

HENDERSONVILLE'S VERY OWN HEROINE

Reviewing the lengthy list of accomplishments and community contributions made by this year's 5'2" Sauer Award recipient, you might think William Shakespeare was talking about Grace Poli when he wrote, "though she be but little, she is fierce!"

The mother of four, a former Vice President of Personal Banking for Harris Bank in Chicago, retired to Hendersonville with her husband Joseph in 1988 after discovering the "sleepy" town on a vacation with friends just a few years prior.

Immediately upon her arrival in Hendersonville, Grace became an active community member, getting involved with Immaculate Conception Church and joining the League of Women Voters. From there, she was tasked with putting together a daycare directory, so she called together every local group that had any involvement with children, not only producing the directory, but also forming the Childcare Coalition. This was just the beginning of Grace's 30 years of service.

Grace often sought out opportunities to enrich the lives of our community members. Upon hearing her daughter rave about the *Parents as Teachers Program*, Grace took it upon herself to travel to St. Louis, Missouri, to learn more and receive training. Impressed by what she learned,

Grace quickly set up a meeting for local teachers and board of education members. The eventual result was the implementation of the *Parents as Teachers Program*, which is to this day successfully run under the Children & Family Resource Center umbrella.

Though she may have slowed down slightly, it is well deserved at 93. Grace is in her 19th year volunteering with Interfaith Assistance Ministry (having spent six years on the board, including a term as president). She served as

past chair of the local board which administers the federal Emergency Food and Shelter Program and continues to serve as a board member. Grace has been involved with everything from helping establish the Human Relations Council, serving on the Mediation Center Board, and volunteering for 13 years as a mediator, to helping establish Smart Start in Henderson County,

being active with FaithLink, and serving on and chairing Henderson County's Department of Social Services Board. Currently, Grace calls monthly BINGO games at Carolina Village and takes the Eucharist to those who are no longer able to attend services.

When asked why she was and is so heavily involved in her community, the response is simple, "I like to be useful, my faith has a lot to do with it, it leads me to give back."

