



JOLENE GUZMAN/Itemizer-Observer

Rodney, left, and Rosalee Stent chat with Dallas Retirement Village resident Anna Funk, 101, right, during a recent visit. The couple, along with many others from their church, Evangelical Bible Church, spend time with people who are homebound or in hospitals or care facilities. The church started a "visiting committee" to help organize the effort. Founder Julia Emblen hopes more churches and organizations will follow suit.

VISITING MRS. MORGAN

Spending time with the elderly is rewarding for both those visiting and being visited

By Jolene Guzman
The Itemizer-Observer

DALLAS — Julia Emblen believes visiting homebound people is so important, she's written a book about it.

The book, "Visiting Mrs. Morgan," offers tips for what to do — and what not to do — as well as suggestions for activities both "visitor" and "visitee" will enjoy.

Emblen's book is dedicated to her "Aunt Tina," who contracted polio at age 45. The disease paralyzed her from the waist down and left her homebound.

Tina was very involved in her community, Emblen wrote, so for the first few months, she often had visitors.

But that didn't last long and, after a number of years, it was just family and pastors who came to see her.

"From Aunt Tina I learned about the struggles and the long lonely hours," Emblen wrote. "She never talked about this, but often her sighs and her sad facial expressions told me that she missed the days when she could walk around and go when and where she pleased."

Her aunt's situation — shut-in and lonely — is devastatingly common, so Emblen and members of her church, Evangelical Bible Church (EBC), have made it a mission to visit with as many people in that situa-



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Evangelical Bible Church hosts events, such as this July Fourth-themed tea, for residents at Dallas Retirement Village on a periodic basis.

tion as possible.

"They sit for hours," Emblen said in a recent interview. "That has always bothered me."

Emblen said when she returned to Dallas to care for her mother several years ago, she discovered many members of her church could no longer make it to church services.

She visited one — the namesake of her book, though the name has been changed to protect her privacy — but decided more should be done.

Emblen suggested EBC organize a visiting commit-

tee dedicated to arranging visits to make sure members who could no longer attend church meetings shared fellowship with others.

While she knows other churches do the same thing, she would like the idea to catch on. She said she could help initiate a group to plan visits and offer advice.

"It doesn't all go perfectly, but we still keep trying," she said.

If you succeed, Emblen said visits become rewarding for both parties.

Rodney Stent and his wife, Rosalee Stent, visit Anna Funk at Dallas Retirement Village often. She's now 101 years old and essentially bedridden.

Rodney Stent said with 101 years to pull from, she can tell incredible stories. She just needs someone to share them with.

"She love to have someone come, of course," he said. "She has no family."

Listening to — and writing down — life stories is one of Emblen's suggestions for visit activities.

She added not only is it enjoyable for the person to share, but later may be priceless to family members.

Kathy Hull and Geri Ciss-



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Kathy Hull, right, visits with Dallas Retirement Village resident David Hamm, left, as Julia Emblen looks on. Emblen helps organize such visits for her church.

Ideas for 'visiting Mrs. Morgan'

- Building birdhouses.
- Writing life stories.
- Planting and caring for indoor gardens.
- Craft projects, such as crocheting, knitting or making baskets.
- Making scrapbooks.
- Reading.
- Games or puzzles.

For more information or assistance setting up a group: Julia Emblen at jemblen@msn.com.

na visit longtime Dallas resident David Hamm at his home at Dallas Retirement Village several times a month. He regales them with stories of Dallas of old, when it was known for its many prune orchards.

As a young man, he worked in those orchards, performing the duties of a picker, tree shaker, hauler and drier. Later in life, he was a missionary in Chile

for years.

Hamm remembers when the population of Dallas was only about 3,600. When asked if he like Dallas better then or now, he gives a diplomatic answer.

"I like them both," he said.

Hull smiles at his comments and added: "He is a real encourager. We try to be encouraging, but he always encourages us."

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