

'Everyone's Helper' Turns 90

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Mary Cuckler didn't mind turning 90. At least it was an excuse for her friends and family to celebrate.

Cuckler's coworkers at the Treasure Trunk thrift store in Wheat Ridge joined in the festivities on Jan. 19, throwing her a surprise party at the store where she has volunteered for nine years.

Cuckler blew out the candle on her cake and offered the guests some advice on getting older.

"Girls, just remember, 90 is not so bad," Cuckler told the crowd. "I've been partying since Jan. 7."

Cuckler is at the store about 30 hours a week, sorting and tagging donations, straightening the shelves and helping customers find what they're looking for. She takes the store's jewelry home and cleans it in her spare time. Volunteering is her therapy, Cuckler said.

After her husband, Harold, died in 1997, Cuckler was looking for a way to stay busy. She and her daughter wandered into the store one day, and Cuckler saw the store needed volunteers. She's been helping out ever since.

"They can't keep me away," Cuckler said. "I love it here."

The Family Tree, a nonprofit family service organization, owns and operates the Treasure Trunk. Family Tree clients have first pick of the merchandise, but the store is open to the public as well. Revenues from Treasure Trunk exceed \$200,000 annually, according to Family Tree spokesman Steve Harrell.

Her carefully manicured fingers stained with red icing, Cuckler distributed slices of cake to the guests and told them stories. She said her life has been like traveling downriver in a boat; she stops for every adventure. In nearly 60 years of marriage, Cuckler and her husband traveled throughout the country and to Africa and Europe. Not bad for a girl from Broken Bow, Neb.

Cuckler's recipe for a long life is simple: Lead a wholesome life, enjoy people and have a positive attitude. Life has been good to her, Cuckler said, and she loves to share that with others. She leads the senior group at Fairmount Baptist Church in Golden and spends time with her two children, five grandchildren and 10 great-grandchildren.

"I want to be remembered as everyone's helper," she said.

Treasure Trunk volunteer Gloria Lucci said Cuckler is constantly on the move, refusing to sit down when there is work to be done. She has taught all her coworkers about aging gracefully, Lucci said.

"We aspire to be like Mary when we grow up," she said.