

N'ville resident improves lives of elderly

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(Photo: Submitted)

Having a mother who was an administrator of a nursing home, Northville resident Donna MacDonald said she was basically raised in one.

“I had about 80 different grandparents growing up,” MacDonald said laughing.

MacDonald, who now holds the title of Director of Community Outreach and Professional Development at Wayne State University’s Institute of Gerontology, oversees the training of more than 8,000 professionals (nurses, aides, social workers, nursing home administrators and doctors) each year who work with older adults.

“Donna brings in outstanding experts to provide this continuing education to make sure professionals are well-versed in the best ways to care for older adults and caregivers,” said Cheryl Deep, a colleague of Donna’s within the Institute of Gerontology and also a Northville resident.

Additionally, MacDonald hosts several conferences and workshops for older adults (many of which are in the Northville community), such as Issues in Aging, a two-day national conference where the “best-of-the-best” speakers come to discuss health-related topics; Art of Aging Successfully, a for-senior-by-senior conference focusing on creative aging; and BrainStorm: A Workout for the Mind, which teaches and shows ways to keep brains healthy as people age.

“Donna’s first love has always been helping older adults,” Deep said. “Donna’s husband, Tim, jokes that his biggest competition for Donna’s affections is anyone over the age of 75.”

MacDonald’s father lived at her family’s home for over 20 years after her mother passed away; he died about one year ago.

“I just love giving back to the community, and this is my way of doing that,” MacDonald said. “I actually started out pursuing nursing, but I just became too emotional with my mom and switched over to the administrative route, which was a good move for me.”

MacDonald has four children, all of whom attended or are currently attending Northville Public Schools. She keeps busy volunteering in the PTA and also with her children’s sports teams.

“Not one of my children failed to have the opportunity to help out at conferences several times a year,” MacDonald said. “They also have had many chances to sit down one-on-one with an older adult.”

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