

Jill Andrew spreads 'Jill joy'

Published on: June 25, 2020



TANYA DORAN PHOTO

Jill Andrew, 67, of Valrico, sets out every day to bring others joy, comfort and positivity through her fun-loving personality, genuineness and truly caring nature. Her motto is "Live the moment, love the moment," and she is known for spreading "Jill joy" wherever she goes.

Jill Andrew spreads 'Jill joy' wherever she goes

By **LOIS KINDLE**

Whenever Jill Andrew comes to mind, your immediate reaction is to smile. That's because her mission in life is to "inspire, serve and make God laugh."

She sets out every day to bring others joy, comfort and positivity through her fun-loving personality, genuineness and truly caring nature.

"I have a passion for folks with dementia and their care partners," said the 67-year-old director of community relations for Tessera of Brandon assisted living and memory care community. "I walked in those shoes, since my mom had one of the 132 known types of dementia, and I was her caregiver.

"It was one of the best and last gifts she gave me because I understand from a caregiver's point of view now," Andrew said.

In her role at Tessera, Andrew handles outside marketing, advertising and speaking engagements to clubs, churches and civic organizations on how to work with people with dementia. Credentialed as a National Council Certified Dementia Practitioner, she teaches courses on Alzheimer's and dementia to Tessera staff members. She also facilitates three Alzheimer's and dementia support groups associated with the Alzheimer's Association and works with Perspectives on Dementia, which provides education and funding for respite for local caregivers.

As if that's not enough, Andrew is the children's ministry director at the Presbyterian Church of Bloomingdale, where she is serving on a committee whose mission is to build an adult day care there for folks with dementia.

She has volunteered for Seeds of Hope the past 10 years, helping fund the nonprofit organization and run the kids craft area at the annual FishHawk Turkey Trot on Thanksgiving Day. Additionally, she's active with the Greater Riverview Chamber of Commerce and a longtime member of the Charity Chicks, an organization of women who help fund and build community awareness for local charities.

And until recently and for many years, she's been a missionary to Honduras through her church.

Serving is a way of life for Andrew.

"The more energy I give, the more I get back," she said. "It's all about community and taking care of each other."





TANYA DORAN PHOTO Jill Andrew is director of community relations for Tessera of Brandon assisted living and memory care community. One of her roles is to speak to members of clubs, churches and civic organizations on how to work with people with dementia. She is a National Council Certified Dementia Practitioner.

Tanya Doran, executive director of the Greater Riverview Chamber of Commerce, has known Andrew for 15 years.

“She served as our board president (two years in a row) during one of the chamber’s most financially challenging times and was instrumental in guiding and leading us through it,” Doran said. “And she has received numerous chamber awards for her dedication and commitment: Volunteer of the Year, Ambassador of the Year, Citizen of the Year and Businessperson of the Year (twice).”

Beyond that, Doran couldn’t say enough about her friend.

“Jill is full of grace; she’s always willing to help others, and she has the most positive outlook in any situation,” she said. “Her motto is ‘Live the moment, love the moment,’ and that’s exactly what she does.” Doran said her friend adds what we call ‘Jill joy’ everywhere she goes.”

“Jill joy” includes blowing bubbles, throwing confetti, sitting on her comfy office couch, giving others a dazzling smile and warm, embracing hugs (pre-coronavirus) and sharing inspirational quotes daily on Facebook to more than 1,200 friends... and their friends.

“It’s amazing how many messages I get from people I don’t even know who are touched and motivated by these posts,” Andrew said. “They also inspire and motivate me.”

Fellow chamber member and friend Daniel Cyral calls Andrew “one of his favorite friends of all time. She truly finds joy, satisfaction and fulfillment in giving to others,” he said. “She’s 30 years my senior, yet she has more energy than anyone I know. I’m extremely humbled to have her in my life.”

“I can’t see a bubble without thinking of her,” Doran said. “It always brings a smile to my face.”

Born in Youngstown, Ohio, Andrew grew up in western Pennsylvania and spent 3 1/2 years studying physical education and elementary education at Edinboro University, before briefly interning and deciding she didn’t really want to teach high school, after all.

Still wanting to serve, she immediately enlisted in the United States Army, where she became a hospital food clerk and cook. Seven years later, she put her culinary and dietary training to use in civilian life as a chef at a holiday Inn in Destin, where her parents lived.

Andrew discovered the retirement business in 1984 when she moved to Ft. Worth to accept a position as a dietary supervisor at an assisted living residence and has stayed in the industry ever since. She’s held positions as corporate food service director, administrator, regional administrator and divisional director for independent living, assisted living and memory care communities for more than 30 years.

She was awarded the Florida Assisted Living Association’s 2008 Administrator of the Year for the state, and in 2017, she and Jerry McNeill received the Silver Pyramid Award from the Promotional Products Association International.

Andrew lives in Valrico with her lifelong partner of 44 years and two cats. In her spare time, she’s is an avid golfer, ventriloquist and enjoys “convening” with nature.

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