**Bill Wilson**

Volunteers for two Volunteer Caregiving Organizations

In Charleston, WV

Faith in Action of Greater Kanawha Valley

and Kanawha Hospice Care

The origins of me being a volunteer go back to my childhood. I grew up in Northern Virginia in an agricultural and rural area. Several times a year, my family would help neighbors with something to do on their farm, and they would do the same in return. It was neighbors helping neighbors with no money involved.

One of our neighbors was a chef in a charming restaurant. Every summer, we would help bale 10 acres of hay on his farm, and every Thanksgiving, he would bring over a large-cooked ham and several pies he made at his restaurant for our family.

Volunteering was instilled in me at a very young age.

When I was working full-time at a natural gas company, I volunteered to help out at an area church camp for kids where they go every summer for a weeklong camp. For 20 years, I worked alongside plumbers and electricians fixing stuff that was broken or putting in new stuff. I learned from many tradespeople in that time that it helped me with my home repairs and now helps inspire my volunteer work.

Both my parents and my wife's parents had hospice care. And it was only natural to repay the kindness extended to us. After retiring, I began volunteering for Hospice, but it's not for everyone. It is a heavy kind of ministry concerning the end of life.

Volunteering at Hospice made me realize I still wanted to help people through volunteer caregiving.

I saw an ad in the paper for Faith in Action of Greater Kanawha Valley, and I applied. Since my training, I have driven many folks to their doctor's appointments. Still, my favorite volunteer activity has been helping people with safety aspects in their homes. The person might have a balance problem and has fallen a few times, so I put grab bars in their bathroom and handrails on the exterior of their homes down those couple of steps that never needed a handrail before then.

I'm a tall guy, and I work with each person to ensure that the safety element suits them with their height and how they move. It's customized, and I love doing it. I get to use my hands, and I know it's something that they can use every day in their home to keep them safe.

Interaction with the folks I help is the most rewarding part of volunteering. I have heard so many amazing stories about their lives. You quickly bond and build a rapport with them; they tell you anything and everything. I have had the privilege of working with vets from Vietnam and World War II. I let them bring up the subject, and most will discuss their experiences. To hear their stories is phenomenal. The fellowship you develop is deep, too.

One of the people I worked with was named Charlie. He was a very small man who was completely blind. On a good day, he might see shadows. He needed someone to help him fix the bathroom faucet. This bathroom had no windows, and when I went to turn on the light, there was none. I couldn't see to fix the faucet and realized that Charlie had to deal with this kind of darkness every day. It was a sobering moment for me.

I am thankful that I have the skills to help people stay in their homes. And I am grateful that I have good health to help improve their lives. I am also grateful they let me become a part of their life. I often feel like I have become a part of their family.

Social Media Post #1

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Social Media Post #2

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