Commitment to others brings Douglas Proffit to work at 3 a.m. seven days a week

by LAURA NEFF-HENDERSON, APR

Deep behind the scenes in Dietrick Hall, Virginia Tech employee Douglas Proffit arrives on campus at 3 a.m. and gets to work cutting up all of the meat that will be used in the Dietrick dining facilities that day. On an average year, Proffit processes more than 61,000 pounds of beef sirloin tips, boneless pork loin, and boneless chicken breasts.

Proffit works from 3 a.m. to 8 a.m., seven days a week. It’s a schedule most people would do anything to avoid, but Proffit says these hours allow him to take care of his family responsibilities, work 13 hours a week stocking the meat case at the Christiansburg, Virginia Walmart, and meet the university’s needs.

Proffit is of the only meat cutter at Virginia Tech, and his work is vital to maintaining food services for thousands of students and employees. Dietrick Hall houses D2 and D5 press, which serves about 6,000 snacks and meals each day.

“Doug is integral in helping D2 offer students the choicest cuts of proteins at an affordable cost and has done so his entire tenure here,” said his supervisor, Amanda Snediker, food production manager. “His diligent planning and expert cuts continue to entice and please our guests’ discerning palettes.”

Proffit’s well known in the Shawsville community for his outdoor Christmas decoration display, which was featured on the front page of the New River Valley section of the Roanoke Times on Christmas morning this year. A few years ago, WDBJ7 broadcast its morning show from his front yard. People come from all over the area to see the display which he continues to do each year, he said, because of the joy it brings to others.

Proffit’s schedule allows him to take care of his wife of 51 years, Dianne, who has some health issues as a result of a heart attack she suffered in 2007. The couple is raising their 17-year-old grandson. Proffit himself had a heart attack on Nov. 12, 2014, but he recovered and quickly came back to work quickly.

Even when his family and friends urged him to retire following his heart attack, Proffit resisted. “I don’t have any desire to retire,” said Proffit. “I’ve been working and earning money since I was 9 years old.”

And, said Proffit, he can’t retire anyway. He’s got to train one of his colleagues to take over his job responsibilities first.

The Profitts have three adult children and five grandchildren between 7 and 19 years old. Their youngest child, their only daughter, Whitney Jones, 39, is a housekeeper at the Sterrett Facility Complex. Their daughter-in-law Sharon Proffit is a fiscal technician in the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences.

His job at Virginia Tech has been a blessing, he said. And, while he can’t put his finger on what it is that makes the university so special to him, it just is. “I just enjoy it – I can’t give you a reason,” said Proffit.

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“Doug is extremely kind and helpful to everyone he meets,” said Sharon. “He is willing to sacrifice time, money, and possessions to help others in need. Doug and his family were there for me and my family when my mother passed away in 1994, before I married into the family. He has a heart of gold.”

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About this series

The Extraordinary Employee series highlights the achievements of Virginia Tech employees who go above and beyond, making a difference in the lives of others on campus and in the community.