

## 'St. James Gang' member receives top honors

By Mike Latona  
Staff writer

IRONDEQUOIT — As Stella Beahan exited an elevator at St. Ann's Home, she gave a friendly wave to a group of residents on their way to lunch. Obviously happy to see her, they responded with a flurry of hellos.

Beahan then popped into the room of resident Pauline Lehrer, whom she has visited for several years.

"She's so good and so wonderful," Lehrer said, prompting an embarrassed smile from Beahan. "She does anything and everything for people; I don't know what I'd do without her. I've had other volunteers, but never as generous with their time."

Moments later, Beahan stopped in for a quick chat with one of her favorite residents, Anna La Salle.

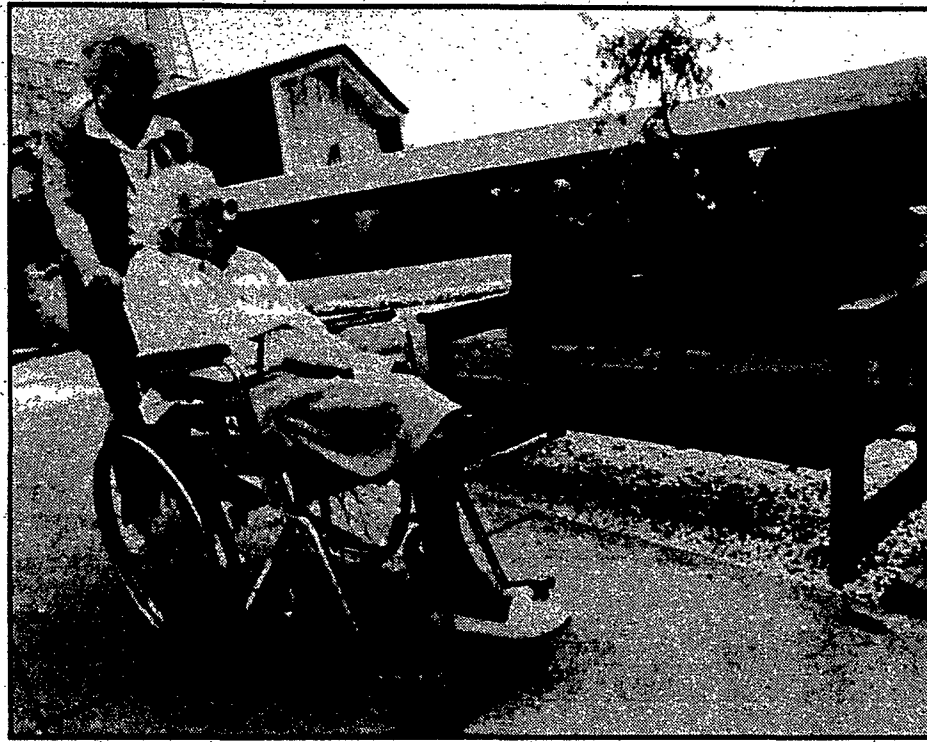
"I looked out the window this morning and said, 'I wonder when my friend is coming,'" La Salle remarked.

Such sentiments help to explain why Beahan, who turned 80 last month, received nearly 80 cards to commemorate the event.

In addition to her milestone birthday, Beahan's 15 years of volunteer service at the St. Ann's Community has garnered recent attention as well. She was selected last fall by the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) of Rochester as its Female Volunteer of the Year. She was also a top-10 finalist earlier this year for the national Catholic Charities Volunteer of the Year award.

Yet Beahan emphasized that she's not into the business of volunteering for recognition's sake.

"All I want to do is my work," Beahan said.



Greg Francis/Staff photographer

St. Ann's Home volunteer Stella Beahan, left, walks resident Pauline Lehrer around the campus May 26.

Beahan is part of a loyal contingent of parishioners from St. James Church in Irondequoit — mostly retirees — who volunteer regularly at St. Ann's, according to Barb Joyce, St. Ann's coordinator of volunteer services.

"We call them the 'St. James Gang,' she remarked.

Beahan and her late husband, Frank, were founding members of St. James Parish in 1949 and have devoted countless hours of volunteer work to the parish over the past 50 years. In fact, the holy water fonts are named in memory of Frank.

The Beahans became connected with St. Ann's Home in the early 1980s in response to a volunteer shortage there. Currently, Stella spends a good chunk of her Tuesdays and Saturdays at St. Ann's.

She said that her favorite residents are the ones who may provide the greatest challenges.

"When I find someone that's very difficult to get along with, that's who I target," Beahan said.

She recalled, with a chuckle, how she was able to soften up a former lawyer by acting extra-friendly toward him. Eventu-

ally, she said, he began asking her to visit with him.

"I decided I was going to break him down, and I did," she said.

It's this level of perseverance that make Beahan's contributions so valued, Joyce acknowledged.

"She's really good at bringing people out, encouraging them to come out of their room," Joyce commented. "She's the most patient person I've ever met."

On the other hand, Beahan-claimed that her work is not really guided by unique talents.

"I think it just comes naturally. I just love people, that's all," she said.

That love apparently extends to people of all ages. Beahan said that one of her most treasured honors was when a fellow St. Ann's volunteer — a student at McQuaid Jesuit High School — asked her to write a letter of recommendation on his behalf to the National Honor Society.

In addition to her work at St. Ann's, Beahan volunteers at St. Peter's Kitchen in Rochester. On the parish level, Beahan founded the Adult Group at St. James Church and is an organizer of the Adult Travel group as well. She also belongs to the parish's Altar Society.

Beahan said she is thankful she can keep up such an extensive workload as she enters her ninth decade.

"I just thank God every day of my life for my good health," she said.

Along with her recent local and national recognition, Stella garnered a flurry of attention when she celebrated her 80th birthday. She reported that festivities were carried over a four-day period as all four of her children were in town to help her celebrate.

"It was wonderful, just to be with the family," she remarked.

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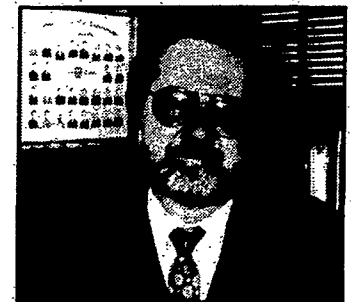
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First, it is important to make sure the child is honestly included in all information and planning. This means being honest about the death and answering the child's questions.

It also means allowing but not forcing children to go to the funeral or visitation as they wish. Secondly, a child needs love and security. Let a child know they will be cared for, take an interest in schoolwork and include them in play. Some children resent being pressured to accept burdens beyond their reach. "Taking over for Dad or Mom" may be too much responsibility. Naturally, changes will occur but a child needs time and help in adjusting to them...

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