

# Here's my story...

I attended the SCP Recognition for CNY DDSOO-Rome last week at Cole Yard Charlie's in Rome. It was there that I met Art. Art De La Roche is a Senior Companion. He is a man who is small in stature and he has a cleft lip, which he pointed out to me a short time into our conversation. You will see that his small physique has no comparison to what is in his heart!

Our conversation began when I asked Art how long he had been a Senior Companion. He told me that he has been in the program for a few years. Art loves his job as a Senior Companion. He stated to me that it is the best job that he has ever had in his life. He passionately talked about why he loved his job. Money was never part of the conversation.



Art grew up on a farm and enlisted in the Army at 18 years of age during the Korean War. The Army doctor asked Art how he even got this far in the enlistment process. His cleft lip was a problem!?! The doctor told Art that he could either quit the Army or the doctor could give him surgery and make Art into someone that even his mother wouldn't recognize!!! Art decided that he liked the way he looked and quit the Army.

Art retired from the Harden Furniture Company after 25 years. Six months into retirement, he didn't have enough to do. Art stumbled upon the Senior Companion brochure. Art called, was interviewed by the former Senior Companion Coordinator and hired---22 years ago!

Art could be a spokesman for the Senior Companion Program. He has a beautiful relationship with James and sees him every day at Ripley Day Hab. Art loves to go outside and James loves

to be out of the noisy Day Hab. They spend most days outside—walking, talking and visiting. Art stated very proudly that he now has a purpose in his life.

I write this story to tell you of the goodness that is exchanged in the SCP. Not only does James have the beauty of friendship with Art, but he also has an advocate. Keeping one self occupied and doing for someone else is so evident in Art's story. It is what volunteering is all about. There is such a mutual reward between the senior with scads of experience and the individual who is looking for a friend. Art is now 84 years young and would like to be a Senior Companion for 22 more years. By my calculations 22 more years puts Art at 106!!! I'd love to have Art in the program that many more years. My bet is that James would like to have his friend to visit every day for 22 more years as well!



Thanks for reading. I hope that this story made you smile as much as it made me smile when I met Art.

Since I met Art last week, I have learned that he is a widower. It seems that Michelle, a staff from Ripley Day Hab checks up on Art when he is ill. She makes sure that he has places to go and people to see. She is as passionate about him and what he does for the individuals as Art is himself.

One person connected to the DDSOO stated, “He is a wonderful man and this assignment is perfect for all.”

The Senior Companion Program is really a three way street between Senior Companion, individual and staff.

I hope that you are smiling even more, as you hear about something good happening here at CNY DDSOO!