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# Senior volunteer helps elders thrive at Our Lady of the Woods

BY JANET C. WETZEL | ENQUIRER CONTRIBUTOR

**CLIFTON** - Nancy Foltz cried when she saw the devastation of Hurricane Katrina on television.

She felt the pain of the victims whose faces registered shock and grief, and she desperately wanted to go to Louisiana or Mississippi to help.

But her car was old and unreliable. Because she has diabetes and she is forced to walk with a cane and can't maneuver steps, she feared she would be more of a liability than an asset.

As the Katrina saga unfolded, a frustrated Foltz finally accepted the fact she couldn't go help. Then, it dawned on her that she didn't have to go to the Gulf Coast to help people in need.

She could help right here at home. She vowed then to get off the couch, end her post-retirement boredom and get busy.

Foltz, 63, of Clifton, who retired as a secretary in South Carolina in 2002, now spends at least two days a week teaching computer skills to residents at Our Lady of the Woods, a congregate home for the elderly in White Oak.

She also takes the time to just visit lonely residents, run them to the drugstore, grocery or bank. When she heads home, she often takes a pile of work with her. She does the home's monthly newsletter, its brochure and paperwork for fundraisers such as the recent golf outing.

Sister Antonita Merritt called Foltz very special, low key and gentle. "She works wonderfully well with the elderly here," Sister Antonita said. "She takes time for each one. If they ask for something from her, she'll do it, and she's always available."

When Foltz decided to volunteer, she called the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program, a national group sponsored locally by Family Service.

The group connects volunteers older than 55 with organizations that need help. RSVP asked her to help a resident at Our Lady of the Woods who had suffered a debilitating illness and apparently could no longer read.

Foltz quickly learned he could read but decided to teach him to use a computer to help with other functions. Another resident saw them working and wanted to learn.

Foltz was quickly dubbed "the computer lady." She teaches residents games and programs, often on computers she provides.

"This helps improve their motor skills, helps some who are having memory problems and helps perk them up," Foltz said. "I pretty much taught myself computer skills, and I enjoy helping others learn. They seem to benefit from it."

When Foltz learned of a Milford woman who has a disability which keeps her home a lot, and who has a nice computer she could barely use, Foltz offered to come two days a month to teach the woman computer skills - for free.

Foltz, whose daughter, Jeanne Jones, lives in Greenville, has also mentored a young girl through Cincinnati Youth Collaborative for more than a year. She talks to her regularly and takes her such places as Krohn Conservatory, Music Hall, to parks, the library and out to eat.

"I couldn't go help the Katrina victims, but I know I'm doing something good," Foltz said. "I'm happy knowing that I'm needed."

To volunteer or donate to Our Lady of the Woods, call 513-741-8846.

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