

Energy to Spare

BY JANE ANN TURZILLO

It's a chilly Thursday afternoon, but the cold doesn't deter Claire Truesdale. She has just finished her volunteer shift assisting residents of Laurel Lake Retirement Community with their workouts.

Although she doesn't live there, she dedicates two mornings and two afternoons a week to helping resident exercisers in the Hudson facility's state-of-the-art fitness center. "I like all the interaction with the people," she says. Truesdale answers questions about how to use the treadmills, step machines and strength-training equipment, and explains the right settings for each. "It's good exercise for me, too," says the vibrant senior, who works out three times a week.

A grandmother of seven and great-grandmother of two, Truesdale is a longtime volunteer. Laurel Lake's Director of Wellness Susan Busko is delighted to have her. "It's easy for the residents to relate to her. They can see she's very lively. She's so full of vim and vigor. We're blessed to have her here."

This afternoon, Truesdale guides a visitor through the wide corridors at Laurel Lake, showing off the library, the post office, the bank and the store. Each passing resident receives a big smile and cheerful hello. She often enjoys visiting with residents in their apartments before she goes home.

Kathryn Chadwick, vice president of marketing, calls her "Miss Volunteer of Laurel Lake."

When Truesdale gets home, her volunteering doesn't end. She picks up her knitting needles to make hats for Children's Hospital Medical Center of Akron and sweaters for an organization that sends them all over the world.



Truesdale first volunteered at a tender age in the "sweet shop" of a hospital in the East, where she grew up. Since then, she's been involved with the National Ski Patrol and the Girl Scouts, and has served as a Sunday school teacher and a Red Cross instructor. In Vermont, she volunteered at a home for terminally ill patients.

Perhaps her crowning achievement was helping to bring Emergency Medical Services to Hudson Village and Township in

1977. Two years in the making, the EMS was a volunteer organization of mostly women, and Truesdale became a nationally registered paramedic and emergency victim care instructor. As the group's first paid coordinator, administrator and director, she also put in a minimum of 54 volunteer hours a month.

It's often said that volunteers are the heart and soul of any organization. Claire Truesdale has an abundance of both. Just ask any resident of Laurel Lake. ■