



Catholic Charities Program Becomes “Gold Standard” of Dementia Day Care

Pat Marabella has been a volunteer for six years.

They said it couldn't be done,” said Michele Osmon, program manager for Catholic Charities Alzheimer's Respite Resource Center. (PHOTO) “We started the first nonprofit program for people with dementia on \$500 and a troop of dedicated volunteers in 1981.

People didn't believe we could sustain the program on a sliding fee scale. To keep costs in line, we train volunteers to work alongside staff, and to this day, 20 volunteers work a full day each week, and most have done so for years on end,” she said.

This year, the program celebrated its 30th anniversary to the delight of family, staff and volunteers, many of whom were involved in the

beginning years. Longevity is not the only sign of success – it has been called “the gold standard” by professionals in the field. Clients perk up with twice-a-day music and singing, games and arts/crafts that stimulate them mentally, physically and spiritually. The program is known for improving the well-being of the clients, while giving families peace of mind because they trust the program and per-

sonnel. Executive Director Chuck Fernandez feels it is God's intent for Catholic Charities to undertake this mission. “It preserves the dignity of our seniors through love and compassion,” he said.

Pat Marabella has been a volunteer for six years. She became involved with Catholic Charities after being moved by a sermon by Father Gerry Gormley at St. Rose Church, who encouraged parishioners to go out and use their talents in the community. She says volunteering has changed her way of being a Christian. “I love it,” she said about volunteering in the Respite day program. “I would come

even on ‘death's door,’” she joked. She confessed getting very attached to the clients, most of whom are over 70. “They feel like they are your parents,” she said. Pat goes home filled to overflowing, sharing the joys of her day with her husband. Michele says people like Pat are a God-send. “She gives extra love and appreciation to every client.” You can see how the Alzheimer's Respite Resource Center impacted one family at www.srcharities.org/spotlight/videos.html - See “2011- Hope Works” For program information contact Michele Osmon, 528.8712 ext.185, mosmon@srcharities.org