

# Why do I volunteer?

*By Ken Goldstein, JCRC member*

I volunteer one day a week ... and it's the most meaningful thing I've ever done in my life.

I have been a volunteer at the Baker Senior Center Naples' dementia/respite program. It spans four hours, from 10:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., providing services for individuals with early- to mid-stage dementia. These clients are still living at home, so the program is four hours of socialization and wellness. It's also a four-hour break for them and their caregivers.

My role has expanded over the years to now include 30 minutes of history and jokes. I spend a lot of time preparing my presentation so that everyone, including the other volunteers, can learn something and enjoy some laughter. The real benefit for me is knowing that each client enjoys their time, and their caregiver gets a needed break.

One incident is seared in my memory. One morning, a husband was dropping off his wife. He saw me first and had a worried look. "My wife did not want to come today. I think you may have to call me to take her home early," he said. I told him we would call if necessary.

At 2:30 p.m., he was back and asked me if she was OK. I told him she was fine, and that she had a great day. The look on his face was priceless. He looked relieved ... and relaxed.

In that instant, I understood what we were doing. Those four hours became so important for the client and the caregiver ... even though tomorrow will be a new day with the same issues.

Those four hours truly make a difference. 🌍