

Volunteering

Rewards of volunteering

Candie Stockinger (r) spoke to Bigfork Valley volunteers at the 2014 appreciation pie social about her experiences volunteering.



I have been asked to speak to you today about recruiting volunteers, as in the action of finding new friends to make their lives much fuller.

Most of you already know how fulfilling it is to volunteer. I see people out here today that have been giving to this community for many years helping people through good times and bad. I'm sure you have many experiences and stories to share.

For our newcomers we can share information on the following volunteer opportunities. There are people that have skills and talents who share their gifts with us often and are greatly appreciated, such as the musicians who entertain us in the Villa. We have volunteers that sit at the front desk every weekday from 8 a.m.-noon. We greet people, escort people to the lab, to imaging, to surgery, etc... wherever we're needed.

As a reward for our 4 hours at the front desk we are given a free meal of the day. (The lasagna is really good and the desserts are very tasty.)

The place that I enjoy the most, and has the greatest need for volunteers, is our nursing home. There is a need for people to help with outside events, trips out shopping, attending community events, etc. and inside helping with bingo and other activities scheduled throughout the day. There is a monthly calendar of events posted on the door of the chapel and any of the staff can direct you to the schedule and explain the events. (It's also on the website,

BigforkValley.org.)

So, what can we say to inspire people to volunteer who may feel anxious about working with our elders and sharing time with them? This is where your stories and experiences come in handy. You can also reassure them that there is plenty of staff available to address our resident's physical needs. Due to the privacy laws the staff can't share personal information, but they'll be able to let people know any issues they should be aware of.

Maybe you could ask your friends to put themselves in place of the resident of a nursing home. You've just been moved out of your home, you have health issues that may worry, or sadden or depress you. Schedules and people around you are different and confusing. You may have family or friends that come and visit....but they go home.... or....nobody visits, perhaps because you've outlived your friends. You can't see, hear, walk or function in any capacity as well as you used to and the future looks pretty bleak. Wouldn't you like to have somebody come by and smile, ask how you are, sit and visit, read, or just hold your hand if that's what's needed??

I was helping an elder one day in a nursing home in Iowa. I was going to take her out to an event in the commons and was helping her get a sweater on...freshening her hair,

etc. I had known this little lady for several months and she never talked. I would chatter away to her about whatever was on my mind. This particular day I started humming.... You Are My Sunshine.... then I began singing. As I was tying her shoes, I soon realized I was no longer singing alone. She was singing and smiling with me. I was shocked. I discovered she knew several old songs and I sang with her often.

There's a little lady here that I used to take by the hand and just walk the hallways. She has a wonderful smile and loved to pat me on the shoulder, on the arm, and hold my hand. She's no longer able to walk the halls, but I love to sit and hold her hand and pat her arm. Who can help but smile when someone smiles at you....?

We have so many loving, caring people in this community. Maybe you know of somebody that's alone or lonely and could use a smile and a little companionship themselves. They'll soon find out that in giving their time being kind to our elders, they'll receive as much, if not more, than they give. Please let them know they're welcome, they're needed, and we have many new friends here that are eager to meet them...

*"You are my sunshine, my only sunshine, you make me happy when skies are grey.
You'll never know, dear, how much I love you. Please don't take my sunshine away."*