



Bill Olmsted/photo@gazettextra.com

Elinor Lorum fills the bird feeder she keeps outside her apartment at Cedar Crest. Lorum uses her son's credit card to buy the feed. Filling the feeder is part of Lorum's daily routine.

Bird Lady of Cedar Crest

By Marcia Nelesen

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JANESVILLE

When Bob Lorum gave his mother a bird feeder for Mother's Day, he figured she'd fill it once a week.

Turns out Elinor Lorum, 79, is filling it every day and attracting a menagerie for the enjoyment of residents at Cedar Crest's independent living apartments.

The birds flooded the feeder within an hour of it being filled, Elinor recalled recently.

Her feathered friends include sparrows, cardinals, blue jays, goldfinches and woodpeckers.

And now there are deer and a fawn and turkeys. "The turkeys, they just stroll along and look in the windows," Elinor said. "They're such a homely bird."

"The other people are enjoying it," Elinor said. "They tell me all about what they see at the bird feeder."

Elinor, whose apartment is above the feeder, looks outside every time she walks by. She keeps binoculars nearby.

Bob, who lives in Virginia, gave Marty Wacha of Wild Birds Unlimited his credit card to keep Elinor in seed.

Right now, she's going through at least one 20-pound bag a week.

"I'm officially going broke now," Bob joked when interviewed recently by phone. "We didn't expect every animal from Noah's Ark to be showing up and eating."

Wacha delivers the seed free of charge to Cedar Crest as a favor to Elinor.

"We're all about the birds and, of course, the critters

that eat off the ground," Wacha said.

Elinor said filling the feeder gets her out of her apartment. Every day, she measures a precise amount of seed and navigates to the feeder with a walker.

Elinor expects to miss some days in the winter, though, as she is afraid of falling on the snow and ice.

Elinor's other hobbies include reading and listening to music. Some residents know her as the Knitting Lady because she started a needlework group.

And now, she is known as the Deer Lady, Elinor said.

Bob calls Elinor the Bird Lady, she noted, adding that she calls him a trouble maker.

"I keep thinking this whole thing is hilarious," Elinor said. "He knows I usually don't go for this stuff."

Elinor's husband, who died nine years ago, was the one who liked feeding the birds.

But Elinor is getting the last laugh. The seed is expensive, especially because it must be sterilized seed to keep the weeds down.

Bob, a 1982 graduate of Janesville Craig High School, doesn't care.

"I've been very fortunate," said Bob, who, by his own admission, is a sentimental sort.

Bob said he was adopted into a wonderful family. He will always be grateful to his mom and dad.

"My mom's loving it," Bob said of the bird feeder.

And now it's not just for his mom.

"Even if it costs 1,000 bucks, I could care less because it is making so many people happy," Bob said.

That wasn't expected, he said.

"It's burgeoned into a whole community thing," he added.

"It's really beautiful."



Lorum

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Submitted photo

In addition to the usual birds, Elinor Lorum's bird feeder at Cedar Crest attracts deer, turkeys and other wildlife.