

Meet Our Volunteers | Judi Hanson



For the first 42 of their now 46-year marriage, Judi and David Hanson ran a print shop in South Bend, Indiana. In 2006, they sold the business and retired to Las Vegas, where the couple had cherished rare vacations away from the family business. Ms. Hanson vowed she would make “getting involved” a priority, since business had always kept her too busy for community activity.

Get involved she has. In addition to playing Chinese Mahjong once a week, women’s poker once a month and bowling two or three times a week, Ms. Hanson serves on the board of her local homeowners’ association, as well as their master homeowners’ association. As treasurer for the latter since 2008, she is responsible today for almost \$5 million in dues.

Ms. Hanson also joined Las Vegas’ Westside Newcomers Club in 2007, and was elected its treasurer in 2008 and president in 2009. “I have been responsible for relaxing some of the bylaws to make the club more accessible to women who have lived in the community for longer than five years but, upon the retirement or the passing of a husband, needed to make friends,” she says.

In the fall of 2009, Keep Memory Alive’s Maureen Peckman spoke to the Westside Newcomer’s Club, inspiring Ms. Hanson and several other listeners to become volunteers at the newly opened Cleveland Clinic Lou Ruvo Center for Brain Health.

“She was so passionate and articulate,” Ms. Hanson remembers.

For Ms. Hanson, the connection was personal. Her father had died of dementia at age 91 in March 2008; in April 2008 her mother passed away from Alzheimer’s at the age of 96.

“The striking thing was that dad, her caregiver, passed first. When mom was told, she thought it was her father who had died. It wasn’t until I got her to the funeral home that mom realized it was her husband. I will always remember that,” Ms. Hanson recollects.

As I was leaving the funeral in Indiana, I told my boys that I would be back within two months. It wasn’t six weeks after dad’s death that I was back to bury my mother.”

Through her involvement in the Lou Ruvo Center for Brain Health community, Ms. Hanson has found friendship and role models for dealing with dementia. She says, “One of the people who inspires me, and who is a fantastic volunteer, is Jean Georges. She amazes me, not only a caregiver, but as a volunteer as well. We need more people like Jean in our lives.”

As for her responsibilities at the center, Ms. Hanson credits Dee King, Director of Volunteer Services, for giving her the latitude to select interesting jobs, which have included compiling a volunteer scrapbook, keeping the content of a digital picture frame fresh and writing the monthly newsletter for volunteers. She also participates in the Speakers Bureau, is responsible for scheduling volunteers in the library and volunteers at the annual Power of Love gala, where she is astounded by the amount of money raised each year.

“If you have a personal connection, it is highly compelling to be here and to give back,” Ms. Hanson proclaims.

To relax from all of the responsibility of being involved in her community, Ms. Hanson walks from three to six miles daily. “This is when I do a lot of my thinking. When I don’t walk, I feel I’ve cheated myself out of something special,” she says. She also enjoys traveling, and has taken cruises to Asia and the Baltic and is looking forward to her second African safari.