

Beads become ties that bind

Snohomish woman takes time to simply spend time with developmentally disabled friend

By Jana Alexander

June Woolsey likes to help people.

She once spent six weeks walking Dorothy Rainey's dog after Rainey suffered an injury. Rainey is a senior resident of the City of Snohomish who has lived here all her life. Woolsey also volunteered to sand-bag downtown Snohomish during the 1975 flood. At one time, she donated her time and care to Children's Orthopedic in Seattle. And her current job at Bead Village, 1204 First Street, came out of a volunteer position.

"I feel that there's a lot of help needed here and there, and there's a lot of lonesome people," Woolsey said.

So when Virginia, a developmentally disabled (DD) adult, walked into Bead Village with a chaperone Woolsey knew in a moment that she could help.

"It's a rewarding experience."

Virginia "came in to see the beads, and I just volunteered to come in and visit her. She just seemed kind of lonely," Woolsey said.

Virginia has the mental attitude of a young child, Woolsey said. She and Woolsey string pony beads together. Woolsey has worked with beads all her

life, and it's something both she and Virginia enjoyed doing.

Woolsey's volunteer experiences are "all positive experiences ... (and they) taught me a lot of patience. It's a rewarding experience" to help someone else, she said.

When Woolsey met Virginia, she was chaperoned by Karl Myhre of Service Alternatives (SA), a private business that contracts with state agencies to aid developmentally disabled and other adults with a variety of services including vocational training and placement. Part of SA's goal is to connect developmentally disabled adults with jobs that provide a support network that is voluntary and unpaid, said Anton Saunsaucie, Director of the East County bureau.

Some DD adults have family to spend time with, but some don't. So the development of a network of people who voluntarily spend time with them is helpful, Saunsaucie said. Every individual has a paid support network of doctors, and other service-related professionals, but what some people take for granted is their network of friends, relatives and acquaintances. That network is a void in some DD adults' lives,



(Jana Alexander photo)

June Woolsey at Bead Village, where she met Virginia, a developmentally disabled woman Woolsey spends time with.

Saunsaucie said.

So though SA has no formal volunteer corps, it accepted Woolsey's willingness to "give of her time," Saunsaucie said.

"Everyone has time to volunteer," Woolsey said. "I just make time. Housework suffers sometimes, (but) I like people."