

Virginia Halley gets nod for November

By Cheryl Walker
The News

There's a sign in the back room of the Leisure World Library that reads: "Volunteers are the life blood of this library."

No one would agree with that assessment more than November's Leisure Worlder of the Month, former Third Mutual President Virginia Halley.

For four years Halley, a former English and home economics teacher, has served as director of the library and coordinator of a crew of 125 volunteers who have given their time, strength and expertise to make the Leisure World Library a special place for residents to learn, relax, plan, dream and escape from everyday troubles.

Halley calls the facility a reading library, rather than a research or reference library, yet one look at its extensive collection, particularly of local history books, pamphlets and special editions, shows that in reality it's a little of all three -- and more.

Besides 18,000 books (hardcovers and paperbacks) representing

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Don Leach/The News

Virginia Halley, director of the Leisure World Library, thrives on the hours she puts in not only supervising 125 volunteers at the library, but as a Golden Rain director, and committee chairman.

HALLEY

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every category in the Dewey Decimal System, there are jigsaw puzzles, maps, magazines, a children's section, elderhostel information, newspapers, informative display cases, a sizable large print book section, 360 musical cassettes and, Halley's pride and joy, a books-on-cassette tape mini-library with more than 880 volumes.

It takes a lot of helping hands to keep the lot in trim and Halley says with pride she has the dedicated men and women to do so. From cataloguers to menders, statisticians to book selectors, typists to schedulers, labelers to sorters, shelvers to front desk personnel, Halley says, each crew thinks they're the best, and they are.

"We're like a big family," says Halley, pointing out there are even 14 residents who use their cars, gasoline, and hours to bring reading materials to the housebound in the library's Books-on-Wheels program.

Halley, who arrived in Leisure World with her husband, Bob, in 1986, says she was recruited for her position by Irma Franklin.

Franklin, recognizing she had a gem in the energetic and efficient Halley, soon gave her the book cassette section to organize. It was not long after that when Franklin urged her to consider taking the directorship in her place.

Asked about her protege, Franklin says, "If you need help, ask a busy person; if you need expert help, ask for Virginia Halley."

Meanwhile, Halley's talents had been noticed in another sphere, by the Third Mutual board, who encouraged her to try for a directorship.

That goal accomplished, she so distinguished herself by hard work, tenacity and levelheadedness during her term that her peers elected her first vice president and finally president of the mutual.

The latter honor was the first time the mutual had ever given a woman the job.

Halley now serves on the Golden Rain board and is both chairwoman of the Golden Rain Community Activities Committee and vice chairwoman of the Golden Rain Maintenance and Construction Committee.

All this is in addition to just beginning the second three-year term of library director.

But Halley doesn't mind her work-packed days; the Ohio-born achiever likes them that way.

"There are so many jobs that need to be done! And I like people." Even the ones who argue and accuse?

"I refuse to let them get me -- I don't think I've ever lost my cool. What they're really angry about is their own little problem, they're not after me, it's the problem that's bothering them."

LEISURE WORLDER CEREMONY

Sponsor: Leisure World Historical Society

Honoree: Virginia Halley

When: Wednesday, Nov. 4

Time: 10 a.m.

Where: Clubhouse 6

Halley encourages Leisure Worlders to get involved, volunteer and not stay isolated in their manors away from the world.

"I like to keep active. My brain is working all the time -- that's the good thing about being a volunteer: your brain is working all the time and if you're busy you don't have time to be sick."

When asked about being selected Leisure Worlder of the Month, Halley leveled her eyes and told of the cryptic phone call informing her of the honor from Historical Society President and friend Irving Goldberg.

"Say yes," commanded Goldberg, when Halley picked up the phone. When she tried to find out what she was giving her assent to, Goldberg remained close-mouthed, simply repeating with greater emphasis, "Say yes -- don't argue with me." She did. And, says Halley, "Was I surprised!"