



Nuns Treated to Day at Lake Heritage

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As boaters glided by and the smell of grilled hot dogs wafted across the picnic tables, the breeze ruffled the navy blue habits of some of the nuns who gathered for what has come to be known as the "nun run."

Sisters from Villa St. Michael nursing home and assisted-living facilities in Emmitsburg, Md., spent Tuesday afternoon at Lake Heritage outside Gettysburg for a day of picnicking and activities on the waterfront.

A group of volunteers from Lake Heritage has organized the event for three years and holds a "nun run" once each spring and fall. About 16 people from Lake Heritage attend each time, with about 16 sisters taking part as well, said volunteer Joe Richard. He and others often visit the sisters at the Villa and have helped organize trips bringing the nuns to Pennsylvania.

"It keeps them busy," Richard said, toting a video camera to film the day's events.

The sisters love coming to the lake and being outdoors, said Anne Wantz, activities coordinator at the Villa.

"We have to actually divide the sisters into groups so they can go because there's such a demand," Wantz said.

Many of the sisters who visited Tuesday had come to the lake on previous trips and said they came again because they enjoy being outdoors. The scenery and company makes the outing enjoyable, said Sister Marie Scattergood.

"It's very life-giving," she said. "(It) makes you appreciate what you have and appreciate God's beauty in the water."

Sister Mary Agnes is with the sisters at the Villa temporarily and will soon return to Washington, D.C., but accompanied the others on their trip to the lake. She liked participating in their outings, she said, particularly being outside on the water.



Fred Krause takes Lake Heritage resident Marita McGrath and Sister Regina, Sister Marie Martin,...

"It's an enjoyment," she said. "We don't have that in Washington, D.C."

The volunteers cooked a picnic lunch for the sisters and shared the meal with them under the shade of a tree by the water. Wantz said one of the benefits of the outing is the adult companionship for the nuns and the conversations they can have.

"It's kind of neat for them to hear about things going on in Gettysburg," Wantz said.

Sisters from the orders Daughters of Charity, Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur and Visitation attended the event. And although they are retired, they remain active by participating in activities such as the picnic.

"They forget where they're living for a while," said Dixie Keller, who lives in Fairfield and works at the Villa. "They forget that they're in a nursing unit. It's just fun."

After the picnic, volunteers and nuns took a spin around the lake on two of the volunteers' boats. Some nuns were in wheelchairs and did not go out in boats, but those that stayed on land could go fishing if they liked.

"You just have to look around and see the sun and the water, the blue sky," said Marita McGrath, who joined a few sisters during their boat ride. "Whenever I'm with these people, it's a great day."

McGrath and the sisters spent much of their time together on the boat sharing tales about where they had traveled and worked throughout their lives and what they had done this summer.

Outings such as these get the nuns out in the community, Wantz said. And getting out is nice, said Sister Mary Agnes.

"People are usually very interested in us," she said. "It's nice to come out."

Many of the sisters have backgrounds in nursing or teaching, Keller said, and they're all brilliant.

"You just fall in love with them," Keller said. "They're incredible people, they really are."

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