

Press Release

Westminster Place Honors More Than 34,000 Hours of Volunteer Service

19 April 2010

Evanston, IL — A volunteer recognition barbecue luncheon will be held on April 23, 2010, at 12:30 p.m. at Westminster Place, a non-sectarian member of Presbyterian Homes, 3200 Grant Street, Evanston, IL. Titled "Well Done!", the event will honor more than 200 volunteers who contributed 34,412 hours of service last year at the retirement community.

The majority of the volunteers are themselves older adults who choose to serve other older adults. About 50 percent of the volunteers are independent living residents at Westminster Place, and the remaining 50 percent are community members. The Presbyterian Homes Woman's Board established the Volunteer Services Department in the 1960's and is very active in volunteer service.

Volunteers serve in more than 40 different activity areas, according to Pat Fiorio, director of volunteer services. Some work with residents in health care by providing friendly visits, pet therapy, and moral support and company for people going to doctor appointments. Others help with holiday flowers, maintaining the greenhouse, producing an award-winning resident news magazine and even offering their own musical talents. "Volunteer services certainly benefit our residents," says Ms. Fiorio. "But volunteering provides a connection for the volunteer in ways that very little else can. It's a win-win."

Says Caroline Carter, an eight-year volunteer from Wilmette, "Helping residents who live in long-term care at McGaw Care Center is a passion for me. Their needs can range from help to reorganize a closet when the seasons change, accompaniment to a medical appointment or even encouraging a person to get outside a little in good weather. I have met so many interesting and wonderful people, and they have become my friends. Conversation and discussion brightens their day and helps them to remain engaged."

Sid Doolittle had already been a Westminster Place volunteer for about a year before he and his wife became independent living residents in 2006. He began by providing wheelchair transportation to the Kimble Fitness Center for people who couldn't walk long distances or were wheelchair bound. He also served as a medical escort. Doolittle enjoyed getting to know each person on a one-to-one basis. Health issues required him to look for other needs he could fulfill. Ms. Fiorio asked him to help with making sure each resident received their daily mail.

"I now serve as mailman one day a week for McGaw Care Center residents. The mail is sorted, and I distribute it," says Doolittle. "But it's more than just that. I help people with vision impairment open and read cards or other mail, and I try to visit a bit at each of my stops. For me, the important thing is that each of these people is my neighbor, and that's what neighbors do. We help each other."

Suzanne Brady, of Lincolnshire, a 25-year volunteer, is a past-president and member of the Woman's Board. For the last 15 years, she has managed the Little Store at Westminster Place. Staffed by volunteers, the store is open six days a week. Much like an old-fashioned general store, it stocks greeting cards, postage stamps, snacks, and sundries. "The store is here to serve those who cannot get out to shop. On the weekend, I shop to fulfill special requests for items we don't carry. It has been my pleasure to serve. The store is a destination and a wonderful convenience to both residents and employees," says Ms. Brady.

Volunteering has a long tradition at Presbyterian Homes. The Woman's Board grew out of the organization's original Board of Managers in 1914. At that time, the board handled everything from admissions to food preparation to sewing curtains—whatever was needed.

###

ABOUT PRESBYTERIAN HOMES

Founded in 1904, Presbyterian Homes is a not-for-profit, non-sectarian organization with a national reputation for creating extraordinary retirement communities. Presbyterian Homes serves more than 1700 older adults through its residential and healthcare programs on campuses in Evanston, Lake Forest and Arlington Heights. The organization is accredited by the CARF/CCAC, the nation's only accrediting body for retirement communities.