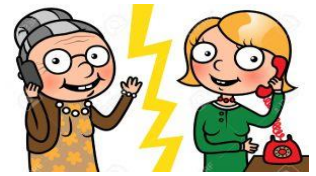


# GREENE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES CONTACT AND SUPPORT



**Brief Description:** Partnership with local Rotary Clubs to offer telephone conversations for older adults.

## **Program Description**

Social isolation and loneliness are common among older adults who live alone and can be exacerbated in a rural setting where many older adults do not live near their neighbors. To address this, Greene County Department of Human Services created the Contact and Support program. Through this program, local Rotary Club volunteers call homebound Department clients for social conversations. Volunteers and clients engage in discussions based on common interests, local issues, shared memories and local history. Whenever possible, clients are paired with Rotary Club members in their own village or town, so they have something in common, which helps facilitate an initial conversation. Some volunteers have been assigned clients who were their former teachers or neighbors, and even friends of relatives.

A past Department survey showed respondents feeling lonely or isolated. This helped launch the program and identify potential participants. Staff also identified homebound clients they work with through case management, home-delivered meals and more who might benefit from additional socialization.

## **Outcomes**

Clients who participated in the program indicated an increase in social support and reduced isolation.

## **Lessons Learned**

It is important to keep it local - the program works because there is a common link between volunteer and client. It is also critical to communicate clearly about the program with clients before it begins, so clients can decide if they want to participate, determine who they would feel comfortable receiving calls from and feel prepared for a call from a volunteer.

## **Resources Needed**

Staff time is needed to identify which clients would benefit from the program, manage data entry, and maintain regular contact with volunteers to ensure compliance and discuss any concerns. Volunteers can use their own phones.

## **Contact Information**

For more information on this program, contact: Ken Brooks Jr., Business Manager with Greene County Department of Human Services (Catskill, NY) at [kenbrooks@discovergreene.com](mailto:kenbrooks@discovergreene.com) or call 518-719-3555.

