

This active volunteer doesn't stay home much

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Marlene Barr



Along with her husband, Marlene Barr and her husband walk a neighbor's dogs 2 ½ hours a week. You don't have to clean up after them and you don't have to pay for them. Barr, 77, doesn't stay home much. She bikes and skis and is a member of numerous organizations including the Ypsilanti Community Center and the Ypsilanti Chamber of Commerce. Despite being very busy, Barr is also an RSVP volunteer at the Ypsilanti Senior Center. "I feel so much to the needy," is the reason she has volunteered. The Thrift Shop's profits go directly to human service organizations in Ypsilanti, including the Ypsilanti Food Bank, Meals on Wheels and S.O.S. Because the Shop is a 501(c)(3) organization, all profits go directly to social services, said Marcia Sylvester, who has been president of the Shop three times and is now in charge of the Shop. "The Shop is all paid for and the building is all paid for." The Shop has been in operation for 70 years, running solely on volunteer efforts. "We always need more volunteers," Barr said. One attractive thing about volunteering is that the Shop only asks for a volunteer to commit to one shift at the Shop every four weeks. The shifts are about three hours long. The Thrift Shop is at 14 S. Washington St. in downtown Ypsilanti. In addition to her work at the Shop, Barr and her husband John are active in Boy Scout Troop 290, which is based at Emmanuel Lutheran Church in Ypsilanti. She and her husband have taken Boy Scouts to Colorado for an Easter ski vacation numerous times. Marlene Barr has won gold medals in her age category through NASTAR, a ski racing organization. "My husband says I'm a fast woman," Marlene said. John and Marlene also like to bike on Saturday mornings with the Ann Arbor Bike Touring Society. They ride along Huron River Drive from Ann Arbor to Dexter and have breakfast in Dexter. Another activity that Marlene Barr enjoys is genealogy. She's a member of five genealogy organizations and has written several booklets about her family history. She distributes the booklets to family members and to various libraries. Her heritage is Swedish, Norwegian and German and her maiden name is Bielenberg. "After doing some research in Norway at the archives, I connected with a cousin in Oslo. He's the same age as I am," Barr said. On one visit to Oslo, the cousin and Marlene Barr visited "a huge brick church that our great-grandfather built," she said. The sanctuary is known as Trefoldighet and was built in 1853.

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