

Grand Marshall Selected for Falls City Cobblestone Parade

(KLZA) Bernice Kopetzky, a retired teacher and current volunteer extraordinaire, will serve as the Grand Marshal of the 2013 Cobblestone parade in Falls City. According to parade director, Lori Gottula, Bernice was selected by a panel of judges who definitely had their work cut out for them this year.

Bernice Kopetzky, who was nominated by Bev Kimmel, and Kim and Kris Vrtiska, served as a public school teacher for thirty years, three of those in a rural school system, and twenty-seven as a special education teacher for Falls City Public Schools. Since her retirement, she has worked at Falls City Sacred Heart, as a volunteer with a reading program that she initiated.

Sixteen years ago, she started Rescue Reading, which is a one-on-one reading program for kids in kindergarten through the third grade. Bernice and her troop of volunteers work with kids who are struggling to read, teaching them phonics-based reading skills. Her program has been so successful that, three years ago, she received national recognition from a group called Retired School Personnel, and got to travel to Washington D.C. to receive the award.

Bernice started another program in Falls City years ago, too—one called RESPITE Care. In its initial stages, RESPITE Care volunteers relieved caregivers for a few hours each week so the caregivers could run errands or simply get away for a while. Although that purpose continues for the group, the volunteers now also offer transportation for cancer victims who need to go out of town for radiation treatments, kidney dialysis, or other medical treatments. In addition, RESPITE volunteers will help with any legitimate need that a person has.

As if those volunteer jobs weren't enough, Bernice has also served as a church organist for 71 years, with 60 of those as the organist/choir director/music organizer at St. Peter and Paul Catholic Church in Falls City. She not only directs the choir and plays the organ for one of the weekend masses, she also schedules the other organists, as well as all of the cantors and other musicians, for every mass service.

Bernice has also served as a blood donor, Co-President of the Retired Teacher's Association, President of Catholic Daughters, a campaign volunteer, and as a member of the Red Hat Society.

One of Bernice's most enjoyable pleasures, though, is giving away produce that she has grown in her garden. She picks vegetables several times a week, and gives the produce to neighbors. On the weekends, she takes boxes full of vegetables to her church, and distributes them to those who don't have gardens. All for free.

Bernice, who is a widow, has five sons, 12 grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren. And every one of them should be proud when Bernice rides through the parade on August 24th, as the 2013 Grand Marshal.