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Former Fairfield school board member now indulges in passion for birds

Anne Crone runs The Bird Shoppe off Dixie Highway.

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FAIRFIELD — For a dozen years Anne Crone was a member of Fairfield City Schools' governing board, but her work now finds her surrounded by bird brains.

And she couldn't be happier about it.

Crone is the long-time owner of The Bird Shoppe and like her previous stint as an elected, three-term member of the occasionally contentious Fairfield Board of Education, there's plenty of squawking going on here.

"I learned patience on the school board and it helps here," jokes Crone who served from 1989 to 2001 on the school board.

"Birds have individual personalities just like people. Birds have likes, dislikes and different temperaments, but they are all like family to me," said the 69-year-old Crone.

And it's a busy, boisterous family at her Dixie Highway shop.

Exotic birds sporting wildly colorful plumage adorn Crone's store. Most are in large cages but some stroll about or hang from specially designed, bird-friendly apparatus. There's a constant cacophony of coos, chirps, whistles and the occasional, dead-on mimicking of human words.

For almost a decade Susan Williams of Fairfield Twp. has been a steady customer of Crone's store, which includes bird grooming, a bird nursery and boarding for vacationing families needing someone to care for their feathered members.

The store also features a communal area of couches and chairs for bird lovers to chat up their passion while sometimes sharing an arm rest or seat next to a bird.

Crone, said Williams, is the reason she and her pet birds keep coming back.

"I just love her. She cares so much and takes such good care of all the birds," Williams said.

And in their own way the birds are helping take care of Crone, who is battling cancer.

"This is a healing spot for me and for others. I love being here because it's a happy place," Crone said.

She bonds with each bird. It's easy, she said, because they understand "the family dynamic."

"God makes birds to live in families and flocks and that's why when you eat, they eat, or when you nap, they nap," Crone said.

"That's what makes birds so sweet," she said.

For more information about The Bird Shoppe, visit www.thebirdshoppe.com.