



VILLAGER BACKSTORY

You may know Gail Formanack from her work with the League of Women Voters, but what you might not know is she has been a member of the group since her days as a librarian.



Ally Mansfield

THE VILLAGES DAILY SUN

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Gail Formanack has been a lifelong educator. Even into her retirement, she said it was important for her to continue serving her community in the best way she knows how: by sharing knowledge.

"I retired at 55," said Formanack, of the Village of Hemingway. "I felt like I still had a lot to give. I have a strong work ethic. I'd feel guilty if I were just sitting around reading all day or playing all day."

Reading has been Formanack's favorite pastime since she was a child growing up on a farm in a small town in South Dakota.

As a young person on a farm, there was a black-and-white TV with two stations. Other than that, there wasn't much to do for entertainment, and so she started escaping into the world of literature.

Her hobby ended up becoming her career.

Discovering a Career Path

"I started working in the school library (in high school), and that piqued my interest and sent me down the road to college where I got my bachelor's degree in library science," she said. "I was a school librarian in South Dakota before moving to Omaha, (Nebraska)."

Formanack said she did "a number of years" in elementary and middle school library programs before moving into a supervisor role. She then got her master's degree in library science and became the supervisor of libraries at her school.

This was a good fit for her, she said, because in addition



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to loving to read, she also likes "bringing order to potential chaos and helping people."

It's this desire to help people that brought her into the world of volunteer work as well.

Being Part of the Community

Formanack joined a few groups for women in business and professional settings while in South Dakota and sought out further memberships in Omaha.

She also became the president of the state's library association and joined the American Association of School Librarians and the League of Women Voters.

"After I retired in Omaha, I had more time and became the president of the League

in Omaha," she said. "Now I'm co-president of the league here and in my third year of doing that."

Formanack is also president of Zonta Club of The Villages, another women's philanthropic organization, and the Hemingway Social Club. She said the latter isn't one of her volunteer-focused organizations but that it's nice to "have fun sometimes" too.

It's the League of Women Voters that has much of her passion, though.

"I think voting is extremely important," she said. "Certainly there's nothing more important than voting."

Finding The Villages By Surprise

Coming to Florida wasn't originally in the cards for

GETTING TO KNOW GAIL FORMANACK

Age: 64

Village: Hemingway

Spouse: Tom

Family: Two kids, two grandkids

Moved here: 2016

Moved here from: Omaha, Nebraska

Favorite Villages activities: Golfing and getting involved in volunteer work

Formanack, or so she thought.

"We never had thought of retiring to Florida," she said. "We thought we'd just stay in Omaha and travel to escape winter."

Formanack's neighbor in Omaha had a mother who spent winters in Florida for years, traveling around both coasts before ending up in The Villages.

It was her neighbor who recommended Formanack "check out" The Villages, which she described as "pretty neat" after visiting her mother.

After coming here in 2015 for a lifestyle preview, Formanack said she and her husband "fell in love."

"We could see ourselves living here," she said. "We don't regret it a bit. There's so many opportunities in The Villages."