

These volunteers love to help others at Schoolcraft College

BY SUE MASON
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When Veronica Foley retired from the telephone company in December 1989, she was looking forward to leaving the work world behind.

But the Plymouth resident quickly made a discovery about retirement: She didn't have enough to do.

Nine years later, she has something to do. She spends her Friday mornings volunteering at Schoolcraft College's Women's Resource Center.

"I saw a notice for the (informational) meeting in the newspaper," Foley said. "I was always interested in what they do there, so I went to the meeting and signed up on the spot. I knew it was the right thing for me."

A peer counselor at the resource center, Foley and her Friday morning cohort, Bev McGurk of Farmington Hills, work with men and women who are thinking about entering or re-entering college and come to the center for help.

McGurk, like Foley, knew she needed something to do something after working for General Motors for 30 years.

"I knew I couldn't stay home all the time; I need contact with people," said McGurk, who has worked at the center for 3 1/2 years. "I had a friend who volunteered at Schoolcraft and I got in touch with the center, but had to wait two years for the classes."

The peer counseling classes are offered six hours a week for eight weeks on an as-needed basis. Volunteers work on listening, communication and problem solving skills and receive information about the resources and services available through the center and at the college.

"The volunteers are an integral part of the program," said Barbara Campau, WRC volunteer program coordinator. "They're very reliable and responsible and important to us because we depend on them to be here. We wouldn't be able to do what we do without them."

The volunteers usually number between 45 and 50, but that changes from year-to-year and semester-to-semester and have a variety of backgrounds. Homemakers, social workers, members of law enforcement, the educational community and sales help out at the WRC.

After a hiatus of several years, Campau is conducting an informational meeting for people interested in volunteering 6:30-8:30 p.m. Thursday, Aug. 12, in the Women's Resource Center, Room

225 of the McDowell Center on campus, Haggerty Road between Six and Seven Mile roads, Livonia.

People interested in attending should call Campau at (734) 462-4400, Ext. 6524, for more information.

"Volunteers are very important to the program," Campau said. "They are the first person someone sees when they walk into the center. Volunteers are the first ones to greet them and meet them."

Volunteers like Foley and McGurk help men and women who are entering or re-entering college, researching new careers, getting information on available services or needing help through a difficult situation.

In addition to peer counseling, the WRC offers financial aid for education, a program for women in transition, divorce support group, career information and help with community and campus resources and referrals.

After training, volunteers are assigned to work with a mentor, a more experienced volunteer, until they feel confident to talk on their own. Campau seeks a weekly commitment from volunteers. For McGurk and Foley it's three hours on Friday mornings, a shift they've worked together for almost three years.

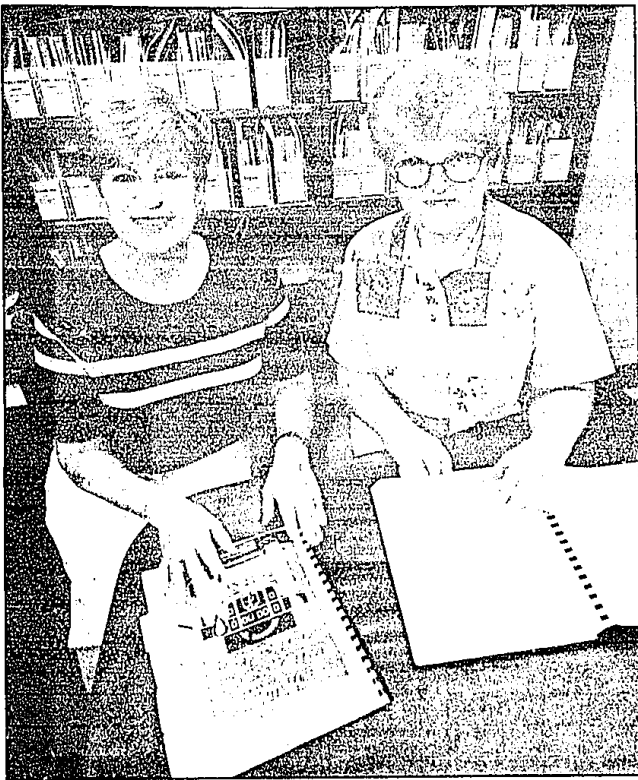
Wonderful is a word the women use often in talking about their volunteer work. They also speak highly of the center's staff and the appreciation they extend to volunteers.

"It's been a wonderful, rewarding experience to be a volunteer here and they really let us know they appreciate what we're doing," said Foley. "There's some really special things about this organization that has made it a wonderful experience for me."

"Volunteering has been more than I ever thought it would be," McGurk added. "I've never been involved with more caring individuals. Maybe the reason why we're all here is because of that attitude."

Because of their experiences, Foley and McGurk have gotten friends and relatives to volunteer at the center. Foley's sister is now a volunteer, and two of McGurk's friends plan to attend the Aug. 12 meeting.

"It's a wonderful experience and I highly recommend it," McGurk added.



STAFF PHOTO BY TOM HANLEY

Well worth it: Both retired, Bev McGurk of Farmington Hills (left) and Veronica Foley of Plymouth have found their volunteer work at Schoolcraft College Women's Resource Center a rewarding experience.

Church hosting annual musicians' conference

Birmingham Unitarian Church is hosting the 17th annual Unitarian Universalist Musicians' Network Conference this week.

Some 150 musicians, choir directors, ministers, music directors, and choir members from across the U.S. and Canada will attend the conference Aug. 5-8, which serves as a network for musicians to share the multiple ways music programs can contribute to the vitality and aesthetics of church life and augment the spiritual impact of religious services.

"The annual Unitarian Universalist Musicians' Network primarily draws Unitarian Universalists involved in church music programs, but some music directors from other denominations also attend, including this year two Episcopal music directors, one from Texas and one from Chicago," said coordinator Barbara Woolf.

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