



# A LIFETIME OF GIVING BACK

**THROUGH TEACHING, AIDING IN TIMES OF CRISIS AND MORE, THIS BELLEVUE CLUB MEMBER HAS SPENT THE MAJORITY OF HER LIFE HELPING OTHERS.**

By Stacy Booth

Judy Holder loves volunteering. The activity has been an integral part of her life, as she has been helping Bellevue schools, city commissions, hospitals and social service agencies for the past 40 years. She says she can't imagine her life without the activity.

Judy learned about volunteering from her mother and through her membership in the Junior League, where she had the opportunity to learn from capable women committed to community service. It was enough to make it a passion for Judy, who then passed along the activity to her own two daughters.

With more than 40 years of volunteering experience, Judy has worked in a variety of capacities and had many different experiences, and she says she's found that rather

than working with a handful of different causes, she prefers to choose just a couple and really "dig in deep." Judy just completed a two-year term as board chair of the American Red Cross in King and Kitsap counties, and currently serves as an appointed commissioner on the Bellevue Arts Commission. Although on the surface these don't seem to have much in common, for Judy, they are both a return to something she loved and experienced previously in her life. They are also both about promoting volunteerism and educating the public, something Judy is passionate about. Prior to her full-time work volunteering, she was a middle-school teacher in New Orleans.

Although she says someday she might return to teaching—volunteering as a tutor—for now she is busy with

the Bellevue Arts Commission's 2006 Sculpture Exhibition and, with the Red Cross, hurricane season and National Preparedness Month.

**REKINDLING OLD INTERESTS**

Judy says she has always loved the arts. She even has a degree in art history from Tulane University. So when a friend left the Bellevue Arts Commission, leaving an open seat, Judy applied for the appointment. She now works with seven other people to advise the Bellevue City Council about arts-related projects in the city. Their sculpture exhibition, held biennially, opened in June and runs through Oct. 9. The exhibition includes 38 pieces by artists from the United States and Canada displayed in and around the new Bellevue City Hall and in Bellevue's Downtown Park.

"It's a huge undertaking for the city's staff and volunteers," Judy says of the sculpture exhibit. "Our committee met almost weekly for four or five months." The final sculptures were chosen from hundreds of applications by a panel of five jurors the committee chose for their varied interests and specialties in the visual arts. "I sat through all of the juried process and that was kind of fun to see how sculptors and art critics and art collectors think. They would say 'I think this is just great because of that feature,' and I would not always agree with their selections. So we all had our opinions, but we had to sit quietly in the back as commissioners. We couldn't interfere with the jury process at all. That was the hard part."

After a successful grand opening, all of the pieces are free for the public to view. Judy believes this is an important exhibition because it helps expose people to art, and hopefully they can learn from what they see. "It would be a nice family or friend thing to do. You have a brochure, you walk around, you look at the pieces, you talk about them...it can be a real personal education," she says.

Education ties into her work with the Red Cross, also. With September designated as National Preparedness Month, Judy wants people to learn that they must be ready for any type of disaster that might come. "If anything was learned from watching that catastrophe on TV (Hurricane

Katrina), it's that we've got to be able to take care of ourselves and our families for three days. You cannot rely solely on the government, disaster service agencies or your neighbors. You've got to rely on yourself," she says.

Although Judy didn't head down to Mississippi or Louisiana after the hurricanes of last season, she stayed busy taking care of more than 1,300 displaced people who came to Seattle from the devastated areas. There was plenty to do, she said, and she had an idea of what they had survived. In 2004, she went to Pensacola, Fla., to help after Hurricane Ivan. Judy served as a caseworker, which means she worked directly with families to make sure they got what they needed, like food and shelter. Though she was prepared for her job in Florida, she says, "I was not prepared for the devastation. We worked 12-, 14-hour days. It's probably the hardest I've ever worked in my whole life, but in a sense, one of the most rewarding." Her reward comes from helping carry out the Red Cross mission, she says. "Something about the humanitarian mission, reaching out to people at a real crisis point in their lives with basic needs and hope for the future, then helping them begin to put the pieces back together and reach stability after a catastrophe ... it's just very appealing to me."

She had learned about the Red Cross when she was a child growing up in Arkansas. Her neighbor was a Red Cross board chair. "I remember as a little kid, tagging along and listening to all the things she said," says Judy. Many years later, Judy has finished her term as the Red Cross board chair, but even now that she has completed that duty, she says she'll stay involved with the organization on its committees and as a disaster services volunteer. "I tend to get in there and roll up my sleeves and stay," she says of her tenure at the Red Cross. Judy has previously had major volunteer commitments with boards of the Overlake Hospital Foundation, United Way of King County, the Junior League of Seattle, the city of Bellevue Human Services

Commission and several school PTAs. "Organizational history is good," she says. "It's impossible to envision and shape the future if you don't have a clear understanding of the past. It's equally important to know when to share that history and when to let new ideas flourish."

**KEEPING BALANCE IN LIFE**

When she isn't helping others in need or advising the city of Bellevue on arts-related ventures, Judy enjoys gardening, reading, traveling and pampering herself. "That's rule No. 1," she says. "If you want to do for others, you've got to take care of yourself." Part of her self-care regimen includes participation in a book club of 20 women that was founded 20 years ago. "I love this group of women," Judy says. "It's my support group, it's my intellectual challenge. It's just fabulous." She and her husband also enjoy spending time at the Club, something they've been doing for years. The pair are charter members.

Even with all of that, volunteering remains her primary focus. For her, the rewards are as simple as the smile it brings to her face. In addition, she says, volunteering "opens your mind to relationships and information and politics that you wouldn't have otherwise. There is a whole world out there that I would not have known had it not been for my volunteer work." She adds, "It's just a great feeling. I feel like I'm fortunate enough to have so much in my life that it's a small way to give back."

**OPPOSITE** Judy stands by the art piece "Chair," part of the Bellevue Sculpture Exhibition.

**BELOW** Judy just completed a term as board Chair of the American Red Cross in King and Kitsap counties.

Information about the Bellevue Arts Commission and the pieces in the Bellevue Sculpture Exhibition can be found at the city's Web site: [www.bellevuewa.gov](http://www.bellevuewa.gov)

The Red Cross of King and Kitsap counties can be found online at: [www.seattleredcross.org](http://www.seattleredcross.org)

The Web site includes information about assembling a home disaster kit, creating a family plan and getting prepared as part of National Preparedness Month.



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