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THRIFT SHOP VOLUNTEERS SUPPORT CANCER CLINIC

Celebrating 100th birthday and 42 years of service

by Mary Anne White

In December 2022, Laura Harper celebrated her 100th birthday. In that same month, she also received recognition for her 42 years of volunteer service at the Cancer Thrift Shop in Grove City, Ohio.

Harper is a first-generation Italian American from New York who spoke no English in the first six years of her life. She and her husband John were both teachers and she became a New York school administrator. They had no children of their own, but her

ing with the Grove City Library, but she was also inspired by her husband's "Aunt Irene" who was the first director of that library. Harper told Senior Times, "She was paid \$30 each month for several years until she asked for a raise and received \$50 per month. However, when the Depression hit, she voluntarily cut her salary in half so the library could continue to operate."

Harper and her husband planned to donate to the Grove City Library after their deaths. But when the new library was being



Laura Harper

High Street, and the Reynoldsburg Thrift Shop at 7125 East Main Street.

Miriam Utter, a volunteer at the Worthington store, provided this bit of history about the three stores: "In 1967, the stores were affiliated with the American Cancer Society. However, in 2005, each of the stores decided proceeds from sales would be better spent in the support of the Columbus Cancer Clinic."

Constitution to maintain its independent 501c3 status".

In 2005, Harper was instrumental in the store's affiliation with the Columbus Cancer Clinic, a program under the umbrella of LifeCare Alliance. She is a past president of the all-volunteer store and is that store's longest-living volunteer. Although she is a reluctant celebrity of both

Chuck Gehring, CEO of the LifeCare Alliance Columbus Cancer Clinic program, emphasized the importance of the stores. "Together, these three stores in 2022 donated \$152,000. They provided 17 percent of the annual budget of the Columbus Cancer Clinic to help uninsured cancer patients with diagnostic



Betty Lewis, President of the Grove City Cancer Thrift Shop presents their 2022 donation to the Columbus Cancer Clinic to Chuck Gehring, CEO of Lifecare Alliance and the Columbus Cancer Clinic. The check for \$73,000 is the largest donation made by this all volunteer effort since it began. Shown at the annual volunteer recognition luncheon on Dec. 5 are (l.to r.) Treasurer Gwen Miller, Gehring, President Betty Lewis, and Asst. Treasurer Patty Hines.

students became like sons and daughters. She is still in touch with some of her students from 61 years ago.

In 1975, she and her husband retired from their work in New York. Her husband was a direct descendant of the Seeds family, a prominent name in the Grove City area; so, the couple decided to move to Ohio where he could manage the family farm. When he passed away in 1984, Harper took over the management of the farm which she still manages today.

Harper believes in being active in the community. Her teaching background may have played a role in her interest in volunteer-

planned, she decided not to wait. The new library has a section called "Harper's Grove"—an area for young pre-teen readers. Harper has been a member of the Friends of the Library for 47 years and is also President Emeritus.

In 1980, Harper became a volunteer with the Grove City Cancer Thrift Shop with some of her friends from the library. "Her great handwriting is an asset in making out tags as a consignment volunteer and as a cashier," said Sue Shilling, also a volunteer with the Grove City store". Shilling continued, "Harper helped update the bylaws and re-write the store's



Looking through the window at the Reynoldsburg Thrift Shop

community and organizational recognition, Harper was recently honored for her volunteering record. "I just hope to make the world a better place," she said.

The Grove City Cancer Thrift Shop, now in its 50th year is located at 3684 Garden Court. It is one of three independent all-volunteer donation-and-consignment stores that support the Columbus Cancer Clinic. The other stores are the Worthington Thrift Shop at 5600 North

screenings, medications, assistance with rent, and transportation to and from doctor appointments". Gehring also stated, "the stores also collect food so that cancer patients can be fed according to doctor recommendations. In addition the stores also collect pet food, so patients who cannot afford it can care for their pets rather than having to surrender them. We wouldn't be able to do what we do without all

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