

News from a Novice Retiree

By: Mary Fran Lepaska

Note: Mary Fran recently retired in December from Ozaukee Co. UWEX, and it appears that she has not slowed down much.

I am now in my third month of retirement and I absolutely love it! It is kind of like being a kid in a candy store, so much to see and where to start. That feeling of being free is just so nice. I still wake up at 6:30 and love having a good cup of coffee and reading the entire paper, something I was rarely able to do while working.

My last two months have been as diverse as Extension work, but much more fun. The first week in January, our family went to Ireland and spent a week in the Shannon and Limerick area. We met my husband's cousins, enjoying lunch, dinner and great hospitality with them. Also went back to the Cliffs of Moher which added an in ground visitor's center since we were there in mid-2003. The nice thing about Ireland in January is almost no tourists, and the weather was high 30's, low 40's with blue sunny skies and lots of green. We also went to the Rock of Cashel and Hore Abbey, and then walked through the town. In Limerick, we toured King John's Castle, the Hunt Museum and St. Mary's Cathedral. Also went to Adare and Ennis and of course, Durty Nellie's pub for Irish music.

During the first week of Feb. I accompanied my husband to Cincinnati and helped out with their 7th annual International Hoof Care Summit held at the Duke Energy Center and the Hilton where we stayed the week. Farriers and equine veterinarians from all over, including Ireland, France, Norway, England, Mexico attended the event. Was great to meet so many of those my husband had written stories about when he visited them. He did interview an Irish Farrier while in Ireland and will have that story in their magazine, American Farrier's Journal.

From March 4-11, I brought my mom to Dallas to visit my brother Allyn and Ellen and spend some time with my niece, Heather and her one year old son and husband. Only other time I was here was during the NEAFCS annual meeting, so recognize many spots that we viewed then. Toured the arboretum, aquarium and had a fun time at the House of Blues for brunch and gospel show. There is more ethnic variety in the supermarkets here than what we saw in Ireland.

My volunteering continues. I joined the YMCA board of directors and am chairing the Community Involvement Committee. I continue to work with Family Selection and Support committee for Habitat and have watched the children of one of the moms whose home is currently under construction.

I agreed to a two year term as League of Women Voters treasurer. I am also able to do more with Interfaith Caregivers and will be part of their fundraiser wedding dress style show in April.

We have offered Powerful Tools for Caregiving since 2002, and I told my partner Jan that I would continue to help out in retirement, so our 21st series is going on now with 11 participants, and we have the 22nd set for April and May. I also have continued to be involved with United for Youth at the High School and Character Counts group. (I have said "no" to several additional requests.) The catch up at home has been slow, but there will be time for that hopefully.

Exercise has been part of my lifestyle for the last nine years so I regularly work out at the Y and walked 3-4 miles each morning while in Dallas. Rather than late evening exercise, I now have the flexibility to go during the day, and even joined a scheduled class.

I feel so blessed to have good health and be able to do so much, with lots of fun family events coming up for the summer.