



Groves makes eldercare a lifelong passion

By Maggie Shafer

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While most of her classmates took piano lessons, did homework or played outside after school, DeAnn Groves would walk across the street to the local senior center, owned by her grandmother, where she would spend her afternoons talking to, feeding and caring for its tenants.

It didn't take long for Groves to realize caring for the elderly was something she was born to do.

As the founder and executive director of Greeley's Senior Resource Services, Groves' accomplishments reflect a lifelong commitment to a cause.

After earning a master's in gerontology from UNC, Groves served as the director of the gerontology department for the Greeley Medical Clinic before becoming executive director for the Greeley Medical Foundation in 1989.

When her mother developed Alzheimer's disease in the 1980s, Groves realized how little was available in Greeley to assist adult children in caring for their aging parents.

Her mother's death was all the prompting she needed to set up a Weld County office for the Alzheimer's Association-Rocky Mountain Chapter, where she assisted in providing resources and support for those with the disease and their caretakers. She still serves as a member of the Colorado Alzheimer's Coordinating Council.

After her husband's retirement, Groves decided it was also time for her to release some of her own responsibilities and slow down. But even as a retiree, she found herself still receiving calls from former patients and, aware of the community's lack of alternatives, she felt compelled to help.

"I could see that there was still so much more that needed to be done," she said. "If there is a way to help others, then I will."

In 2006, just eight years after retiring, Groves started the non-profit Senior Resource Services, a volunteer-run organization committed to assisting seniors and their families in addressing the issues that come with aging. The organization provides numerous services from transportation to health care assistance to a simple friendly phone call through their various programs.

With Groves as executive director, SRS volunteers provide on average 400 rides a month, and its 161



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Groves established Greeley's Senior Resources Services in her own retirement years.

respite volunteers often put in more than 30 hours monthly. The center currently has 341 clients, a 27 percent increase from the previous year, and a growing number of volunteers.

"I do it because I am one of them (a senior)," said Groves, who turned 78 this year. "I can see exactly what's happening physically and mentally as I'm aging.

"I'm just getting the services in place I'll need for me so all my kids will have to do is make a phone call," the mother of three and grandmother of six added with a laugh.

Groves' recognitions include Volunteer of the Year in 1996 for the Alzheimer's Association, Business Woman of the Year in 1994 for the Centennial Rotary Club of Greeley and Diplomat of the Month for the Greeley Chamber of Commerce.

But she doesn't do what she does for the accolades. Groves describes her work as rewarding in itself ("It's a non-profit – I'm certainly not doing it for the pay.") and said if you volunteer just once, you're hooked.

"I love it," she said. "The reward is all of the thank-yous. It's when you lay your head down at night and you realize that helping people was what you were born to do."