

Doing their fair sharing

La Grange's Wilborns get chamber honor

By KRISTIN FAUREST
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Raymond Wilborn is given to expressing a sentiment that seems odd coming from an 82-year-old man. "They're always doing something for the old people," said the former La Grange mayor. "But never anything for the kids."

That's why Wilborn and his wife, Irene, are putting two Oldham County students through the University of Louisville. And it's why they helped found La Grange's John T. Walsh Park, worked to raise the funds to start Cedar Lake Lodge and gave time and money to too many people and organizations to enumerate.

Last month the Oldham County Chamber of Commerce honored the Wilborns with a lifetime achievement award for community service. The Wilborns — both Oldham County natives who moved to their La Grange home in 1968 after retiring from farming — have no children, although nieces, nephews, grand-nieces and grand-nephews visit often.

But in a sense the Wilborns have adopted their neighbors during the past 30 years or more, championing a plethora of causes in La Grange and elsewhere in Oldham County.

Although they focus their efforts on young people, their gifts have also included the double-faced, black-and-white town clock



STAFF PHOTO BY MARY ANN LICHT

Irene and Raymond Wilborn of La Grange recently received a lifetime achievement award from the Oldham County Chamber of Commerce for their numerous community services.

on Main Street in La Grange as well as contributions to the library, several churches and the North Oldham Lions Club.

They have difficulty pinpointing what has been most rewarding — a single large gift, such as a scholarship, or the many times that they've donated to victims of house fires or other disasters.

Irene Wilborn said she and her husband have never missed the time and money they've given away, noting that the gift is to the giver. "I just don't know what it would have been like if we couldn't have lived the way we did," she said, explaining that the couple's interest in helping young people stems from their being young during the Depression.

"I think you feel rewarded for doing things like this. We have no regrets. Does that sound all right?" Then she paused. "I just

wish we'd done more."

"I'm glad to be able to help people," chimed in Raymond Wilborn, who was La Grange's mayor from 1969 to 1978. "I was able to do it, so why not do it? I just enjoy doing these things for people."

The couple married on May 14, 1932, at La Grange's First Methodist Church. The groom had \$10 in his pocket, a Ford Model A parked outside, and a horse and a cow on a farm along U. S. 42 near Skylight. His bride quit her job as a teacher in a one-room schoolhouse near Centerfield to work the farm.

Over the years, they invested their earnings, accumulating enough to support their causes.

"They're just very down-to-earth people," said Mayor John Black, who has known the Wilborns for a decade. Black refers to Raymond Wilborn as "windbag"

because he good-naturedly heckles the mayor at public events.

"They know what hard work's all about," Black said. "They came through very tough times. They're very special people who want to take their lifetime successes and give them back."

The Wilborns don't get out as much as they used to — restricting their commitments to La Grange First United Methodist Church and Walsh Park's board of directors — but Irene Wilborn said she believes the good they have done will continue long after they're gone.

"I think we have a feeling that there are people we've helped who are now helping others — ministers, teachers, physical therapists," she said. Through those people, she said, "there's that feeling that we're still helping someone else."