

Elderly find fellowship, fun in association

by Pat Allen

Battalion Reporter

Every Tuesday and Friday afternoon, at 1402 Bristol Dr. in Bryan, senior citizens of Brazos County get together for a little fun, food and fellowship. They're members of the Brazos County Senior Citizens Association, an organization helping the older adults of the community enjoy their lives. "Something has to alleviate the feeling of being alone and growing old," Willie Belle Bogard, president of the association, said. "We provide a

place where older people can come for fellowship and use their talents." The association was organized in 1976 by a handful of people who saw the need for such a group in Brazos County. In the beginning, members met in an old medical clinic on W. 28th Street. Now, thanks to Jack Lester Sr., they have a new facility. It's two years old, worth \$1 million, and paid for. Lester wanted to help senior citizens in the county, so he gave the association land for a building. He then told the association

he would give \$50,000 to the construction fund if they would match his donation. "I like giving money to people," Lester said. "This town needed a place like this for the older people, and I'm happy I was able to help." "Jack told us he'd give us \$50,000 and all we had to do was match him," Mickey McGuire, a member of the association and unofficial groundskeeper said. "So we went out and began raising the money. We had bake sales and yard sales. We also received funds from the Brazos County Development Council and several donations from people in the community who really wanted to see a place for senior citizens," McGuire said. McGuire takes care of the landscape and is an all-around handyman for the association. He paints and varnishes cabinets, raises the flags, sweeps the dining room and still finds time to sneak in a game or two of dominoes. "We did all the landscaping ourselves," he said. "Those professional guys wanted \$15,000 to do a job we did for less than \$2,000. We planted 70 shrubs and enough trees to start a forest." When members gather at their "home away from home," they begin the afternoon with a covered dish lunch. Everyone brings something to share. This provides a family-like

atmosphere and allows the ladies to show off their favorite recipes. Before the feast begins, visitors are introduced, and a prayer is given for members who are ill or absent. After lunch, the fun and games begin. In one room ladies are quilting blankets that sell for \$150 to \$250. In other rooms people are making pottery items, painting china and sewing stuffed animals. The items are sold in the association's craft shop, and the money goes into building maintenance. Dewain "Pappy" Wade and friends are in another room involved in a traditional domino game. "We have a good time here," Wade said. "We don't care if we get beat, we'll keep on grinning. That last game was nip and tuck the whole way. We're gonna get 'em this time." Lucille Newcomb joined the association in 1981. Her interests lay in the association's craft shop, which she manages. "I love doing the quilting and taking care of that shop, but I especially enjoy meeting the people here and making new members feel welcome," Newcomb said. "Many of the people here have lost their mate and begin to feel lonely and unwanted. We try to get them interested in games and crafts. We're a close family here, just like brothers and sisters."



Lucille Newcomb, left, chairman of crafts, and Julia Cross work on a baby doll quilt together. The quilt hanging on the wall behind them is a 1976-81 membership quilt with 225 names.

again and then you know you're going to make it." The association also provides its members with activities away from the Bryan-College Station. For example, travel groups are set up among members and friends so that the senior citizens don't have to travel alone. McGuire said the association accepts as members anyone over 55 years old. He said he believes the youngest member is 62 and that James Lang, 95, is the oldest member of the group. "We have about 350 members but the center is available to any senior citizen in the county," he said. "The National Association of Federal Employees and the Retired Teachers Association use our center for their meetings also." "Just seeing your friends enjoying life and seeing the satisfaction you're bringing to others makes all the hard work worthwhile," McGuire said. "What you can do for others is what gives you satisfaction. I get the biggest kick out of helping people. When you start doing things for yourself, well, you're riding on the wrong boat."



"I'm Connie . . . the first of the Cotton Patch Kids." These dolls are for sale in the association's craft shop, along with pillow cases, and other hand-made crafts.

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