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## Entertains at Hastings Manor

# At 85, Ray still tickles the ivories for the VON

By Barry Ellsworth

THE INTELLIGENCER

The first letter in VON stands for Victorian, but it could just as easily represent the first letter in 'Volunteers'.

Like Ray Jenkins, 85, who tinkles the ivory for clients at the VON's Aberdeen Place adult day care service in Belleville. Jenkins recalled his first brush with the piano.

"I was eight years old," Jenkins said, "and I went four years to lessons."

He then quit, but jokes he later saw a piano player surrounded by women and told his mom he wanted to take lessons again.

"Here's this guy, plays the piano (with) girls all around..." the Kenron Estates resident said, laughing.

The not-for-profit Victorian Order of Nurses thrives on volunteers, who drive people to medical appointments, provide hot meals and snacks, pet therapy, adult day care and entertainment. This is VON Week, officially proclaimed as such by city council, and Harvey Clue seized the opportunity to say thanks to the approximately 200

VON volunteers in Hastings, Northumberland and Prince Edward counties.

"We wouldn't be able to provide the services without the volunteers," said the head of Aberdeen

Place. The adult service on Pinnacle Street South is named for Lady Aberdeen, who founded the VON in 1897.

The piano playing Jenkins is a good example of a volunteer, Clue said. Besides laying down tunes at Aberdeen Place since it opened a little more than two years ago, he has regular gigs at eight area nursing homes like the county home in Belleville, and Belleville and Trenton hospitals.

"I've been (playing) in Hastings Manor for 22 years," Jenkins said. That's when he and his wife retired here. Jenkins has been widowed for five years, and said his performances have increased since his wife died.

He has two children, four grandchildren and one great-grandchild, but so far no one has stepped forward to carry on the Jenkins' tradition.

"None of them play," he said.

Meanwhile, there's a message on the blackboard just inside the door at Aberdeen Place that neatly sums up the attitude of the VON.

"Today is a gift. That's why they call it a present."

It was penned by anonymous, just like the VON volunteers.



INTELLIGENCER PHOTO BY BARRY ELLSWORTH

Piano player Ray Jenkins volunteers to entertain clients with his musical talent at the VON's Aberdeen Place in Belleville.

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