

# EVERYDAY Heroes

16 | MONDAY, OCTOBER 20, 2014 | THE HERALD-TIMES | EVERYDAY HEROES

## Cathleen Weber

### Creating a place to belong

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Cathleen Weber, founder and owner of The Better Day Club — an adult day program serving people in Monroe and surrounding counties with early-to-moderate stage Alzheimer's disease or dementia — did not hesitate when asked what she loves about her job.

"Every single day, I hear our club members say how much they feel like they belong here," said Weber, a licensed clinical social worker. "This is a place where they can laugh and feel valued and enjoy themselves and be accepted for who they are. This the most rewarding thing I've ever done."

Jean Capler, who nominated Weber as an Everyday Hero, said, "She is a force of nature when it comes to doing what needs to be done for people. She is an incredibly skilled, insightful, committed and effective social worker with a heart. She truly believes in the dignity and worth of all people."

It was a year ago this month that Weber opened The Better Day Club at 4211 E. Third St. Today, a dozen members are in the club, participating in art therapy and speech therapy designed to improve speech and cognition.

"The goal of art therapy, other than to have fun, is to give people another means of expression and communication when using language is frustrating," Weber said. "We've



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found that a number of our club members have a tremendous artistic side they have never explored."

The club is open from noon-4 p.m. three days a week — providing therapeutic, social and cognitive engagement activities based on best practice research. The cost is \$100 per four-hour session, which includes a catered lunch, snacks and art supplies. Some outings, such as to a Cardinal Stage production, cost extra. The club accepts private pay and long-term care insurance, but not Medicaid.

She said club members take field trips to places such as the Exotic Feline Rescue Center, do service projects and have lively discussions.

"We have a lot of fun and laugh a lot, and we talk about whatever they want to talk about — religion, politics, sports," she said. "Our activities reflect the interests of our members. This is their program, not ours."

Weber said club members come from all walks of life and range in age from 67 to 92.

"Dementia can be an isolating disease that affects their social life, so we want to provide a safe place where they can connect with others and be themselves," she said.

Weber is supported by an assistant director with a bachelor's in social work and an art therapist, and works closely with the Indiana University Speech and Hearing Clinic, IU students and community volunteers.

"With Alzheimer's, the sooner you reach out for support the better," she said.