

## TUSCOLA COUNTY

# To the end, longtime volunteer Will was ‘making things better’

By JOHN SCHNEIDER  
john@tcadvertiser.com

**FREMONT TWP.** — Helping out others and his community was James “Jim” Will’s legacy.

The list of organizations Will touched and made better is long. And he wasn’t just a volunteer; he was good at volunteering.

“Just a world of knowledge,” said friend Neil Jackson, who served with Will on the Tuscola County Fair Board. “People see the fair from a distance, and don’t understand the complexity of everything. Jim made it look real easy. He knew how to get things done and if he didn’t, he knew who to contact to get it done.”

Will, a former utility lineman and family man, died Thursday, May 12, at his Vassar-area home at age 74.

“He was retired, but he never really retired,” said Cathy Patterson of Tuscola County Michigan State University Extension, who worked with Will, who volunteered for the MSU Extension 4-H program. “He just kept going from one thing to another. He was a blessed soul. He’ll be greatly missed.”

According to his obituary, Will was employed as a lineman for DTE Energy for many years, retiring in 2005. While he



Courtesy photo | *The Advertiser*  
**James “Jim” Will, a longtime volunteer for multiple local organizations, died Thursday, May 11, at the age of 74.**

was employed at DTE, and until his death, Will had a knack for helping others.

Local folks may know Will best as a member of the fair board, where he served

SEE WILL | A4

# Will, longtime donor and volunteer, dies at 74

FROM | A1

for more than 20 years, several as board president. A few years back, Will told Jackson he was stepping down as president, and asked his friend to run for the position. Jackson has been board president ever since.

"I'll miss him, the fair board will miss him, and the community will miss him," Jackson said. "I talked to him every week and asked him about something. And I have no doubt that in the next week or two I'll have a question I'd sure like to ask him."

Jackson said his family and Will's family were close, and that he'd known Will "about my whole life."

"He has a wonderful family," Jackson said. "One good person after another."

For more than 50 years, Will was a member of International Brotherhood of Electrical Union Local 17 and the Knights of Columbus. When he was named Caro Citizen of the Year in 2013 by the Caro Chamber of Commerce, he had to walk to the podium from the kitchen to receive the award. Caro K of C members were cooking the meal for the ceremony.

Will dedicated a great deal of time, according to his obituary, to the local 4-H program.

"He had a way of seeing a need and finding a way to get that need met," Patterson said. "Whether it be community gardens, or teaching someone how to build a garden, or getting a millage passed, he always got the right people in the right

place."

Gardening was another of Will's passions. For years, he and wife Linda have owned Will's Greenhouse on Apache Road in Fremont Township. But not all of the flowers and plants were for sale.

"I think he donated more flowers to 4-H and the fairgrounds than he sold," Patterson said.

Even as Will's health was deteriorating, his was still helping others, Jackson said.

"Just a few days before he passed, I went to visit him," Jackson said. "He was very weak, but he still had a few projects he was working on for the fair and he wanted to make sure I knew some things. Here's a guy near the end of his life and that's what he's thinking about, making things better for the community."

According to his obituary, Will was born in Caro on Oct. 12, 1947. He went to the old Bruisee Country School before graduating with the 1965 class at Mayville High School.

In 1969, he married the former Linda Lange. She survives him along with the couple's children, Angela (Carlton) Painter, James S. (Lisa) Will, Mark (Shannon) Will and Sheri Will, and eight grandchildren.

"Jim loved spending time with his family, sharing his knowledge of gardening and you could always find him riding one of his many John Deeres," Will's obituary states.

A funeral service was held for Will Monday morning at his church, St. Christopher Parrish in Caro.