

Nomination Narrative: Leading Age Award For Volunteer of the Year

The volunteer I am nominating not only exemplifies volunteerism but he positively impacts the resident's quality of life, has extraordinary devotion to our organization and lastly, he encourages others to volunteer.

As a volunteer, this particular individual impacts the quality of life of our residents each and every day. He is the only volunteer who regularly commits to driving for our organization which is a huge responsibility for anyone to take on. His commitment is paramount to our transportation services, as we could not offer the variety of transportation options if he did not offer his time. Quite literally we need and depend on his efforts as a volunteer to provide for our residents. This volunteer is responsible for taking our residents to and from medical appointments which supports our resident's health, well-being and overall care. In fact, in the attached photos, you will find on this particular day, he was taking our residents to aquatic classes of campus. When one of the residents found out I was taking pictures of our volunteer driver, she called him by name and said, "He is a Godsend!" No matter how long the resident's appointments or how long the outing, he faithfully waits or occupies his time until the appointment is finished. His dedication to service means he is always there even if it is for only a couple of hours.

This particular volunteer is an essential part of our team and what we do. As we like to say, "You'll find him in the driver's seat." He will drive our shuttle or minivan which helps immensely with our service to our residents based on their physical needs. They may or may not have physical limitations but may need assistance with their wheelchair or electrical scooters. He meets every resident at their room and provides a wheelchair escort if necessary. In addition, he is responsible to get the residents on the shuttle utilizing a lift if needed. He makes sure our residents arrive to and from their appointments safe and secure as he is always in charge of our precious cargo, our residents. He not only takes them for important appointments but also enjoys driving for the fun events as well—examples include: Outings to the grocery store, the Festival of Trees at the Historic Embassy Theatre at Christmas time or maybe the Children's Zoo. Anywhere our residents need to go, he is sure to be behind the wheel.

In addition, this volunteer has extraordinary devotion which comes from his strong faith and servant heart which is evident in everything he does. He is a shining example of our mission which is: *"As an expression of Christ's love, we serve individuals and their caregivers with compassion and respect for independence, wellness and spiritual life."* When he walks through the hallways, he talks to everyone he comes in contact with and calls them by their name. Our residents are like family to him and they simply love him.

Furthermore, he encourages others to volunteer. Service is an integral part of the Christian faith. It not only allows him to express his faith through service, but also sets a great example for the children and grandchildren who visit our residents. Giving back teaches us some valuable life lessons that can only be learned by serving. Likewise, he encourages others from his church and his family to volunteer. For example, one Sunday we did not have wheelchair escorts for chapel so I placed a call to this volunteer. Between his own family and his church family, the residents who needed a little extra push to get to chapel were able to attend because of the efforts of our faithful volunteer.

In addition to volunteering at our organization, he also volunteers through his church, Trinity Lutheran, on Old Decatur Road. One of the many things he does for his church is recycling. He picks up newspapers for recycling throughout the community. Some of the stops along the way to pick up recycling include: our organization, several barbershops, gas stations and other retirement communities. The money earned is given back to his church for any financial needs they might have. Also, he volunteers at his church helping when there is a funeral in which he hands out bulletins, rings the church bells, and will even serve as an usher if needed.

In closing, when you first meet this volunteer, he is one of those people who always wears a smile; he has a sense of humor and an enormous laugh that can simply warm your heart. In fact, his laugh is so contagious that it makes you want to laugh along with him. He always leaves you feeling, "up!" Once you get to know him, you will soon understand he has a very young-at-heart spirit even though he is 80 years old. He is rare in every sense of the word. He has been married to his wife for 57 years; they have 8 children, 20 grandchildren and 2 great-grandchildren.

As for being a volunteer at our organization, it can be very hard work but in the same sense, it can be very rewarding work. Our volunteers are essential to what we do. Furthermore, our volunteers have the opportunity to get to know our residents, staff, share a few laughs, and develop personal relationships that can simply last a lifetime. Because we are a faith based organization, he has the ability to share his faith with others and be an expression of Christ's love in all that he says and does. From the outside looking in, it is amazing how genuine he is with others. It is truly inspiring the many ways he touches the lives of those he encounters and how his positive ways end up touching and impacting his own life. This volunteer consistently supports our mission and provides a "Better Way of Living" for the residents each and every day. I am proud to nominate this candidate for the Leading Age Volunteer of the Year Award. God's richest blessings in your decision making process!