

Volunteers honored at KM Senior Center

By ELIZABETH STEWART
of The Herald Staff

They all share a common interest.

Alma Mitchem, 92, Lloyd Patterson, 86, Inell Decker, 70, Judy Phillips, 40, Kim Roper, 24, Jennifer Parker, 15, and Corbin Parker, 10, are volunteers at the Kings Mountain Senior Center.

Phillips, the newly-named 1992 Volunteer of the Year and also the new volunteer recruiter, said life really began at age 40 for the mother of two grown children and grandmother of two.

Lloyd Patterson and Inell Decker, like Phillips, report to the Senior Center at the Depot every day. They help with the congregate meals program. Decker rides in the van and helps deliver meals on wheels.

No matter the age of participants, the dances at the Center are tops, according to Kim Roper, who volunteers at monthly dances. "Swing your partner," she tells the 40-60 people who like the music of the country band, "Sweet Ambitions." She has a ball and everyone has a good time.

Alma Mitchem, the senior member of the volunteer team of over 100 people, has been a volunteer for at least a decade. She helps out in the coupon club and is a big booster of the Swinging Mountaineers and is one of the top students in the adult education class. Her bright smile encourages other adults to get involved in adult education and earn their diplomas, in spite of age. Mitchem gets compliments for her sunny personality and for her hats. She usually wears a hat to match every outfit and is always the first member of the adult education class to arrive for class.

Corbin Parker and his sister, Jennifer, volunteer every time they visit their grandfather, Fred Thornburg, and their uncle, Monty Thornburg. On a recent Saturday they brought Monty a Dalmatian puppy from Atlanta and also helped serve brunch to volunteers at the annual appreciation luncheon at the Depot Center.

"I'm really having fun," said Corbin, serving heaping plates of assorted salads and goodies. The Parkers are children of Mr. and Mrs. Ray Parker, formerly of Kings Mountain.



VOLUNTEERS HONORED - Suzi Kennedy, guest speaker, Sharon Eaker, Senior Center staffer, Judy Phillips, volunteer of the year, Monty Thornburg, Aging Director, and Carolyn Bell, new Senior Center activities director, left to right, congratulate Phillips and display the plaques at Saturday's brunch attended by nearly 100 volunteers and guests. Phillips won the first annual Charlie Walker Volunteer of the Year award.

"Judy really looks like a teenager herself," say co-workers of Judy Phillips who applaud the first year volunteer who has racked up more than 450 hours updating client card systems and volunteer files and helping with clerical duties and organizing volunteers for the Health Fair.

Judy's new role is quite different from the one that she does for a living but it was because of her love for her paying job that got her interested in helping at the Center. Phillips sits with shut-ins and one of her former patients was Frances Thornburg, mother of KM Aging Director Monty Thornburg. The late Mrs. Thornburg, quite proud of her son's leadership at the Center, suggested that Phillips might want to volunteer. Phillips also heard about the Depot programs through other patients, including Bertha Clary, Odie Collins, Millard Putnam, Lois Guyton, and Marvin Byers. When she was asked why she went back to work after raising her family and after being out of school 20 years, she said that "well people don't need what I can give."

Phillips took a nurses aid course

20 years ago but decided to remain at home with her children until they were grown. Married at 17, she was a full-time homemaker. She took nurses training at Cleveland Technical College. Husband Coy, who works at Lithium, and children, Robbie Phillips and Crystal Bess, encourage her in her job and volunteer role. The two granddaughters, Tasha Phillips and Amy Phillips, are her pride and joy. No wonder she also she adores her nursery class at East Side Baptist Church.

Phillips loves to travel with senior citizens on shopping trips and outings. She plans to take a cruise to the Bahamas with friends in October. Favorite vacation trips have been to Disney World in Florida.

Patterson described himself as a jack of all trades at Patterson Oil Company where he retired after 42 years. "I did everything except office work," he said, recalling the many gallons of kerosene he had delivered to Kings Mountain area homes. He also worked for several years at Glass Grocery and for Little Dan's Grocery. His wife,

Geneva Goforth Patterson, died almost 10 years ago. They had three children, three grandchildren and one great-grandchild. He is active in El Bethel Methodist Church.

Patterson's job at the Center is wrapping silver for the table settings for daily luncheons and packing lunches that are delivered to home-bound people.

Decker, who has volunteered four years, helps pack food for delivery to homebound people and at one time also rode in the van with Patterson and helped deliver the meals. She became a volunteer at the urging of Jeanette Surratt, retired teacher, and has never regretted her volunteer work. She has five children, eight grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren and is active in Ebenezer Baptist Church.

Roper, daughter of Derek and Becky Roper, loves to dance and it's natural that when she volunteered that Aging officials selected her to help with the socials and dances. She is active at East Side Baptist Church and works at the Community Center. She is a 1986 graduate of Kings Mountain High School and also attended Gaston

College.

Mitchem, born in Earl Station, has lived in Kings Mountain almost all her life. She reared two children, both of whom are deceased, and is active in Mount Olive Baptist Church. She is widow of Meek Mitchem. She calls the senior center one of the best things that has happened in Kings Mountain and is one of the earliest members of the Senior Citizens club.

Ninety-seven volunteers contributed over 3,000 hours in volunteer time last year at the Center. "Their service is a labor of love and we could not operate without the tremendous assistance they give," says Thornburg. "Senior volunteers are our greatest natural resource and something we can't put a price on."

Thornburg, assistant Sharon Eaker and Carolyn Bell, the newly named activities coordinator, call on volunteers for a number of jobs which Thornburg estimated it would take both a full-time employee and a part-time worker to replace.

"For a couple of years now we've had on our wish list a position for an activities director and now Mrs. Bell will be working part-time to coordinate our programs," said Thornburg. Another new volunteer position is that of volunteer coordinator which Judy Phillips has volunteered to do on almost a full-time basis.

Interacting with older adults isn't new for Thornburg, who interned at the Life Enrichment Day Care Center in Shelby in 1986 when he was a senior at Gardner-Webb College. "It doesn't matter about age, we have volunteers of all ages and everyone is blessed by friendships with each other," he said. "Self-worth, dignity, and independence are some of the rewards of these programs."

Participation in Senior Center activities literally turns lives around, say members of the staff. Seniors look after each other and lives are touched in a significant way.

Thornburg says that volunteers come in all sizes and ages but one trait they have in common is dedication. During the past year 130 people volunteered, some for short periods of time and others for longer periods of time.

Bell encourages more participa-

tion in the Senior Center program by the community-at-large and wants to see a full house at every activity. "This program has much to offer that many of our citizens don't know about," she said, volunteering herself as a PR person for the Center. She encourages those who want to become active in the program to contact her or any member of the staff for details on transportation, etc. Once a person becomes involved, he grows with the program, she says.

A strong advocate for the elderly, Thornburg said all the volunteers are sticklers for detail and are hard workers, noting that it is always difficult to choose top volunteers for the Volunteer of the Year award. Thornburg said all are tops. Phillips volunteered 450 hours of service during the past year and Patterson was close behind with 430 hours.

Thornburg said the spirit of volunteerism was exemplified by the late Charles Walker, for whom the Volunteer of the Year Award is named. He said Walker came to the Center eight years ago to volunteers 20 hours a week and logged 4,000 hours in four years before he became a member of the staff in September 1988. He died January 7, 1992.

Suzi Kennedy, Director of the Shelby Life Enrichment Center, said people drop out of activities for one reason or another and see only the walls of their homes until a volunteer encourages them to join a senior program. "Joining a Senior Citizens Group gives them dignity and independence. Their lives are completely turned around and volunteers are the ones who should be thanked profusely for what they give to others."

Kennedy, who was Thornburg's first employer, was the speaker for the volunteer brunch.

"We're not here to compete with other agencies," says Thornburg. "We're just here to enhance the services they offer."

The agency is unique in that it operates as a city department.

"There's not many aging departments in the state that are city departments," Thornburg said. "Seven percent of our money is city money. We're very fortunate."

Over 700 seniors have been served since July 1991 at the renovated Depot.

Kyles grew to love French Bulldogs

By RENEE WALSER

When Wanda Kyle first met her husband-to-be, Harry, who owned Victor, a French bull dog, she had no idea that her future would be full of puppy chow and the pitter-patter of little feet.

"I did not like dogs," says Wanda.

But when she married, Harry wanted another dog all his own (Victor lived with Harry's mother).

Wanda said, "No way."

Harry called and got a Bon-bon, another French bull dog.

"That was our first real fuss after getting married," said Wanda.

Harry and his sister went to pick the dog up at the airport.

"I didn't even want to see this dog," said Wanda.

All she could think about was, "This dog has got to go." She wouldn't even pet him.

But that first night, the dog, enclosed in the bathroom, started whining for company. Wanda just knew the neighbors were going to call the police. So she allowed Bon-bon to come up to their bedroom.

Bon-bon slept with the Kyles that night and until she died.

The Kyles spent \$200 on a small casket for the dog's burial and had her buried in a pet cemetery.

That was the first French bull dog.

Since then, that was twenty years ago, there have been many.

By this time, it was apparent that Wanda's distaste for dogs had grown into a love for the animals. She had to have another one.

She called a breeder in California to buy one. The breeder made her promise to show this dog.

"I told her I didn't know how," said Wanda. "She said, 'You learn.'"

Wanda did learn. But during her first show, she dropped the dog. The judge just laughed and said it was OK, to go on with the showing.

"I survived that first dog show," said Wanda.

The Kyles say they have had as high as 25 dogs at one time.

Today, among the six they own, they only have one show quality French bull dog, Sugar Baby, son of champion Sugar Man. Sugar Baby is one year old and has been



WANDA KYLE

And one of her winners

to two shows.

"If he's only half the dog that his father was..." said Harry.

In confirmation showing, said Harry, each breed has a standard it is compared to. The judge has to pick which dog best meets the standard in such categories as weight, walk, gait, alertness, playfulness and curiosity.

The Kyles are two of the oldest breeders of French bull dogs in the country. At one point, they inherited nine dogs from a breeder who died. All of those dogs are dead now, too.

The French bull dog is believed

to be a cross between the English bull dog and a Spanish bull dog. The first French bull dog in America was brought over from France. His name was Nelcott Gamene. This was the dog whose picture was on the first Milk Bones box.

The first French bull dogs were shown in 1898. They were very rare and only rich people could afford them, said Harry.

As a bit of history, Harry said there was a French bull dog on the Titanic when it sank. The dog is believed to have drowned.

And the last Russian czar's

daughter had French bull dogs as pets when she was held prisoner after the Revolution. Their masters carried them on little pillows.

French bull dogs are good companions, said Wanda. Some are shy. One of their dogs was so shy that they had to take him to shopping centers to get used to people.

"You don't ever find one vicious," said Wanda. And they're known for their alertness.

The Kyles spent two weeks in Africa last July as medical missionaries (both are paramedics). Wanda left June 15 for three more weeks and on the way back to the States she plans to stop in England and pick up another French bull, which the Kyles co-own. The dog is named Oliver Cromwell. Wanda will also visit a dog show at Windsor Castle.

The Kyles got interested in visiting Africa when their pastor came home from a visit to Nigeria. He urged the congregation to use their talents for mission work.

"I thought, I don't have any talents," said Wanda. And then she remembered that she had just finished paramedic training. She also works as a substance abuse specialist for Gaston Lincoln Mental Health.

The organization that arranged the mission trips to Africa had never had medical missionaries before, but decided to include the Kyles in medical clinics set up through Migoria Christian Center in Kenya. They had six months to prepare for the trip.

"We didn't know what we were getting into," said Wanda. "I cried for two days when I got there."

The team was in the Bush.

"It was like going back into time hundreds of years," she said. "How do they survive?"

They travelled with the mobile medical clinics each day from village to village.

The hospitals they visited had no food or medication. The beds had no sheets and some patients slept two to a bed. One hospital had 500 to 600 patients and just one doctor.

"It was depressing," said Wanda. "But it was clean."

"The first time you go just to see," she said.

"The second time you go because you love the people," said Harry.



EAST AWARDS -- Mrs. Kiser's third grade class won awards for the last nine weeks. Front, left to right, Nikki Hullender, Misty Black, Javaris Crenshaw, Ryan Mauney, Brian Noblett. Second row, Leslie Scott, Melissa Carroll, Anthony Childers, Teresa Ledford, Chuck Lofton. Third row, Chip Martin, Jarvin Ross, Audra Smith, Zack Guyton, Kelly Hughes, Micky Ramsey.



EAST AWARDS -- Shirley Smith's 4th grade class received awards for the last nine weeks. Front, left to right, Matthew Biddix, Chad Johnson, Carl Burch, Chris Carroll, Jason Hastings, Johnathan Houze. Second row, Ricky Huskey, Chris Lawson, Tanna Morgan, Sharon Moses, David Noblett, Deneen Ward. Third row, Jonathan Merk, Sherill Chambers, Neely Garner, Josiah Burton, John Wilson.

Land use vote put off again

Cleveland County commissioners put off again Monday a vote on proposed land-use laws after officials of Rednour Mining Company of Kings Mountain objected to limitations the new laws would place on any proposed expansion of their 10-acre site on Grover Road.

Rednour Mines would be zoned light industrial instead of heavy, and the company's lawyer, Steve Dolley, hinted the proposals could

prompt a lawsuit.

"I just want to be a little more certain of what I am doing," said Charlie Harry, recommending that the vote be delayed for a month.

The land-use proposals would update the county's current outdated development ordinance and would add regulations for new subdivisions, new mobile home parks, and billboards.