



THE AGING AND DISABILITY RESOURCE CENTER helps cut the red tape for people trying to get information and assistance concerning programs and services. Pictured (from left) are Myrene Theis, Lori Metoxen and Rosie Kohl. Metoxen, an elderly benefits specialist at the center, recently assisted Theis and Kohl.

Photo for the Post-Crescent by Wm. Gashoen

HELPING HAND

Resource center puts help just a phone call away

By Toni Hoh
For The Post-Crescent

The concept of one-stop shopping has reached even into county government. That's good news for people trying to navigate the sea of services for the elderly and people who are disabled.

The newly formed Aging & Disability Resource Center, a partnership initiative serving Calumet, Outagamie and Waupaca counties, serves as information central for everything from nursing and respite services to home handymen, transportation, nutrition and even government health coverage.

The main goal is connecting people to the services they need in just one call. On a larger scale, ADRC strives to provide services that allow individuals to stay in their own homes as long as possible.

The service was an answer to prayers for Myrene Theis, 86, of Appleton. Inundated a year ago with information about government-sponsored health coverage, Theis was overwhelmed, unable to make a decision about which plan to choose.

"I piled it all up. It was so much to wade through that really any senior could hardly do it," she said. "All that confusion, and every day I'd get some more. I didn't know where to start."

A call to ADRC was just what Theis needed. In just one visit, she was signed up with a health care plan that fit her needs and arrangements were in place to have the costs taken directly out of her Social Security checks.

"I came out of there feeling 10 feet

TELL ME A STORY

What your neighbors find interesting

high. I was really happy," Theis said, of the burden being lifted from her shoulders. "To talk to a person sets your mind at ease. I came home and threw all those papers into the recycling."

Rosie Kohl used ADRC for help in finding a nursing home for her aunt. Not knowing who to call or where to go to begin the search, Kohl found someone at the Center who "took me right under her wing and showed me what I had to do."

"So many other times, I had to make multiple calls ... first to a social worker, then they would speak to someone else, then I had to call the nurse. This way I just called once. It's perfect because it's all in one spot," said Kohl, of Appleton.

Launched earlier this year, ADRC is run by a committee whose members represent the cross-section of society most likely to need its services, according to committee chairman Dave Ballering. "It's a mixed bag, intentionally designed that way so there was community involvement and it is representative of the people you're serving."

"One of the things ADRC is looking at is to provide long-term care within the person's home as a best possible option," Ballering said. The process includes asking the individual receiving services for their input as to what they believe would

be best. "We ask them 'What's best for you and what do you think you'd prefer out of these options that we can give you?' They can define how we're going to accomplish providing services in their home" in order to stay in their own environments as long as possible.

A critical step in achieving that goal is getting people to what they need, even if those needs cross county lines. "One-stop shopping is what we're shooting for. That's the commitment we have," Ballering said. "If you call in, you're going to either get the solution or be directed immediately to the person that can give you the solution. They're not just referring you over to someone. They actually put you in touch with the person you need."

Because ADRC exists for the elderly as well as people with disabilities of any age, Ballering strongly encourages anyone with questions to call the agency.

"If you're not sure if you need a service, but you're just wondering, don't hesitate to call," he said. "That puts the power with the individual, and that's the goal."

Based at county buildings, ADRC is part of a state government initiative to expand the successful Family Care program statewide. All ADRC services are provided at no charge.

To contact each county's program: Calumet County, 206 Court St., Chilton, 920-849-1451 or www.co.calumet.wi.us; Outagamie County, 402 S. Elm St., Appleton, 920-852-5178 or www.co.outagamie.wi.us; Waupaca County, 811 Harding St., Waupaca, 715-258-8400 or www.co.waupaca.wi.us. All locations may be reached by calling toll-free to 866-739-2372. People with hearing or speech disabilities should call the Wisconsin Relay Text Telephone at 711.