

Donations, volunteers fuel GAF services to LW



by Cathie Merz

cathiem_news@lwsb.com

The Golden Age Foundation (GAF), Leisure World's philanthropic arm, begins its new year with Anna Derby continuing as president. Rounding out the board are Mary Wood, vice president; Sandy Geffner, treasurer; and Lynn Vienna, corresponding secretary.

The GAF sponsors several annual and continuing services for all residents of Leisure World that are financed by the generous donations from LWers and their families and memberships.

The Hospitality Center is the most popular GAF service. "This past year was a bit of a roller coaster this year," says Chair Linda Johnson. The renovations of Clubhouse 6 caused the center to close for six weeks and for the first time since its inception, the center closed for federal holidays.

During the past year the center served 24,388 guests. The center serves 100-150 guests between 9-11 a.m., Monday-Friday.

Johnson hopes to see more diversity in the volunteers and guests this year. She has volunteers from eight nationalities now and notices a more diversified group of guests.

"People who come to hospitality really seem to enjoy the human contact and interaction," she says. "They look forward to coffee and camaraderie each day. For some this is their only outside contact."

Johnson is stepping down as hospitality chair. Carl Kennedy, Mutual 14, will be the new chair. Johnson says he has lots of new ideas to implement.

Kennedy is excited about his new position. He has volunteered in hospitality and with the GAF tax program during the four years he has lived in Leisure World. He invites all residents to volunteer at the Hospitality Center. For more information, call him at (661)810-9410 or email him at carl_kennedy@yahoo.com.

The center asks guests to bring their own cups for coffee, which saves the GAF money and more importantly the environment.

The Mobility Aids program is another year-round program that services many shareholders.

The GAF loaned 256 deluxe walkers, 136 transporters and 72 wheelchairs through the program from June 2017-June 2018.

This year marked the retirement of Program Director Bruce Humes and repairman Frank Shramek.

Humes gave 10 years of service and Shramek spent 18 years with GAF. Both men worked tirelessly to further the goals of the GAF during their tenures.

With Shramek's retirement new tools were purchased. Repairs are mostly inexpensive, however the equipment is aging.

The tax man comes each April and the GAF was kept busy completing 702 Federal tax and state returns e-

filed last year, along with seven amended returns completed. Volunteers also answered 147 questions from residents. More than 1,000 telephone calls were fielded.

In addition to the site coordinator, there were 17 tax counselors, seven greeters and five telephone appointment makers.

This was the second year the Tax Slayer program was used and allowed more appointments to be scheduled.

Although the tax program operates for only a couple of months, volunteers begin training in November for the upcoming season. The biggest challenge is recruiting tax counselors. Many of the current counselors have been volunteering for 10 years and are ready to retire.

The tax center was open Monday-Wednesday, Feb. 5-April 11.

The GAF sponsors and pays for the shredder truck to come to the parking lot in Clubhouse 2 four times a year. Over 1,100 shareholders attended the shredding events this past year. Shareholders look forward to the event each quarter.

The GAF also pays for recycling projects in LW, including batteries and light bulbs. Residents recycled 4,031 pounds of batteries, including alkaline, lead acid, lithium and Ni-Cad. Over 4,400 light bulbs were collected.

The Donor Wall Project for residents to leave a legacy in the community is complete. Residents purchased a walkway brick or wall tile to help enhance the area leading to the Amphitheater from the Administration parking lot.

The GAF donated \$15,000 to the Golden Rain Foundation for the construction of Mission Park behind Clubhouse 2.

The GAF has enrolled in two rebate programs, that give a percentage of qualifying purchased back to GAF, AmazonSmile and Ralph's Community Rebate.

AmazonSmile is a simple and automatic way to support GAF every time the registered person shops, at no cost to them. To participate visit smile.amazon.com and choose Golden Age Foundation as the charitable organization, then log on to smile.amazon.com and begin shopping.

GAF received \$2945.28 from the Ralph's Reward program for three quarters this year.

To participate in the Ralphs program, go to Ralphs.com to register or call (800) 443-4438. Participants need a Ralphs Reward Card number to register. Shop at Ralph's and be sure the bottom of the receipt references Golden Age Foundation.

A mailbox is located in the GAF Hospitality Center, Clubhouse 6, to simplify becoming a member, to renew current memberships and to donate to GAF programs.

Memberships are issued annually. Basic membership is \$10; bronze membership, \$100; silver membership, \$250; and gold membership, \$500 per year.