

Returning to work after retirement may help reduce stress

Fallston resident Marge Rupp sees no reason to end her 40 years of work at St. Michael the Archangel School, Overlea, just because she recently celebrated her 80th birthday.

The St. John the Evangelist, Hydes, parishioner doesn't view the three days she works in the Catholic school's office each week as a stressful experience.

To the contrary, Mrs. Rupp finds the experience therapeutic.

"I enjoy working with the children and people," she said. "It keeps me young."

Though health care professionals warn that obsessive work habits can lead to dangerous stress levels, they also agree that continuing some kind of employment after retirement age can provide the activity necessary to keep the elderly vital.

"The traditional thought is that retirees can relax and are free of stress, but that often is not the case," said Kandy Aboud, a psychiatric nurse practitioner and yoga teacher at Good Samaritan Hospital in northeast Baltimore. "A lot of retirees have to deal with financial difficulties, mounting health care expenses and the state of their health, and the loss of their friends through death."

A job after retirement can supplement a retiree's income, relieving financial stress, Ms. Aboud said.

"It also keeps the person more active than just sitting on the couch in front of the television set," she said. "It can also serve as a distraction from dwelling on how their lives could have been, or on other worries they may have."

Volunteer work is usually the best type of post-retirement service for seniors, Ms. Aboud said.

"The expectation for performance isn't as high as a paying job, so that element of stress is usually missing in volunteer work," she said. "At the same time, it keeps them active and provides them with a great sense of accomplishment, which is

satisfying for all of us.”

For 67-year-old retired nurse Phyllis McNeal of Northeast Baltimore, returning to Good Samaritan Hospital’s Lorien Frankford Nursing Center’s Dialysis Unit as a volunteer does more than keep her active.

“Good Samaritan was good to me for many years, so I felt like I wanted to give something back,” Ms. McNeal said. “It’s a great feeling when you help out. It ends up helping you, too.”