



Making Connections *a 317 Board Update*



Dola Powell takes a break from pricing items for the center's community yard sale to get a hug from student volunteer Kloe Stevens.

“I do a little bit of everything here,” says Dola Powell, a volunteer at the Vinton Senior Citizens Center. Powell is 87 years old and has been volunteering at the center for the last 16 years. “I have worked since I was a kid, I love the people, I love what I do and that keeps me going. Rhoda will call me and say, “Dola I need you,” well, Dola is here.”

According to Executive Director, Rhoda Toon Price, the Vinton Senior Citizens Center has around 200 clients. The programs are available to those 60 and older as well as veterans and disabled citizens of any age. Among the services offered are transportation, meals, outreach and socialization. Food is the most important thing that the center offers, according to Powell, who often spends time in the center's kitchen helping to prepare the daily meals.

Last year, Vinton County residents received nearly 24-thousand meals as part of the senior center's Meals on Wheels program. Powell fears that if the center weren't able to provide meals to those who need them then most would simply go hungry. There's no grocery store in Vinton County, although that's about to change.

According to Price, “We traveled over one hundred thousand miles to offer transportation to those in need last year, and if it weren't for the center, many people would remain completely isolated and unable to go to doctor's appointments or receive prescription medications.”

“The need is increasing because they don't have family to help them,” said Price, about the fact that younger generations continue to move out of the area seeking better employment opportunities and leaving elderly family members to fend for themselves. She says the biggest employer in the county is the public school system.

As a way to combat the isolation that many rural senior citizens face, the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) pairs students in the local schools with “grandpals” from the center to write back and forth during the school year. At the end of the year each student gets to meet their grandpal in person. Price believes that mixing generations is an important aspect of keeping seniors connected with the greater community, and healthy connection ultimately leads to greater independence. And according to Price, “(the goal is) for senior citizens to be able to be on their own in order to live a free life in this country.”

Vinton County Senior Citizens is a member of the Athens-Hocking-Vinton 317 Board Network of Care

For more information on Vinton County Senior Citizens services call 740-596-4706.