Local teen thrilled by volunteering

By **BECKY LOCK**
Sentinel correspondent

Kirsten Henry, 15, of Walnut, spends her free time brightening the lives of senior citizens living at Locust Grove Retirement Village in Mifflin.

"I always loved being around people," Kirsten says. "I love helping them."

At the village, she assists in serving lunch, helping with activities, moving people from room to room and talking with residents.

"It makes their day, and I'm having fun, too," Kirsten says.

A freshman at Juniata High School, Kirsten joined the Key Club, which is a student-led group that teaches leadership skills through community service. Key Club actually is an international program affiliated with Kiwanis International.

Members at Kirsten's level are required to commit seven hours per marking period to community service.

"I'm always in here longer than that," she says. "I love doing room visits with them (residents) where we sit and talk. They open up to you. I find it fun."

Kirsten gets her assignments from her supervisor, Freda Durio, activities coordinator.

"She's helped out with our big activities, delivers mail, puts up and takes down decorations and does odd jobs," Durio says.

Kirsten particularly likes talking with the residents, learning about their lives and encouraging them to participate in social activities.

"I remember that they might be scared sometimes, too," but that just by talking with them, "somehow, you're making somebody's day," she says.

Some residents are alone, Durio says, without family to visit. Henry's presence and interest fills a great void for them.

Volunteering with the elderly is "an amazing opportunity for young people," she says. "The elderly have so much to give, but sometimes they are forgotten."

"Having young people brings light and energy and life into this building," Durio adds. "Nursing homes couldn't function without volunteers. We're really happy to have young faces in the building."

Sentinel photo by BECKY LOCK

Kirsten Henry, right, talks with Carol Orme after sharing cookies with her during an event at Locust Grove Retirement Village.

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— Kirsten Henry

Above —Kirsten chats with Anna McNaughton during a 'Sunset Social' event at Locust Grove.

Below —Kirsten Henry visits with Sylvia Harper, left, and Martha Price at the event.

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