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Live to serve

By Natalie Macias

OSF HealthCare Saint Anthony's Health Center
Special to Everything Senior

ALTON — Saint Clare's Villa resident, Sister Celine Maasen, found a way to help others and the environment in living a life of service.

She found many ways to serve people in her community over the years, and more recently took up crocheting — but not with the usual materials, she uses plastic shopping bags. The old, used plastic creates fresh, new handbags and mats, which she gives to people in need.

"A local church, Abundant Life, taught us how to crochet, here in the Villa," Sister Maasen said. "I had never crocheted a day in my life, but now I have been creating items out of plastic bags for over a year now."

The process of creating these items involves folding, cutting and intertwining the bags and then crocheting it all together. The entire process takes about one day to make one purse, and one-and-a-half weeks to make a full mat.

When friends caught wind of Sister Maasen's need for plastic bags for her new hobby and service, they began saving their shopping bags and leaving them at her door overnight. Family also leaves bags for her.

Sister Maasen gives away her hand-made gifts to whoever wants them. She takes special requests from Villa residents and friends. She has made Bible holders, beach bags and even diaper bags upon request.

She also delivers her hand-made items to the Community Hope Center in Cottage Hills for anyone to take for free.

"I don't know who gets my bags, but it doesn't make a difference to me," Sister Maasen said. "I'm just glad that I have the opportunity to bless other people."



For Everything Senior

Saint Clare's Villa resident, Sister Celine Maasen, and Saint Clare's Villa Activities Coordinator Ellen Miller, display a tote crocheted out of plastic shopping bags. Sister Maasen donates the totes to those in need. To donate plastic shopping bags, call Miller at 618-463-9000.

Abundant Life Community Church, with campuses in Alton and Wood River, recently went on a mission trip to the Central American country of Panama, and brought along Sister Maasen's purses and mats.

"I have been hard at work and trying to get as many bags and mats done that I can, so the church will be able to share them with the people in need in Panama," she said.

Aside from sharing her creations with people in her community and abroad, Sister Maasen also volunteers at the Community Hope Center, serving lunch to those in need.

"In one day, I make about 100 sandwiches," she recalled. "Sometimes we serve over 200 people. This is my way of giving back — I enjoy making people happy."

When she is not busy making bags, mats or sandwiches, she helps with a variety of Villa's parties and events, provided for residents.

"Sister Maasen is my right-hand man," Villa Activities Coordinator Ellen Miller said. "She is always ready and willing to help whenever we need her. Sister truly has a servant's heart."

Sister Maasen is a three-year resident of Saint Clare's Villa.

"I enjoy living in the Villa. There is

no place I would rather be," she said. "I get the opportunity to gather with other people in such a great atmosphere. I have no complaints."

The Saint Clare's Villa is a supportive living facility that offers apartments for residents to call home, just like Sister Maasen, striving to make life easier and enjoyable for senior citizens, providing amenities that remove the stress from their daily lives.

If you or a loved one are interested in learning more about Saint Clare's Villa, call 618-463-9000 to schedule a tour. ■

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