

Rosa Wims puts in between 40 and 45 hours per week at the health center.

*'When you can be active at this age, I feel the Lord has blessed me. You not only give but you get. You meet friends you'd never meet.'*

Rosa Wims, 70, director of the Faith Community Health Awareness Center

## Retired nurse provides hope for inner city

By Rob Cullivan  
Staff writer

ROCHESTER — Steward C. Putnam, senior vice president of operations at St. Mary's Hospital, remembered the day he told Rosa Wims he would serve on her advisory board for Faith Community Health Awareness Center, 176 Genesee St.

"Hold my mule while I shout!" she said to Putnam, who laughed and asked her what she meant. Apparently, the old adage refers to joy so great that someone holding a mule might lose it should they let go of the reins in celebration.

Celebration seems to be the best word to describe the dedicated volunteer health worker, who exudes a sense of hope and delight in her work that makes her seem younger than most teenagers.

"I feel it's an honor," the 70-year-old said. "When you can be active at this age, I feel the Lord has blessed me."

A Seventh-day Adventist with a decidedly ecumenical outlook, Wims has won several awards honoring her humanitarianism. She serves on numerous boards of community organizations, including United Way of Greater Rochester, Corpus Christi Center, Rochester Regional Food Bank and several others.

Wims' daily life centers on the health center, which is open Monday through Friday, and Sundays. The center offers food and clothing distribution on a daily basis, hypertension screenings, lectures and classes on various health and social topics, and a soup kitchen twice a week.

The center also provides activities for seniors; tutoring and after-school programs for children; and various support groups. The agency networks extensively with other groups and health organizations, including St. Mary's and Highland hospitals, and the student-nursing program at the



Babette G. Augustin/Photo editor

Wims (second from the right) prays with volunteers before the daily food and clothing distribution program begins.



(Above) Anthony Garrett reflects during the saying of grace prior to the weekly Sunday soup kitchen. (At right) Dr. Louis Velocci examines Dolores Cherry during a monthly eye clinic at the center.



State University of New York College at Brockport.

The health center relies on donations from churches, organizations and individuals for its finances, and two part-time employees along with a host of volunteers for its manpower. Some funding also comes from government coffers.

The center grew out of a post-retirement adventure that Wims started almost a decade ago. A licensed practical nurse, she retired in 1983

after working as a nurse since 1971. Prior to becoming a nurse, she was a nurse's aide at Rochester General Hospital, where the staff encouraged her to pursue her childhood dream of becoming a health professional.

"I just loved nurses — their white uniforms, their nurses' caps," the Florida native said. "Everything about them was so nice and clean."

Westside Health Services requested in 1984 that she run a health and activities center on Jefferson Avenue.

"I really didn't want to do it," she admitted. "I was almost forced to do this."

But seeing the dozens of residents come in each day — unaware of the knowledge needed to lead healthy lives — turned Wims around and fired her enthusiasm.

"When I got into it, I really got hooked," she said.

Fate almost seemed to have doomed Wims' post-retirement career when her

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