

Hills police to seek more senior volunteers

By Joanne Maliszewski
staff writer

Ann Lessing worked in accounting at General Motors Corp. for 45 years. Jerry Connor worked 45 years for Michigan Bell. Fran Manning was a legal secretary. Now the three work as volunteers for the Farmington Hills Police Department.

"You can't sit at home watching TV and let your hips spread," said 74-year-old Lessing, who has served as a department volunteer for exactly one year and five months. "It keeps your mind going. At my age, it's important to keep your mind going."

Manning, Connor and Lessing are among the 18 senior adults who give

their time and knowledge to the department's almost two-year-old volunteer program. Another 25 volunteer with the handicap parking enforcement team.

"Seniors are an untouchable resource," Farmington Hills police Chief William Dwyer said. "They are people who are trained. They are responsive to volunteering. They want to be involved."

ALREADY CONSIDERED successful, the program will be expanded by early summer. Department administrators have already studied where senior adults' skills are needed.

While the volunteer program provides senior adults with another outlet following retirement, it benefits the department. And it's a sign of things to come.

"With the tightening of budgets, we recognize this is going to be a trend of the future. Government will recognize the need to use these people," Dwyer said.

"We won't always get it (hiring of new people) in the budget. The future trend is not to hire people to fill positions but to use people who would want to volunteer," he continued.

Because of a tighter city budget, Dwyer does not plan to request any new sworn officers or civilian personnel in the proposed 1991-92 budget.

On any day, you can see the volunteers in the department. They're always busy and they move around the department, depending on what needs to be done. The majority of senior volunteers, excluding the handicap parking volunteers, are involved in clerical work, typing and filing.

"They're great," said Kim Kemske, a crime prevention specialist who works with the volunteers. "We couldn't do without them. They're lifesavers."

Jerry Connor volunteers twice a week. "This makes you feel like you're doing something. You are useful. You work all your life and you want to do something," he said. "I was getting under my wife's feet. Like any retiree you have time on your hands. You want to do something."

FRAN MANNING has worked on a project through the department's crime prevention section, which sends letters welcoming new city residents. She also sends out applications for burglar alarms.

She works Friday afternoons. "I like the association with the younger people. I feel I'm appreciated here and that's not too common to be ap-



Six-year Farmington Hills resident Fran Manning learned of the police department's volunteer program when a crime prevention officer spoke with a group of senior adults of which she was a part.

Ann Lessing volunteers at the Farmington Hills Police Department on Thursdays. She also volunteers for other organizations, including doing taxes for senior adults and blood donor registration.



Senior adult volunteer Jerry Connor works with Wendy Thorion, a civilian employee at the Farmington Hills Police Department. He worked with Michigan Bell for 45 years and when he retired decided to volunteer.

preciated," said Manning, a widow.

Also a widow, Lessing calls the work she's doing exciting. "I found I had some free time. I tried to keep busy. I found I was busy on Fridays, Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays. But not Thursdays."

That's when Lessing is at the police department. "It's entirely different than anything I have ever done.

They seem glad to have you come in."

Maggie Loridas, a senior adult specialist with the city's special service department's senior division, supports volunteer work for senior adults.

"Getting out and volunteering makes them a more well-rounded person. They feel more appreciated.

They get a good feeling of self-worth. People tend to turn inward when they stay at home and grow older," Loridas said.

While some people who are retired have staying at home, others need to get out. "Those without family become isolated. They need their peers. We all need to be with people our own age," Loridas added.



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