Editor

Volunteer Today! It's Good for Your Heart & Your Brain

We hope you will enjoy this issue of "Community That Cares" that's all about volunteers and volunteerism. We've learned that staying active and getting involved can help keep your brain vibrant and healthy. We hope something in this issue will inspire you to volunteer -- at the Senior Center or anywhere in the community. There's lots of work to be done. -- Amy Oatley, Newsletter Editor

Taking Care of Your Brain

"Aging is not lost youth but a new stage of opportunity and strength." -- Betty Friedan

by Lynn DiVenuti

Good News! Your brain CAN make new brain cells, contrary to the popular belief that once you lose a brain cell then it is gone forever and your brain cell supply will continue to diminish. This process is called neurogenesis.

Dr. Susan Wehry told the crowd of 50 or more attendees at her "Taking Care of Your Brain" presentation, that our brains start slowing down and becoming less efficient in our late 20's. The good thing is that we are born with 100 billion neurons -- that's a lot of neurons!

One of the barriers to successful aging, she said, is our acceptance of ageist stereotypes. Common stereotypes link absentmindedness to aging -- not true. We all forget -- it's not a privilege of the elderly. Another barrier is that we demand less from our brains and less from our bodies as we age.

Wehry says follow the common sense advice that your Mother told you long ago -- use it or lose it. Surround yourself with an enriched environment. Make sure you have plenty of toys and friends to play with on a regular basis. It keeps you young -- physically and mentally.

So what if the clock keeps ticking, Wehry says, it's ticking for everyone. Get up off the couch and go for a 30 minute walk. You could walk around your block, go to the grocery store, walk at the mall, or even check out the Senior Center exercise room. There



are plenty of places to go -- rain or shine.

Practice remembering! This includes problem solving, thinking, reading, or even learning to play a musical instrument! Learn something NEW -- it stimulates your neurogenesis.

Ok, so you don't work a forty hour week anymore. You know what that means? You have the opportunity to style your life with a creative flair. Ever thought of writing your memoirs? For one thing, it's always good to chronicle your life. Simple stories of your life are part of your history. Then share your stories.

Another good practice is to take an inventory of the medications that are prescribed to you. You may be able to take fewer medications. Ask your doctor. Take an inventory of your sleep habits. Are you getting enough sleep? Then there is the stress inventory. Stress can rob you of your health, so keep an eye on any stress triggers you can avoid. One of the best ways to undermine stress is simple laughter. There are plenty of things to laugh about out there -- find them and let go! Laughter tricks the brain into feeling optimistic and getting a good attitude. Plus, it's contagious.

So are you ready to change some of your past behavior? First -- develop a strategy. Then make a pledge to yourself, identify your goals and visualize success! JUST DO IT! Live, Love, Laugh.

"Just remember, once you're over the hill you begin to pick up speed." Charles M. Schultz

"It turns out a good bit of our brain health and function is under our control," according to Dr. Susan Wehry, MD, daughter of Senior Center participant Maxine Wehry. "Good health habits all give a boost to our brains," Wehry said. These include good nutrition, hydration, sleep, laughter, walking, exercise, no smoking and if you must drink, do so in moderation. "I am very proud of my daughter," says the elder Wehry. "She became interested in the brain as a seventh grader when she helped found an organization called TARC (Teenagers for Retarded Children). They worked hard securing funds to bring happiness to "God's Special Children" as they referred to them. When they were leaving for college, it was taken over by some parents whose children had been helped by their endeavors. It became NKAR - Northern Kentucky Association for the Retarded, which has become an outstanding community organization. "Susan is so down to earth and makes science easy to understand, I'm sure this is why she is such a popular speaker with doctors, nurses, medical students, policy makers and seniors in all areas of the United States. -- Maxine Wehry

Dr. Wehry is a psychiatrist and a Clinical Professor at the University of Vermont's Medical School and Vermont's newly appointed Commissioner for Aging. She is also a commissioner of the Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living

Meet Our Dedicated Volunteer Board of Directors

Dedicated volunteerism is at work in the management of the activities of the Gulfport Senior Center Foundation. It is governed by an all-volunteer Board of Directors, the legal entity accountable to Foundation donors for the services it provides and the funds it disburses. These are the men and women who contribute a variety of skills and experience, their time and talent to keep the Foundation strong and focused on its mission "to raise and distribute funds that support and enhance health, educational, social and recreational programs and services at the Gulfport Multipurpose Senior Center."

Please meet the Volunteer Members of the Gulfport Senior Center Foundation Board:

- President, Sarah Peel retired Social Worker and former Senior Center staff member.
- Vice-President, Michael Calamari of R. Lee Williams Funeral Home.
- Joan Barry - Vice President of the Gulfport Women's Club and active in Red Hatters, and Gulfport Chamber of Commerce.
- Barbara Burkham, Community Liaison for The Hospice of the Florida Suncoast.
- Bill Distel, retired teacher and Senior Center volunteer.
- Carole Gabrio, employed by the Stetson University College of Law library and active in community organizations.
- April Hill, Esq. -active Elder Law Attorney in the Hill Law Group and adjunct professor at Stetson University College of law.
- Bernadette Homan - Business Development Specialist for Arden Courts Alzheimer's Assisted Living Facility.
- Jane Ogilvie, owner of Senior Solutions of Pinellas Country - Care Coordinator and past president of the Foundation .
- Pat Smoot - reverse mortgage specialist and active board member of Weedon Island Preserve.
- Lori Rosso owner/manager, Sea Breeze Manor Bed and Breakfast, and president of the Chamber of Commerce.

What's Your Niche?

Are you a people person? Do you have office or computer skills? Do you have a special talent you would like to share?

The Gulfport Senior Center Needs You!

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Our Volunteers

Volunteers last quarter – **113**

Volunteer hours last quarter – **1,349**

Volunteer hours 2010 – **5,678**

Number of clients served by volunteers in 2010 – **3,490**

Volunteers services last quarter:

Clerical/admin - 2
Education - 12
Leadership Team - 9
Board membership - 20
Fundraising - 4
Health promotion - 21
Information/Referral - 10
Legal assistance - 5
Recreation - 3
SHINE - 1
Phone Reassurance - 8
Special Events, servers, hostesses - 27



Volunteer Opportunities and Volunteer Action ...

Calling All Pets & Their People - Wags & Whiskers



Saturday, May 21, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Thanks to a dedicated group of volunteers, the first Wags & Whiskers outdoor event will take place at the Senior Center on Sat. May 21 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. The event includes great door prizes, a pet Gift Boutique, lot of give-aways, dog/cat goodie bags, pet photography and much, much more. Don't miss out! All pets are asked to bring their owners on a leash! Great fun for all! All proceeds support the Gulfport Senior Center's mission that includes enhancing the lives of seniors with pets.

Volunteer "Silent Warriors" Deliver Meals on Wheels

Volunteers are desperately needed to deliver hot, nutritious meals to the homebound in Gulfport and throughout Pinellas County. Volunteering for the Neighborly Meals on Wheels program is a hands-on, front-line experience. If you have two hours, midday, to help in your own neighborhood, you could help improve someone's life and make a real difference in this critical area of need.

Years ago, if an elderly person was homebound and in need of a meal, neighbors came to their aid. And they still do, thanks to the Neighborly Care Network Meals on Wheels program, the first federally funded Meals on Wheels program in the nation. Many Pinellas County seniors are living alone, too poor to buy food, or too frail to shop and cook for themselves. And the need is growing every day.

Each day around lunchtime, Neighborly Care Network Meals on Wheels volunteers deliver much more than hot, nutritious food. For homebound people, these visits mean contact with the outside world and the chance to remain at home -- not in a nursing home. Meals on Wheels volunteers help to brighten the day for their senior neighbors by showing concern, having a friendly chat, and making sure that all is well.

Our drivers are "Silent Warriors," says Christina A. Angelou, who oversees the Gulfport area program. "Their dedication and dependability is unlike any I've ever seen." Tenure is six months to 25 years. There are ten routes out of Gulfport with 50 drivers needed, but currently there are only 36 drivers. So how do the meals -- about 140 per day -- get distributed? Many drivers volunteer extra days and take extra routes to get the job done.



Neighborly needs compassionate, caring volunteers to share their time with lonely, isolated seniors. Please call Pat Hazell 727-573-9444, ext. 4190 to start helping your community today.

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A detailed black and white line drawing of a storefront for "Stella's Deli & Gelato". The building has a tiled roof and large windows. A sign above the entrance reads "STELL'S DELI & GELATO". In front of the store, there are tables and chairs set up on a sidewalk. To the right of the store, there is a small illustration of an ice cream cone.

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Seventeen Creative Volunteers Make Quilts for Kids

Downy Fabric Softener has challenged quilters around our nation to sew and donate 10,000 quilts for their "Quilts for Kid's" program. Seventeen women from the Gulfport Quilter's Club answered this challenge at their January retreat in Lithia. Twenty quilts were made from colorful fabric with varied designs - frogs, monkeys, dogs, cupcakes, circus animals and woodland fairies to name a few.

Once the 4 day retreat was over, the finished quilts were assembled and delivered to "All Children's Hospital" in Saint Petersburg. The quilts sewn with love and laughter were received with joy and thanks.

The women whom answered this challenge are Zina Cherkus, Jo Day, Kathy Florence, Mim Kagol, Janet La Flamme, Pat McCune, Betty Matthews, Pauline Murphy, Mary Oliver, Joan Owen, Mary Pavlicin, Aileen Price, Carol Seward, Frederica Soles, Mary Taylor, Margaret Wamhoff and Sharon Warner.

If you are interested in this challenge, go to www.quiltforkids.org and make a sick child smile.



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Coming Events

Cinco De Mayo Celebration

Thursday, May 5, 11:30 a.m.

Add a little spice to your life! Get your ticket now for our Cinco De Mayo celebration. Enjoy some Chili, Sangria Punch, Salsa & Chips! The event will also include door prizes and opportunity drawings. Tickets are \$5.00 (\$3 for Neighborly lunch participants). Neighborly will also provide transportation for the convenience of their bus people.



Hurricane Pizza Party

Thursday, May 26, 6 p.m.

Mark your calendars now for our Hurricane Pizza Party. Coffee & 2 slices of Pizza for \$3.00 while supply lasts. Visit our many vendor booths for ideas on disaster planning. The City of Gulfport's annual Hurricane Seminar will follow in the Catherine A. Hickman Theater at 7pm with featured speaker Meteorologist Brooks Garner from TV Channel 8.

Mini-Flea Market

Fri. Apr. 8, 9 a.m. to noon

Senior Trips

The Senior Center offers a variety of day trips each month in partnership with Town Shores. Call the Senior Center for a list of fun trips for spring and early summer.

First Mardi Gras Fundraiser Sells Out

The Senior Center's first Mardi Gras fundraiser on Monday, March 7, was a huge hit! All 150 attendees expressed their delight by way of warm smiles, toe tapping, clapping, and very enthusiastic applause when winners of the many door prizes were announced.

Everyone enjoyed the appetizers, chocolate dipped strawberries, champagne, and strawberry shortcake. The crowd was colorful wearing a variety of masks, fancy costumes, and of course, beads.

Senior Center Volunteer Art Instructor Richard Rasulis won the grand prize of 3 days and 2 nights at the Tradewinds Beach Resort. City employee Gail Biron provided the entertainment.

This successful event took hours of planning by Senior Center volunteer Julie Fuce and 26 other volunteers. Everyone including the volunteers had a great time and all agreed another Mardi Gras should be held in 2012.

-- photo by Lynn DiVenuti

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Last Minute Tax News - Estate Tax Changes for 2010 – 2011

by Dena Lebowitz, Back Tax Solutions LLC

The federal estate tax, which applied to taxpayers with estates valued in excess of \$3.5 million in 2009, was repealed for the year 2010 only. So, an estate tax return is not required for taxpayers who died in 2010.

The estate tax is back for 2011, with some changes. Taxpayers who have more than \$1.3 million in assets at the time of death will have to file an estate tax return. In addition, if the taxpayer had acquired appreciated property within three years of death (unless from his or her spouse), an estate tax return is required no matter the size of their estate.

Many other changes relative to the basis of the decedent's property take effect in 2011. Estates have long enjoyed the benefit of the 'step up in basis' rule- meaning the fair market value of the decedent's property at the date of death was used as the 'tax cost' of the property. In this way, heirs could sell the property without much risk of paying capital gains taxes. This 'step up in basis' is no longer automatic. The estate must use the lesser of the decedent's adjusted basis (what they paid) or fair market value at the date of death. There are some adjustments that can be made to make this a less painful calculation however.

If you are responsible for filing an estate tax return, it is strongly advised that you seek professional guidance, as the rules are complex.

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You can help assure that the Gulfport Multipurpose Senior Center will continue to look after the needs of your community's future generations of older residents by arranging a charitable gift in your estate plans.

It is easy to arrange your legacy to the Gulfport Senior Center Foundation through: A bequest in your will or living trust, a beneficiary designation on a life insurance policy, a beneficiary designation on an IRA or retirement plan (401-k or 403-b), a payable on death arrangement on a bank account or certificate of deposit (CD), a transfer-on-death designation on an investment account or mutual fund.

For information, call 727-893-2237 or 727-893-1231.

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