

Norfolk Insider

City of Norfolk, NE

www.ci.norfolk.ne.us

July 6, 2010

“Doris Nelson”

It's just an 8 by 10 foot shed but its location next to the Ta Ha Zouka baseball fields and the food that is served from it draws Doris Nelson every summer. As concessions coordinator for the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) Auxiliary, Nelson orders all the food, buns, ice, napkins, popcorn bags, baggies, paper towels and anything else that might be required to serve some 150 people for one night of baseball games.



“I love the kids. Maybe they'll have only a quarter and want to know what they can buy with it and we'll help them out. One girl once even brought me dandelions,” Nelson said a recent night as she pulled pop out of the cooler for customers.

Nelson has worked at this position for nine years and has been a resident of Norfolk for 56 years. Before that, she taught school in South Dakota with her husband, Rodney, then moved to Norfolk where they've raised five children.

Nelson said she grew up in the

30's and remembers gas rations so knows how to save money.

“My husband, Rodney, and I were in the sanitation business and I managed it for four years after he passed on. That was my living. I had one in college and four at home at the time,” Nelson said. She has also worked as a bookkeeper and dress shop manager.

Nelson has worked with Norfolk youth for years as a Cub Scout leader and a helper to the Drum and Bugle Corp. She also coordinates the annual VFW Pancake Feed. This is Nelson's 15th year as President of the VFW Auxiliary. Members do community volunteer work including sending packages to people in the military and helping at the Norfolk Veteran's Home.

Nelson's primary job in the summer, though, is to sell hotdogs and popcorn to help make money for the same kids who pay for them with dimes and quarters. All the profit from the concession sales go to the VFW baseball program.

“We've sponsored 80 kids so they can play ball. In the past we also paid coaches, umpires and bought the kids' uniforms,” Nelson said.

Concession stand set up starts at 4:30 pm with games beginning at 5:30 pm. Many nights, Nelson doesn't get home until 11:00 pm. Games run Monday through Thursday with some make up games held Friday and Saturday. Nelson is there for them all.

For seven years, Kim Knight has worked alongside Nelson helping to make sure the candy bars are all stocked and they don't run out of ring pops.

"Doris is very dedicated to the baseball program. During the day, she'll be out here meeting the truck for deliveries of pop. She even got the freezer donated," Knight said.

When Nelson heard that the flood waters might overtake the concessions stand, she drove out to put items up high. She then helped sandbag in parts of town where there was flood danger. Nothing in the concessions stand got wet.

Nelson's cell phone rings during the interview. It's a tool she is more comfortable with than others in her generation.

"This is how you stay young. I don't want to stay home and stare at the wall," Nelson said.

The umpire is barking strike outs and the crowd is clapping at plays. Nelson's view of it all is through a little window from the concessions but she doesn't mind.

"These kids are all so polite. Don't dare tell me all kids are bad. I know different," Nelson said.