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**Mary Rainwaters, 71**, of Drakesboro loves to cook. She also has a talent for organizing the behind-the-scenes operations at local events like the annual International Thumbpicking Contest held in her hometown.

# SUPER COOK

## Rainwaters makes food, helps at various events

By David Blackburn  
Messenger-Inquirer

### D R A K E S B O R O

The best place to find Mary Rainwaters on the few times she is home will be to look in one of her kitchens.

There are two of them in her house — one downstairs and one in the upstairs apartment she used to rent.

With her work preparing food for the various community events she helps organize, at

### Mary Rainwaters

**Age:** 71.

**Address:** Christian Street, Drakesboro.

**Family:** Seven children — Michael (deceased), Debbie Boyd, Carolyn Lear, Pam Casebier, Morris Rainwaters, Billy Rainwaters and Melissa Dene.

**Job:** Part-time house-sitter with the elderly.

**Quote:** "I stay busy; it keeps me out of trouble."

least one kitchen stays pretty busy, especially during the holidays.

"All the kids get in the kitchen," said Rainwaters, a mother, grandmother and great-grandmother to 26. "It's elbow-to-elbow."

Sometimes, though, she has to make use of both kitchens.

Rainwaters cooks four turkeys and two hams while preparing the potluck dinner for contestants in the International Thumbpicking Contest in late August.

"You should see my kitchen then," she said, chuckling at the thought of the cleanup.

She also makes the food sold at various events honoring the style of guitar playing made popular by natives of Drakesboro and the surrounding area.

"I sell concessions at all the activities," Rainwaters said. She also lines up cooks and buys food sold at the Four Legends

See **Cook/Page 3B**

# Cook: 'She's almost a one-woman Chamber of Commerce'

From **Page 1B**

Jamboree on the second Saturday of every month; the Mose Rager Day in April; and Merle Travis Day, which will be Saturday.

And then there is the homemade ice cream. Rainwaters makes three gallons on Jamboree nights and 4½ gallons for the Pickin' in the Park summer concert series on Fridays in Powderly.

Bobby Anderson, who organizes the music portion of most of those events, said her frozen dessert draws people from miles around. "The homemade ice cream is what people talk about," Anderson said.

Rainwaters, though, said she can't enjoy the results of her work since she's diabetic.

And despite the time she spends fixing food, Rainwaters is proud that she has lost 26 pounds through a regimen of daily walking, Weight Watchers and generally staying busy.

"I've always cooked. My boys love to cook, too," she said. "Their

dad cooked on weekends when he was alive."

Her husband, Chester, died of cancer in 1974, leaving her to raise the last three of her seven children by herself.

The Drakesboro native, who was born in the Goose Hollow area in what is now Pear Street, was a stay-at-home mom until 1964.

"I've worked ever since somewhere," Rainwaters said.

That included a 16-year career at a Greenville sewing factory, custodian at the Drakesboro First Baptist Church that she attends and staying with the elderly, which she still does four nights a week.

"She's always kept busy," said daughter Debbie Boyd of Central City, who recalls her mother selling Avon and cleaning products when Boyd was a child. "Sometimes I wish I had the energy she seems to have."

Rainwaters also brings food and arranges entertainment for Fun over 40, a club that meets every second Wednesday for a potluck lunch, devotion and bingo.

"I think if you come home and sit down, you've had it," Rainwaters said.

That won't be a problem, said Jonell Lear, a longtime friend of Rainwaters. She called Rainwaters one of the "backbones" for the local events that they sometimes co-organize.

"If she got to where she couldn't do it, it may fall through," Lear said. "She does the running."

"Of course, she thrives on it," Lear added. "It seems like it keeps her going. She won't rust out unless her body gives out."

"I believe she's the hardest-working woman I know," Anderson said. "She's a doer. I don't know what I'd do without Mary."

Anderson said most of her work, such as the thumbpicking-related events, revolves around promoting Drakesboro.

"Sometimes she's almost a one-woman Chamber of Commerce for Drakesboro," he said.

Rainwaters said most of her involvement in those activities stems from being on the City Coun-

cil, to which she was recently re-elected, off and on since 1985.

"Drakesboro doesn't have much to offer anymore," she said. When the coal mining industry left, all that remained were churches and residents, most of whom are elderly, she said.

The thumbpicking events, which mainly draw out-of-towners, are opportunities, Rainwaters said, "because who in Virginia ... or New York is ever going to come to Drakesboro?"

"She's just a sweet person," said Paul Jarvis, a friend of Rainwaters and another occasional co-organizer. "She seems to want to help everybody."

That includes Mose Rager's widow, Laverda, who still lives in Drakesboro, Jarvis said. During the thumbpicking events, Rainwaters makes it a point to have a plate of food sent to her, he said.

"She (Rainwaters) does it on her own, too, a lot of times," he said.

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