



Carla Bell volunteers with BridgingLife to not only help those in hospice care, but to help the staff through tough times.

◀ CONTINUED FROM PG. 57

"When I go to Dove House, it is always a learning experience," Bell says. "Like teaching, it's another place where you have to meet people where they are."

She says she is willing to do anything necessary for those in her care.

"I sit with any patient who doesn't have family with them, and I offer family members a chance to take a break while I sit with their loved one," Bell says. "Other times, they just might need to talk about what they are going through. It helps them be a little bit more prepared for what might happen. You try to give people a little bit of courage to make it through."

Bell says she volunteers for many reasons, including the opportunity to work with such a dedicated staff.

"They are my friends, and I want to help them through tough times, too. I have been going there long enough that I have gotten to know everyone," she says. "They are like family."

Barna says hospice volunteers provide invaluable care at a critical time. She considers Bell to be one of the best.

"She is empathetic, kind, serving and giving," Barna says. "It takes a special person and a special calling for someone to volunteer in this environment. She considers it an honor to work hand in hand with patients who are at the end of their journey in life and their families."

WESTMINSTER RESCUE MISSION

"Last year, we moved a million pounds of food in our food program," Westminster Rescue Mission Engagement Manager Trish St. Michel says. "There is no way we could do this without volunteers."

The Westminster Rescue Mission uses volunteers in two areas: the addiction healing program and the food mission program. Georgia Rittmeyer volunteers weekly in the food program.

"People who volunteer know they are helping to put food on the table of hungry people," St. Michel says. "Georgia is as regular as clockwork. She knows the program in and out, and she's also one of our downstream partners."

Now retired, Rittmeyer worked for the U.S. Department of Defense for nearly 50 years. She loves spending time with her two daughters and three grandchildren. Most of all, she calls herself a "kitchen junkie."

"I love to try out new recipes and love cooking shows and competitions," she says. "My favorite thing in the world is feeding people, whether guests in my home, small catering opportunities or at a community meal or the soup kitchen."

Rittmeyer is committed to volunteering to ensure people have access to food. She has volunteered at the Rescue Mission for eight or nine years, first cooking for residents in the addiction healing program. Now she sorts food to be picked up by the Maryland Food Bank and other community partners.

"I go through things donated by grocery stores and separate them into categories," Rittmeyer says. "We also have farmers who bring fresh vegetables or fruits, and I prepare those."

Rittmeyer runs a food program at St. Paul's United Church of Christ, where individuals can receive a free midday community meal every Thursday.

"They helped me so much with food for the St. Paul's kitchen that I feel I need to give back and help as much as I can," she says of volunteering for the Rescue Mission. "I wish I could do more. I believe that people who are benefiting — partners like myself — should be expected to give a few hours a week."

Rittmeyer says she loves running into residents she's worked with at the Rescue Mission and has attended their graduations from the organization's program.

"All the people at the Rescue Mission are incredible," Rittmeyer says. "I feel blessed and honored to be able to work with them. I love what they do and what they have made it into. Without volunteers, it [the work] would not get done."

Westminster Rescue Mission volunteer Georgia Rittmeyer is committed to ensuring people have access to food.

