

Helper at senior center still going at age 93

By [Kaitlin Ugolik](#)

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Without a wince or a groan, Marvin Laughlin, who turns 94 in June, led a group of seniors in their stretches and exercises on a recent Tuesday morning at the Gibsonville Senior Center.

Everyone sat in a circle of chairs, with hand weights by their sides. Laughlin counted down from 10 or 15 with each stretch, and everyone followed along, barely missing a step. They'd memorized the routine almost as well as he had.

Fourteen pairs of arms stretched back and fourth as Laughlin counted down: "... five, four, three, two, one, done," and they switched almost in unison to another exercise.

Jokes were traded across the circle about how old Laughlin is, and how he used to be able to touch his toes. He's a modest, soft-spoken man who has a quiet command of the room and the respect of everyone in it.

"He don't forget a thing," said Ruth S. Clapp, 87, a participant and Laughlin's friend. Another participant made a point of mentioning what a wonderful person Laughlin is.

"I try to help around where I can," Laughlin said. "I enjoy it."

He lives alone on Whitsett Street, just a few minutes from the senior center — in the same house he moved to 68 years ago upon moving to Gibsonville from Randleman. "I'm gonna stay (in the house) as long as the Lord will let me live and take care of myself," he said.

In 1936 he opened Laughlin's Flowers, which he ran for 47 years, making arrangements for funeral homes and other organizations.

"It's a lot of work," he said of the florist business. "They've improved the way they do things."

He left the florist business in 1995 after his wife's death, but continued to garden avidly until last year when the groundhogs in his backyard proved too much for his plants to bear. He still sustains a few tomato plants, and brings what he doesn't use to the senior center. Even after "retiring" from the florist business, Laughlin worked in the postal service for about nine years.

"I've been completely retired maybe 13 to 14 years," he said.

Laughlin has been an active member at the senior center for about 10 years. He comes down five days a week for a congregate meal provided by Senior Resources of Guilford County. He takes over Tuesday and Thursday morning exercise class for Mike Dupree, director of recreation at the center, when Dupree is unable to make it. Laughlin also likes to play games on the computer at the senior center.

"When they first put this in, I had never even fooled with one," he said. "So I ordered this book and brought it down here." He showed me a book called, "Computers for Seniors."

He said he has an e-mail address but doesn't get a lot of e-mail aside from Wheel of Fortune updates because he doesn't send a lot out.

Laughlin has one son, three grandchildren and five great-grandchildren, all of whom live in Burlington and Graham.

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