

If you come to The Helm between 10:30 a.m. and 1 p.m. Mondays through Wednesdays, you most likely have been welcomed by the smile, kind words and sartorial splendor of Front Desk Volunteer Brenda Taylor.

"I started volunteering because I wanted to give back to the community," Brenda said. "Now a few years later and I've gotten to know so many wonderful members and other volunteers."

Born and raised in Grosse Pointe, Brenda graduated from St. Paul High School and earned a bachelor's degree from Hillsdale College. She worked as a legal secretary for a couple of years until she married.

Brenda met her husband, Jim, at Diamond Lil's, a well-known bar that used to be nestled at Kerby and Mack. "Back then, Diamond Lil's was where all the young people went to mingle," Brenda said. "It was the place to be."

After marrying, Brenda and Jim settled in the Grosse Pointe area. After their second daughter was born, Jim surprised Brenda by buying a small farm in St. Clair, something he had long wanted. While their main residence was in Grosse Pointe Woods, they often went to the farm to take care of the animals.

"The farm is Jim's passion," Brenda said. "He'd go almost every evening, but occasionally I'd join with the girls. They liked having all that space to run around and play."

Running a farm and raising seven daughters didn't keep Brenda from pursuing other dreams. She went back to school to get her teaching certificate. She taught English at Pierce Middle School for 15 years. It was her last full-time job, which she retired from in 2015.

"It was very rewarding to witness my students grow as readers and writers throughout the year," Brenda said with a smile. "It's the little things in life."

Between the farm – Jim and Brenda are the main caretakers of the farm and its 60 chickens and 20 horses -- their daughters, eight granddaughters, two grandsons and volunteering, Brenda still finds time for other hobbies, especially reading.

"Often I'm perfectly content to curl up with a novel while waiting for Jim to finish up (at the farm)," Brenda said

Next time you're at The Helm, say hi to Brenda. You won't miss her with her inimitable fashion style ("I don't think I own one pair of jeans. I dress to impress," Brenda jokingly quipped.) – or her can do and friendly attitude.

