

Luncheon honors community members in their 90s

By Douglas McCulloch | Jul 16, 2017

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Photo by: Douglas McCulloch

Nominees pose for a photo.

Walter Dearing has accomplished a feat few golfers can claim: he shoots his age.

It's made a little easier because he's 92 years old with a love of golf that stretches back nearly 80 years to his childhood, growing up a stone's throw away from the Paskamansett Links golf course where the Dartmouth Mall now stands.

Dearing is a World War II veteran, serving in the Navy, enlisting in military service along with his brothers. He worked on military bases, and ran a golf shop out of his home for many years. And he still keeps his golf game up to this day.

"I was able to get through life and still be able to do the things I do at my age," Dearing said of his golf skills.

Dearing was one of 12 nonagenarians honored at the first Wisdom of our Elders luncheon. A collaborative effort between the Dartmouth Wanderers, Friends of the Elderly, Dartmouth Historical and Arts Society, and Dartmouth Community Television, the event solicited nominations from community members on who the inaugural event would recognize.

When Donat Bernier was 17 years old, he and a group of friends decided to enlist in the U.S. Navy during World War II, but his mother disallowed it several times until he eventually enlisted. He served aboard the USS Hornet, serving as one of its original crop of sailors. He recently received his honorary

high school diploma from Greater New Bedford Vocational Technical High School alongside his grandson.

Like Dearing, nominee Horace Wildes also has something to keep him going: his car collection. At 99, he owns a variety of antique cars, including a tractor he stitched together himself.

Florence Harding received recognition for her life, which began in 1925. Originally from Acushnet, she graduated from New Bedford High School and moved to Dartmouth in 1950. She most recently worked in the cafeteria at Dartmouth High School starting in 1997, and organized a tab collection program to benefit Shriners Hospital. She officially retired in 2016 at the age of 90.

The Helfand sisters, Edith and Sophie, were also honored. The pair lived at the Helfand Farm property on Chase Road, and have an extensive family tree. They now attend regular Dartmouth Historical and Arts Society meetings, participate in historical roundtables, and offer input on the history of Dartmouth.

Other nominees include Aurore Chace, Alzida (Elsie) Ferro, Ruben Goldstein, Renate Hamer, Graziela (Grace) Luiz, and Judith Viera.

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