

# VOLUNTEER CONNECTION

**Quiz: Is Betty Jewell** (a) special education teacher; (b) collector of antique sewing machines; (c) left-handed crocheter; (d) ordained minister; (e) UMD volunteer “extra-ordinaire” (f) **all of the above!**

UMD’s March Volunteer Orientation was just getting underway, and in comes Ms. Betty Jewell. So began a wonderful partnership. Betty relocated to Durham in August 2013 from New Jersey with her brother. One of 9 children and recently retired, Betty said “I wanted to work with people.” She went online for a place to volunteer and found UMD.



While Betty’s brother attends a program for disabled senior citizens 3 days a week, Betty is generally at UMD helping, smiling and encouraging people to do better, to do more, to have a good day. A regular fill-in at UMD’s reception desk, Betty is the welcoming face as donors, clients, volunteers and guests walk through the door. She also helps out on Friday mornings with jewelry class, and she attends Friday Chapel Services led by UMD’s volunteer chaplain.

For 30 years, Betty was a special education/resource teacher at the Avon Avenue School in Newark, NJ. Certified as an elementary and nursery school teacher, Betty also tutors. Betty says she feels good coming to UMD. She enjoys greeting people and talking with them. But she also shares “it kind of bothers me that there are so many needs and UMD can’t meet them all.” She explains when she sees young mothers, she wishes she could do something to help them. “I would like to tutor young moms to show them how to be better parents—singing to their children, doing their ABCs.”

In her spare time, Betty quilts. In one single weekend, Betty, her sister and two friends made a family reunion quilt—each family member was given a piece of white muslin and a permanent pen to write something about their family. Then Betty and her family and friends sewed it all together. She also makes jewelry, and crochets baby blankets as gifts for family members or friends. This is quite a feat since Betty is a left-handed crocheter. (Left handed crocheters find a few quirks as they are asked to hold the crochet hook in their left hand instead of their right hand. This means that patterns are back-to-front!) A passion for antique sewing machines has led Betty to buy her sixth one. Most amazing is that she uses most of these machines—one dating back to the late 1800s (William & Son) and a 1925 Singer that operates with a foot pedal.

What does UMD do for Betty? “It is satisfying to see someone come in not smiling and then leave with a smile. I greet them ‘Hello, can I help you?’ I smile. And they smile back. It is that simple. If you talk to them in a loving, friendly voice, they become more at ease. Someone can come in with a sour face and before the conversation is over, they are smiling and their whole attitude changes.”

