



Panhandle Health District

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Panhandle Health District

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Boomers Helping Boomers: Senior Companion Program offers unique support

HAYDEN, ID – In honor of Senior Corps Week, May 18-22, Panhandle Health District is highlighting its Senior Companions Program (SCP). For 28 years, Senior Companion volunteers have provided free companionship to local seniors to help them remain at home for as long as possible.

Lloyd Coleman and his wife, Ruthann, live in Kootenai County and signed up to have a senior companion come into their home earlier this year. While Ruthann is still active, Lloyd is homebound and suffers from Alzheimer's disease and anxiety. Lee Hendrickson, a 65 year-old retired business owner and SCP volunteer, agreed to come by three times a week.

"The visits were so valuable," Ruthann explained. "Lee is gifted at creating just the right emotional environment with appropriately crafted distractions that Lloyd enjoyed. She became a very special friend and support for me, as well. I'm so grateful for this service."

SCP was established in 1974 and has been locally managed by the Panhandle Health District since 1987. Since then, the program has grown to serve nearly 200 clients at any given time. In Idaho's five northern counties, there are currently 55 active volunteers, ranging from age 55 to 93. Each year, these volunteers put in thousands of hours – supporting community members who are often close to their age.

"Whether a visit involves helping to sort the mail, a ride to an appointment, or a quick card game, it can make a huge difference in someone's quality of life," said Miranda Hoefert, SCP Program Coordinator.

Volunteers may also provide respite care for family members or full-time caregivers who may need a break or time to attend to responsibilities outside the house.

Hoefert continues, "Just because you're considered a senior citizen, it doesn't mean your ability to impact the community lessens. A couple of wrinkles, a few grey hairs and a smile? That's the face of hope that many seniors in our community need. The rewards of Senior Companions are immeasurable for both the client and the volunteer."

You can find out more about qualifications to receive services or volunteer with the Senior Companion Program by visiting www.panhandlehealthdistrict.org.

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