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Point of Light

Hazel Rawlinson shines in Central Elementary's 3rd grade

By Harlow Clark



Hazel Rawlinson receives the governor's Point of Light award for volunteer work today, Dec. 16. She and her husband Harvey used to square dance at nursing homes and hospitals. They didn't consider it volunteer work, but others do and have included it in a long list.

For 7 years Hazel and Harvey made gingerbread houses for the Festival of Trees, raising about \$8,000 for Primary Children's Hospital. In two of

those years John Huntsman bought them and donated them back to the hospital.

One "was a whole village," Hazel said, about the size of two elementary student desks, including houses, gazebos, a church with stained glass windows, ponds, skaters, railroad tracks made of candy canes and trees made of upside

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down ice cream cones. There were lights inside the buildings and around the village.

"We never considered it volunteer work," Hazel said. But it's on the list.

Hazel's oldest granddaughter wanted a gingerbread Salt Lake temple for her wedding, but a scale model would be too intricate and heavy, so Harvey made it out of plywood decorated as if it were gingerbread. It has lights on the inside, and all around the outside.

"We didn't know what the top of the temple looked like, so we went up to the Family History Center up there so we could look down on it. And he made it completely to scale."

She still has the temple, and sometimes school kids come over and look at it. They love the lights.

After Harvey died Hazel went over to Central Elementary one day. "I just wanted to be here where he taught," she said during the lunch break in Brianne Kirchner's 3rd grade classroom. "I needed something to fill my life and this has done it."

While she was sitting in the principal's office Cathy Gover, a member of Hazel's LDS ward, walked in and said, "What are you doing here, Hazel?"

"I came to volunteer."

"You're coming with me," Gover said.

Hazel spent 6 years in Gover's classroom, and when Gover became assistant principal two years ago Hazel started working with Kirchner, the new third grade teacher.

Kirchner's classroom is set up with different centers. In the spelling center the

children use a marker and small whiteboard, with a sock on one hand as an eraser.

Hazel writes words and the kids copy them, or tell if she's spelled them correctly. "Jingle," one girl calls out, and Hazel writes j-i-n-g-l-e. The children clearly enjoy the spelling, but they enjoy reading even more.

"They line up to read with her," Kirchner said.

For reading Hazel takes out a small magnifying glass. She's not going to let some eye problems get in the way of her work. Indeed, she even takes spelling tests home and corrects them using her Video Eye, a magnifying system that displays on a large screen.

"They really take care of low vision people in this state," she said. The Video Eye allows her to see bills and write checks and send email and do many other things, "It's liberated me," she said.

But she'd rather talk about the joy of serving children. "I don't see why more people don't do this. I really don't, 'cause kids are so loving."

Hazel spends 4 mornings a week at Central, and Tuesday afternoons at Timpanogos Elementary in Provo where her daughter, Linda Olson, teaches art after school. Linda also substitute teaches. "I love it when she comes here and we get to work together," Hazel said.

Hazel will continue her volunteer work as long as she can. "I do it because I love children, and they make my day. They really do. It gives purpose to my life, and the children give so much love. In other words, they energize my day."

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