**Vickie Kappes, Faith in Action of Western Stark County, Massillon, Ohio**

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745 words

In February 2020, my whole life changed. After 20 years of battling cancer (eight episodes), my husband of 38 years passed away. I cared for him as needed during his illness while still working full-time.

His last eight or nine months of life were the most difficult for us both. Although he had been in remission for 5 ½ years, in March 2019, his second kidney was removed, and he now had dialysis three times a week. It was difficult for him to handle many of his own medical-related activities. I was now responsible for scheduling and transporting him to his numerous medical appointments. When he learned the cancer had returned in late January 2020, he chose to stop dialysis and he died the following week.

Suddenly, I was adjusting to a new way of life as a widow. In late 2020—mid-pandemic—I decided I would retire in May 2021 after 40 years of service in accounting and taxation at an Akron rubber company.

In March 2021, I read an article in the Massillon Independent: “*Faith in Action of Western Stark County seeking volunteer drivers.”*I volunteered over the years in connection with my sons’ school activities and served on various church committees. As I entered yet another season of life—retirement—I was driven by my faith. I knew I would continue to serve my church and had already committed to volunteering at a local thrift shop operated by the Mennonite religious denomination. I wanted to volunteer my time to one other agency after my retirement and was considering the local library, Meals on Wheels, or a program sponsored by the county Probate Court called the Guardian Angels.

I was still working remotely and kept that article on my desk, trusting that my faith would guide me. I now was aware of a program in my community that I had not known of before, Faith in Action of Western Stark County. In April 2021, l called Angela Tucker Cooper, Faith in Action’s executive director, and told her I wanted to volunteer. She invited me to a driver's orientation starting within a few days. I started volunteering a few days after retiring.

My prayers were answered! I was now transporting housebound seniors (who have no family to transport them to daytime appointments or living nearby) to medical appointments, the grocery store, and other necessary errands.

I didn’t consider myself a caregiver early in my husband’s illness. After his second cancer diagnosis, he developed anxiety issues, and in retrospect, I wasn’t as compassionate as I could have been. In addition, I have always been a fast walker and my husband, even before his illness, was never quite as fast. He always asked me to slow down to walk beside him.

I never thought I’d be a transporter, controlling my own schedule, while interacting with others. Transporters receive four weekly emails advising of transport needs in the coming weeks or months. They can select the ones that best suit their schedule. I typically transport from 10 to 20 times a month—as brief as 45 minutes to 2-3 hours.

Deep in my heart, I know why this organization is called “Faith in Action.”  I am developing more compassion for others and learning their stories and the challenges they face. I am also developing more patience. Since many of them move more slowly and use a walker or a cane, I am now walking at a slower pace by their side. One of my primary goals as a transporter is to make each person’s day a little bit brighter because I was a part of it. It inspires me in my interactions with others as I serve Faith in Action.

I have found common interests and connections. Sometimes their children or relatives were my former classmates. One woman I transported, and her husband, owned a local store that my family shopped at when I was a child. Sometimes, the relationship I have formed has resulted in sadness. I transported a 94-year-old lady in the summer of 2022 to her podiatrist. We connected immediately and so enjoyed our time together. She scheduled her next appointment so I could transport her. When I could not contact her a few days before her next appointment, a call to her assisted living facility shared that she had died a few weeks earlier. I was sad I couldn’t say goodbye. Both of us enjoyed a brighter day in the short time we spent together

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**Social Media #1:** One of my goals as a transporter is to make each person’s day a little bit brighter.

**Social Media #2:** I never thought I'd want to transport older people in my car to medical appointments.  It turns out to be one of the most flexible--and rewarding--volunteer opportunities to give a couple of hours when I can.