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## Volunteers offer donors a free hand

'Day of Sharing' offers Arc beneficiaries a way to say thanks to those who help

By Mary Gail Hare Sun reporter

*September 23, 2007*

Jimmy Turner needed a little direction, but he easily managed a garden hose and watered newly planted flowers at the Havre de Grace Community Center.

"I have watered flowers before," said the 37-year-old Bel Air resident, who is one of 32 community partners at The Arc Northern Chesapeake Region, an organization for people with developmental disabilities. "I know how much to give them."

Turner and 11 other Arc volunteers spruced up the center's gardens Thursday as part of their community service project. If they took a break, they soon were back at their tasks and encouraging one another.

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of Sharing," a statewide Arc event that provided a way to thank supportive organizations, such as the town of Bel Air and the Harford County Sheriff's Office.

In addition to gardening, group members, who range in age from 21 to 70, delivered lunches and trays of cookies to area businesses and flowers and cards to hospitals.

"This day was just a good way for organizations that help The Arc to get a thank-you back," said Kim Good, coordinator of the community partners program.

The most labor-intensive work fell to the dozen partners at the Havre de Grace center. Jack Hurley, 65, of Bel Air grew up on a farm and readily takes on the tougher jobs, Good said.

He spent most of the morning spreading mulch. Just as he finished raking one pile, a lawn tractor would deliver another bucket. When organizers tried to give him a break, he resisted.

"I have to keep raking," he said. "The plants really need this stuff."

Tony Perry, 46, of Aberdeen weeded the beds of pansies, mums and shrubs from his wheelchair as Hurley spread mulch evenly around the plants.

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"I need a spade so I can get the big old weed roots," Perry said.

Cynthia Martin, 45, of Aberdeen and James Wise, 48, of Belcamp had planted the flowers before turning the beds over to Turner.

"You have to water the plants and trees because the sun makes them so dry," Martin said. "I love planting all the pretty colors."

After about three hours, the group could relax. Landscaping at the building's entrance had a fresh look. The weeds were gone and the fall flowers were planted, watered and protected with pine-smelling mulch. The Arc provided the flowers, and Harford's Department of Recreation and Parks donated the mulch and lent gardening tools.

"The Arc people come here frequently for our programs, and today they are giving back," said Terri Glenn, assistant manager of the building that serves as a senior center as well as providing family and youth recreation programs. "We could use a bit of beautifying."

The \$6.4 million activity center, lauded as a facility that will allow generations to mingle, socialize and work together seven days a week, opened in March. Activities include playing bingo, join discussion groups and listen to concerts at the facility.

"This was a good experience for everybody," Good said. "Our members did a great job. They were hot and tired but really pleased with how beautiful it all turned out."

When they are not landscaping, Arc members help deliver for Meals on Wheels, volunteer at area soup kitchens and lend a hand to Bel Air whenever possible.

"We are always looking for volunteer opportunities and ways to partner with other organizations," Good said. "If your organization is looking for someone to help out, we have volunteers willing to learn job skills."

Most members volunteer every weekday at some kind of community-based work, and some have part-time jobs, Good said.

"It all gives them a chance to meet people and feel needed," she said.

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