



Most Treasured Volunteers: 2010-2011



Mary Lou and Vernon Kramer



After years of service during their employed years, Mary Lou and Vernon Kramer continue to give back to the community through volunteering. Both octogenarians, they've worked together through Greater Cleveland Volunteers to help numerous organizations, including New Avenues to Independence, the Great Lakes Science Center, and University Hospitals—just to name a few. For the past seven years, they have specialized in civic events, finding it incredibly rewarding to contribute to the city while experiencing it themselves. According to Vernon, "Volunteers set the pulse and the pace at local events and attractions." Their ongoing example of service is especially remarkable as Vernon recently began a struggle with Alzheimer's Disease—with Mary Lou sticking right by his side.



Jeanne Sydenstricker



Linking Employment, Abilities and Potential

Over the past 10 years, Jeanne Sydenstricker has given hundreds of volunteer hours to LEAP while helping people with disabilities address the challenges they face and live as independently as possible. Just two examples: Jeanne played a pivotal role in helping LEAP develop its own internal accounting system and make the complex transition from purchasing those services from another organization. She also attained funding and managed a pilot project that enabled people with cognitive disabilities to live independently by using innovative technology. Jeanne's efforts have resulted in profound life changes for the individuals involved. And she did it with extraordinary commitment, creativity, drive, intellect, loyalty, and perseverance.



Lucy Thomas



Lucy Thomas uses her professional expertise as a Certified Adult Nurse Practitioner and Diabetes Educator when she volunteers at Care Alliance Health Center, where she encounters some of the sickest, most troubled, and least trusting patients imaginable. Her compassionate, warm demeanor breaks down the wall of distrust and encourages patients to respond. As a result, staff have noticed both an increase in patients returning for ongoing health care, and improved adherence to medication regimens and personal care. For example, for six years, one homeless man refused to have his feet examined; with Lucy's friendly and respectful help, he is now actively engaged in his own health care and allows regular foot exams. Lucy makes her patients feel special and cared for. She's the kind of health care professional everyone would want.



Eugene Wade



Truly "a man in a woman's world," Gene Wade makes time every week to show the women and children in shelters of the Battered Women's Shelter of Summit & Medina Counties that someone cares about them—showing them the respect and compassion that may have been lacking from the men in their lives. For 15 years, he has provided non-judgmental support, treating every task as of the utmost importance—from opening the door, to making up a bed for a new client, to chasing skunks and squirrels away. He is the "go-to guy" for new male staff and volunteers, sometimes even filling in for sick employees. Gene's humor and contagious happiness bring calm to tense situations. His philosophy is, "If I can influence one person to be a better, more loving person, then my life has not been in vain." There is no question that Gene uses his life to bless others.



Karen Young

Domestic Violence & Child Advocacy Center



For 28 years, Karen Young has helped children and youth served by Bellflower Center for Prevention of Child Abuse, now known as the Domestic Violence & Child Advocacy

Center. She began in 1983 as a volunteer, twice a week, working with the families of the Teen Parenting Program. That experience inspired her to return to school. Upon graduation with a Masters Degree in Human Services, she returned to Bellflower as a staff member, initiated the Parenting Program, and provided counseling for victims of trauma. And after retirement, she completed the circle by staying on as a volunteer. Every week, she provides guidance and support to callers on the 24-hour Family Helpline. Karen is treasured by the staff and the young people she continues to help.