

Crossville Senior Center

Written on January 8, 2024. Posted in News, Senior Center Facilities.



WHERE FRIENDS GATHER AND PUZZLES ARE SOLVED

It's a little before 8 a.m. on the Wednesday morning before Christmas inside the Crossville Senior Center in DeKalb County. The furniture, decorations, piano and artwork look and feel homey. Center Manager Teresa Tomlinson offers a friendly welcome.

The action is happening in the back part of the center near the kitchen. The truck delivering meals to those who can't come to the center just pulled out of the driveway. Senior volunteers Violet Davis, Pat Shipp, Judy Denning and Ron Thorpe are cleaning up the kitchen. They helped Teresa prep the meals for delivery.



Front left to right, Violet Davis, Pat Shipp, Judy Denning, and Roger Thorp playing Rummikub.

Once everything is in order, they sit down for a spirited game of Rummikub and talk to a visitor. Violet, 72, describes herself as an immigrant from Attalla. She used to go to the Boaz Senior Center but has been coming to Crossville for the past three years. She comes three days a week.

Pat, 87, was born in Crossville but lived a chunk of her life in South Huntsville because of her work with Army Missile Command on Redstone Arsenal. But when she retired and moved home, she got her EMT license and worked with the Rescue Squad until its building burned. But she also started delivering meals for the Senior Center. She also enjoys Rummikub and singing.

Pat, Judy, 80, and Ron, 74, come to the center every day. They're sitting, joking around and playing Rummikub when the others stop in, and the bus arrives with four more participants.

Judith Rusk, 85, gives an update to the group on a friend's health condition before the gathering starts breaking up for different activities. A card game of Rook gets underway in one of the front rooms, which also houses a small library of books.

Lyman Chumley, 88, and Fayrene Davis, 88, pair up against Ann Black, 86, and Freida Coker, 87. There's much banter between dealing, bids, trumps and the widow.

Linda White, 75, pops in saying "Merry Christmas" to everyone. She's returning a book before heading to the dining area where two tables of Rummikub games are underway. Linda is a newcomer to the center, coming about six months, and thankful to her friend, Judy, who invited her.



Judy has moved from the first group of Rummikub players to a second table to play with Linda Doeberyl, 76, who is originally from upstate New York and Florida before moving to the area in 2007.

"I love it here," said Linda Doeberyl, wearing an Alabama Crimson Tide sweatshirt. "We went on vacation driving to Tennessee, and on our way back we stopped in Fort Payne and were just really impressed by the small town ... I got a job at a nursing home here and have been here ever since and no regrets."

From front left to right, Freida Coker, Lyman Chummy, Ann Black, and Fayrene Davis playing Rook.

She said she believes she should have been born in the South and added it didn't take her long to choose Alabama as her football team. "I don't like those other colors, and Alabama wins a lot, so that's a bonus."

Linda White sits at the table with Judy and Linda Doeberyl.

"I don't play because I like to talk too much, and it messes everyone up," Linda White added.

Off in a room by herself, Judith is working on a puzzle of a stormy sea with a rainbow. She's been coming to the center since 1985. She said the building was once a doctor's office in the small town.

"I come one day a week and it used to be on singing day. We haven't had that in a while, Covid messed everything up, but we're starting back with Judy playing the piano, and we have a better piano now, too," Judith said. "But I love to sing, and sometimes I play some games and work on puzzles."

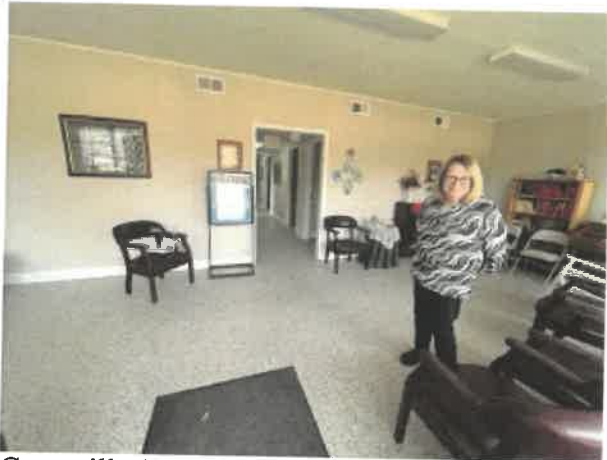
She talks about growing up on the family farm with her brother Lyman, playing cards across the hall. She and her husband went to St. Louis, and Lyman went to California for work because there were no jobs in the area. Both eventually migrated back home.

“We are so blessed to be back living on the farm where we grew up,” Judith said as she slides another piece of the puzzle into place. It’s one of many that have been completed at the senior center by all center participants. Many are framed and line the halls and hang on the walls in each room.



Judith Rusk working on a puzzle.

“This is a puzzle place,” Lyman said, as the foursome wraps up another game just in time for lunch. Everyone walks to the kitchen where they find a hot meal of beef and rice casserole, capri vegetables, cabbage, wheat bread, and chocolate cake, with milk, grape juice or water to drink.



Crossville Senior Center Manager Teresa Tomlinson

On top of Sand Mountain, Crossville is a town of about 1,800 residents. Of those residents, nearly 330 are age 60 or older. The Crossville Senior Center serves meals to 25 people each day. Teresa, who has been the manager since 2009, says her goal is to make those who come to the center feel at home and accepted.

“I think there’s a misconception about what a senior center is, but once they get in here one time, they understand,” Teresa added. “We are a family and we care about each other.”

< Previous