

Biography - Anderson
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Remembering Yakima By Those Who Were There

Each week the YAKIMA VALLEY SUN presents a feature about a Yakima pioneer.

Nona Anderson Was in the Vanguard of Local Volunteers

By Patricia Brown

Forty years of volunteer work put Nona Anderson in the vanguard of senior citizens' programs.

Anderson joined Agenda Club shortly after moving to the Yakima Valley in 1935, and it was Agenda that took the local lead in reaching out to include senior citizens within the sphere of community activities. The idea for such a club was included among suggestions for community service projects from the Federation of Women's Clubs, and it struck home with several Agenda members who knew older

people in need of activities.

The club project, Golden Age, opened its doors on September 19, 1951, in the social room of St. Michael's Episcopal Church at the corner of East Yakima and Naches avenues.

The result was amazing. "It was a simple kind of thing," recalled longtime Agenda member Helen Dean. "They played dominoes and checkers that afternoon." And they began to talk. Some of the ladies who attended this and other Golden Age gatherings told of "sitting in their two-by-four apartments all day and looking out the window."

When they left St. Michael's that afternoon, these same women headed downtown to buy their own sets of the standard parlor games that life had somehow left out of their experience until Golden Age filled in the gaps. Before the club, they had known neither dominoes nor the social mechanisms for meeting people.

Nona Anderson spent hours working with and for Golden Agers. Two decades before the need for senior programs emerged as a national priority in the arena of social services, Anderson and other Agenda members shared their time with Yakima's elderly population.

Years following found Nona Anderson serving as secretary for the first meeting of Yakima's chapter of the American Association of Retired People and secretary once again when the town opened its first Senior Citizens Center in the old Harrison house at the corner of East Walnut and South Fourth Street.

Nona Anderson never had any children of her own, so the hours that might have been spent counseling youth groups were earmarked, instead, for volunteer work with the Valley's elderly. She was as capable of firing up the old Monarch stove in that first senior center as she was of planning dances and chaperoning tours for the center's honored guests.

When Yakima's new Senior Citizens Center built on the northeast corner of Miller Park officially

opened its doors on September 21, 1973, Nona Anderson continued her work there as long as her health permitted.

From her beginning club work on through to membership on the Yakima County Council on Aging, she worked both for and with the Valley's elderly. "I didn't want to be a senior citizen at first," Anderson said of her change in roles; "but I had worked with them for so long that I felt like I was one of them."

Nona Anderson now resides in Yakima Convalescent Manor.



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...AND THEN.