

Beacon Hill Byline by Mary Rogeness

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Longmeadow's Silver DOVE

Several times during the year, Longmeadow residents receive honors marked with State House ceremonies. The State House internal communications network, which is very efficient in informing me of such events, called last week to say that Eva Jurist was to receive the Silver DOVE award. So I set out to learn about both the award and the recipient.

A DOVE is a Devoted Outstanding Volunteer Elder, and a Silver DOVE serves Massachusetts elders above and beyond the call of duty. There were 200 nominees for the designation this year; 27 were finalists; and ten individuals were awarded the designation. Eva is one of the ten. She was nominated jointly by the Jewish Nursing Home and the Longmeadow Council on Aging. This is why her sponsors nominated her and what they say about Eva Jurist.

When Eva became a resident of the nursing home, she looked for a volunteer activity with the town's children. Volunteering had been an important part of her life, both at Baystate Medical Center and in the Springfield schools. She saw no reason to end that activity simply because her residence was now a nursing home. Eva voiced an interest in working with children because, she says, "Children are the future." So the nursing home, working through the Council on Aging, secured Eva a position in the Senior Reader program at Wolf Swamp School, where she reads stories each week to first and second grade students.

To say Eva simply reads to a class is to miss the real meaning of the relationship between this lady and dozens of schoolchildren. She spends hours selecting just the right book, finds questions to draw out the quietest child and talks of her years of life experience with her students. The children anticipate her visits and call out their welcome when she is sighted in the school corridor. She is an important part of their education for life.

Vicki Soja, activities director, and Richard Slutsky, vice president of the Jewish Nursing Home, accepted the award for Eva at the State House ceremony. She did not make the trip herself because she is a bit under the weather, although she expects to be back to work soon. Eva is entitled to a little time to get back on her feet. You see, there is one fact about this Silver DOVE that I have not yet mentioned. You may remember if you read about her last year in the Longmeadow News. She was featured along with her children on the occasion of her 100th birthday. She continues her volunteer activities as she approaches her 101st birthday this June.

Meeting such a remarkable lady as Eva Jurist and sharing her celebration are two of the rewards of serving as your State Representative.