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105 -year-old volunteer continues to be a blessing to others

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As a foster grandparent to more than 50 children and a devoted wife for 62 years to her late husband, Julia Cochran is a living testament to the advice she gives about the secret to long life: “Being a blessing to others.”

Cochran, who celebrated her 105th birthday earlier this year, was recognized last month with the President’s Volunteer Service Award, an honor she says she was “overwhelmed” to learn she’d been selected for.

“I’ve never been recognized for anything, but I’ve always enjoyed helping others,” said the Opelika Alacare Hospice volunteer. Alacare Home Health & Hospice is the state’s oldest and largest privately owned home health agency.

Cochran, a Hurtsboro native, has worked as a volunteer with Alacare Hospice since 2008, volunteering about twice a week coordinating various arts and crafts activities for hospice patients.

Presented with the President’s Volunteer Service Award on June 30, Cochran received a congratulatory letter signed by President Barack Obama, a pendant, a Call to Service Award certificate and a resolution from Alabama Gov. Bob Riley.

“It made me feel very special and proud that the President of the United States recognized little ole me,” said Cochran, who plans to continue volunteering with Alacare Hospice.

Alacare Volunteer Services Coordinator Stephine Bulger said Cochran is well-deserving of the honor.

“We often talk about the accomplishments of a person’s life after they’re gone, but through this award, we’re giving her (Cochran) flowers while she is alive and able to see and smell the beauty of them,” said Bulger, who nominated Cochran for the award.

While she’s happy with all the recent attention she’s gotten, Cochran’s outlook on life after more than a century has remained fairly simple.

“Keep God first,” Cochran said.

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