

Volunteers lend skills to parish communities

By Mike Latona
Staff writer

Not long after Mafalda "Maffy" Camillaci retired from the Greece Central School District approximately 20 years ago, she found herself among a small group of parishioners being tapped for volunteer roles by Father David Simon, then the parochial vicar of Holy Name of Jesus Church in Greece.

"He said, 'I want you and you and you.' And he made us sacristans," Camillaci recalled.

Since that time, she has kept so busy that it might be easier to list what she's *not* involved with at Holy Name Parish.

"She does so darn many things, I can't think of them all," said diocesan Auxiliary Bishop Dennis W. Hickey, who regularly celebrates the 9 a.m. Mass at Holy Name.

Camillaci, 81, prepares the altar for most of the 9 a.m. Masses. Over the years she has also sewed and cooked for the parish priests, and has even sewn booties for newly baptized infants. She still goes on several Communion calls per week as well.

And at parish suppers, Camillaci utilizes the same cooking skills she applied during her 17 years as a cafeteria worker at Hoover Drive Junior High School in Greece.

But when you see Camillaci merrily scurrying from duty to duty, it's easy to tell that she doesn't consider her efforts a burden.

"I love to do it," Camillaci said. Camillaci is among many retirees who apply the same dedication to their parish as they did in the work force.

"The commitment that these volunteers make is essential to the overall ministry in our communities," said Barb Pedeville,

diocesan coordinator of parish personnel services.

Because these seniors are not paid staff members, Pedeville added, their accomplishments often go unnoticed.

"I'm sure there are a lot of unsung heroes who give of their time and talent," Pedeville said.

Such is the case for Holy Name's Esther Eaves, who retired in 1983 from Eastman Kodak Company where she was a quality assurance technician.

"I worked 41 years, and you don't just turn off," said Eaves, who — like Camillaci — was a founding Holy Name parishioner in 1964.

Eaves is a sacristan for Holy Name's 6:30 a.m. weekday Mass. She noted that she's involved with so many parish groups, she has her own desk in the parish office.

"I've been in almost every group except the Men's Club. But I attend their dinners and serve the drinks at their golf tournaments," smiled Eaves, who will turn 75 in May.

At St. Catherine of Siena Church in Addison, Don Armbruster's electrical skills came in handy during a big renovation project this past year. Armbruster, who retired from Dresser-Rand Co. in Painted Post seven years ago, helped wire the lighting in the church hall and also helped build a new office.

Don's wife, Jerry, pitched in with the renovations as well and is also a member of St. Catherine's buildings and grounds committee. She noted, with a laugh, that this work doesn't have much in common with her former job in the executive personnel department at Corning, Inc.

"I worked 39 years in an office and I've



Greg Francis/Staff photographer
Mafalda "Maffy" Camillaci blows out candles after Mass March 18 at Holy Name of Jesus Church, Rochester. She is an active volunteer at the parish.

had enough of that," remarked Jerry, who has been retired for four years.

The Armbrusters, both 62, added that several other retirees — such as Ken Knowles, who has donated supplies and the use of construction equipment — volunteer at St. Catherine's. Jerry Armbruster said that without such help, the renovation wouldn't have been possible.

"The cost would have been prohibitive," she said.

Father Gerald O'Connor, pastor of St. Catherine's as well as St. Stanislaus in Bradford and St. Joseph's in Campbell, said he relies heavily on his retirees because he is the only full-time priest for the three churches. These helpers include such people as Dominic Volino, a St. Joseph's parishioner who is in his mid-80s. Volino, a former railroad track repairman, has maintained the shrubs and flowers, mowed the lawn and even helped renovate the parking lot at St. Joseph's.

"He's been a tremendous help down there. I've never had to worry about a thing with him there," Father O'Connor said.

Father O'Connor remarked that Volino's workload began with a simple chore several years ago.

"One day he just asked me if he could put in some flowers," the pastor recalled.

Other retirees interviewed for this story also seemed eager to help out their parish during retirement.

"I have a need to be needed," Eaves said.

"The activity makes me feel better, and it makes me feel good to do it for the church," Don Armbruster said.

"I don't like to just sit around. I do like the involvement," Jerry Armbruster added.

As for Camillaci, she said her volunteerism is the least she can do for her beloved Holy Name parish community.

"The people at this church are the most compassionate people I've ever met in my life," Camillaci said.



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