

Thank Our Volunteers

Today begins the observance of National Volunteer Week, a time to thank one of America's most valuable assets, and call the public's attention to all that they do to improve our communities. Volunteers certainly play important roles in the fulfillment of the mission of Life Care and Century Park. We are deeply indebted to them for the time, energy, creative ideas, hard work and, many times, the giving of their own financial means to positively impact the lives of our residents and the performances of staff members.

Sponsored by the Points of Light Foundation and Volunteer Center National Network, National Volunteer Week began in 1974 when President Richard Nixon signed an executive order establishing the week as an annual celebration of volunteering. Every President since has signed a proclamation promoting National Volunteer Week. Additionally, governors, mayors and other elected officials make public statements and sign proclamations in support of the week. This year's theme, *Inspire by Example*, truly reflects the power volunteers have to encourage and motivate the people they help, as well as attracting others to serve.

Across the years, I have met some extraordinary people – those who put into practice the oft-quoted maxim of caring for one's fellow man, and who are remarkably unselfish and humble in their work – in visits to our centers and particularly through Life Care's Carl W. Campbell Wind Beneath My Wings awards program recognizing volunteers. Those honors will be bestowed this year at the annual management meeting in September, and nominations are currently in process. The 2005 winners – Company-Wide Volunteer of the Year for 2005 was Wayne (Cotton) Morgan, presented the award posthumously because of his work at Life Care Center of Morgan County; St. Francis Xavier Church, Volunteer Group of the Year for its involvement with Evergreen House Health Care Center; and Jessica King, Youth Volunteer of the Year for her service to Hickory House Nursing Home – are excellent examples of the value of volunteers.

Down through the ages, various cultures have understood and appreciated what voluntarism means, including:

- *No act of kindness, no matter how small, is ever wasted.* – Aesop.
- *We make a living by what we do, but we make a life by what we give.* – Winston Churchill.
- *If you want to lift yourself up, lift up someone else.* – Booker T. Washington.

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- *Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.* – Margaret Mead.
- *We can do no great things, only small things with great love.* – Mother Theresa.
- *It is one of the most beautiful compensations of this life that no man can sincerely try to help another without helping himself.* – Ralph Waldo Emerson.
- *Volunteering creates a national character in which the community and the nation take on a spirit of compassion, comradeship and confidence.* – Brian O'Connell.

In whatever ways our centers may find to honor volunteers this week, go hug a few – and thank them sincerely for what they do.

--Beecher Hunter