



NRAI Fox / DN-R

Amanda Sensabaugh, 24, of Bridgewater volunteers at the Mercy House Thrift Store on South High Street earlier this week. Sensabaugh is one of hundreds of volunteers in the area working to bring happiness during the holidays and year-round.

Stellar Volunteers

Seven Valley Residents Shine Bright In Nonprofit Realm

Story by Heather Bowser

In many ways, Amanda Sensabaugh is a typical volunteer.

For the last six months, the 24-year-old Bridgewater resident has worked at the Mercy House Thrift Store on South High Street. Two days a week, she spends nearly four hours hanging and organizing baby clothes.

"I like volunteering; it helps me a lot," she said. "It's good for my body because I can walk and it's good for my brain because I can think."

But Sensabaugh's bosses say she is much more than their average volunteer. She has Down syndrome, so she works extra hard to make sure the job is done right. Her bosses say she helps out wherever she's needed around the store and has never once complained.

"I'm very happy right now," said Sensabaugh, the daughter of Mark and Beverly Sensabaugh of Bridgewater. "My mom and dad and sister are very proud of me because I work really hard."

According to the directors of local nonprofit agencies, hard-working model volunteers like Sensabaugh can be found across the city and county. This area is well known for its bounteous supply of happy, helpful, loving volunteers, they said.

While not all of these folks must overcome a disability to serve — though many do — all give their time, talents and resources without reservation or hesitation.

With that in mind, the Daily News-Record took time to recognize just a few of



Courtesy Photo

Joe Riley, 64, of Harrisonburg helps Erick Tejada with his homework during the Second Home program at Muhlenberg Lutheran Church.

these shining stars during the holiday season.

Last week, executive directors at more than a dozen United Way partner agencies submitted names of their super givers — folks at Mercy House nominated Sensabaugh — and then the DN-R features staff picked out six others to highlight.

Joe Riley

About four years ago, Joe Riley and his wife moved to Harrisonburg from Northern Virginia where he worked as a statistician and an economist. Although the 64-year-old still does a bit of statistical consulting for the federal government, these days his most important job deals with slightly simpler mathematical concepts.

Four days a week, Riley helps elementary school kids with their homework. He also plays kickball, board games and helps them learn to read and ties

their shoelaces. The day-care program, called Second Home, is housed at Muhlenberg Lutheran Church and Riley's been helping there since it was created about 2 1/2 years ago.

"A lot of times, especially with math, providing one-on-one assistance can make a huge difference," he said. "All of a sudden their eyes light up and they feel much better about the subject. It's just really nice to see that."

Of the 25 or 30 volunteers at the day care, "Mr. Joe" spends the most time there, said Patty Sensabaugh, executive director. Almost all of 70 or so children at the day care are impoverished, she said.

"He is just an amazing person who is there for any child in need," she said. "He goes to whatever child is in need at the moment and helps them."

Riley added, "I just like being around the children. They're just delightful to be with. It's an opportunity to

be with them and try and assist them as best I can."

The Breedens

Opening the donation bags at the Elkton Area United Services Thrift Store is a yucky job, said Marsha Deavers, executive director. Sometimes people put trash in the bags or dirty diapers and other stuff that's a bit too nasty to print, she said.

"It's the dirtiest job in the whole place," Deavers said.

And yet, for 10 years, that's just what Reba Breeden did. While her husband, Roger, worked on moving heavy items and making minor repairs, Reba Breeden opened bag after bag after bag after bag. Chances are if you bought or donated something at EAUS in the last decade, it's passed through her hands.

"They will do anything that we ask them," Deavers said. "Anything."

The Breedens, both 67, live in Elkton a few miles from the thrift store. Reba Breeden began volunteering 11 Christmas ago after she quit babysitting and had more time on her hands.

"I don't like to be sitting at home doing nothing; I like to keep busy," she said. "I knew doing this would help other people and me too."

Store manager Susan Dell said the Breedens are as quiet and as faithful "as the day is long."

"You can always count on them being here," Dell said. "They give because they can and they ask for nothing."

For Lands, Volunteerism Is In Their Blood

Volunteers FROM PAGE E1

Rob Munro

For the last few months Blue Ridge Legal Services on North High Street has been home to two new volunteers: Sable, a black Lab, and Rob Munro, his owner.

While Sable doesn't offer the best legal counsel — to humans, anyway — she does contribute significantly around the office. Munro, 37, of Harrisonburg became blind after suffering from cancer of the retina as a teen. He uses Sable, Braille and computer software that reads documents aloud to him to do work around the nonprofit office.

"I have it on very good authority that Sable is an adorable dog," Munro said.

In May, Munro graduated from law school at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He took the bar in July but until he gets licensed in Virginia, he can't practice law.

But that doesn't mean he — and Sable — can't help.

Since August, Munro spends two days a week

screening people who are filing for debt protection or bankruptcy. He interviews them by phone, writes up a report and shares his thoughts

with the licensed attorneys at the practice. Most of his clients never know that he's blind.

"We're helping people though a very difficult time in their lives; difficult financially and psychologically," Munro said. "We are helping them take control back during a time when things are feeling out of control. We're telling them they're not alone."

Sarah Looney, a staff attorney at BRLS, said the crew loves both of its new recruits.

"At first we thought, 'How's he going to read the case files? Maybe we should hold back on the types of assignments we should give him,'" Looney said. "But Rob taught us about the software and he really has helped us ex-

pand the number of clients we can get to. And even if we can give peace of mind to one more person, you can't underestimate how much that means."

“For us, our family, [it's] not a vocation, it's an avocation.”

■ Tim Land

handyman.

"For us, our family, [it's] not a vocation, it's an avocation," said the 82-year-old city resident.

About three years ago, Land began putting his skills to work for the Harrisonburg Rockingham Child Day Care Center. The nonprofit was littered with a bunch of old bikes and tricycles, none of which worked. At the time, his son-in-law was president of the center and asked him to help out.

He fixed chains, pumped tires, replaced pedals and seats. Suddenly the center had all the bikes it could need. Ever since that day, Land has completed minor repairs

and fix-it jobs at the center anywhere from once a week to once a month, depending on what breaks.

He repairs light switches, doorknobs, bathroom doors and vacuum cleaners.

"I don't claim to be a professional but I knew if they had to call someone in, it would be between \$75 to \$80 just to get them there," Land said. "It makes me feel really good that I'm able to help."

Delores Jameson, executive director of the nonprofit, adds, "He loves the kids. I do not know what I would do without Mr. Tim."

Land isn't the only volunteer in his household.

He and his wife, Kitty, both volunteer at Rockingham Memorial Hospital, Meals on Wheels and with the Broadway Lions Club.

"We feel we owe this to our community," Land said.

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