



## GREENE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES CONTACT AND SUPPORT PROGRAM

Greene County Department of Human Services has partnered with area Rotary Clubs to offer telephone reassurance to local senior citizens.

### **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, the Department of Human Services created the **CONTACT AND SUPPORT PROGRAM**. Through this program, local Rotary Club members volunteer to call homebound Department clients for social communication. Whenever possible, clients are paired with Rotary members in their own town so they have something in common, which helps facilitate an initial conversation. Some volunteers have been assigned clients who were their former teachers, are neighbors, and even friends or relatives. The volunteer and the client engage in discussions based on common interests, local issues and history, and shared memories.

A past Department survey showed respondents felt lonely or isolated. This helped launch the program and identify potential participants. Staff identified homebound clients they work with through case management, home-delivered meals and more who might benefit from the telephone socialization. In turn, clients who participated in the program felt an increase in social support and reduced isolation.

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 the client before calls begin. This is so that a client can decide if they want to participate, determine who they would feel comfortable receiving calls from and can be prepared for when the volunteer calls.

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 use their own telephones.



For more information on the program, contact Greene County Department of Human Services Deputy Director Tami Bone at [tbone@discovergreene.com](mailto:tbone@discovergreene.com) or call 518-719-3555.

