

Senior Living

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Senior Kinship program being revamped; Fridley company offers another option

By Sue Webber
Contributing Writer

A Senior Kinship program in Anoka County is undergoing a makeover.

"We partnered with Lutheran Social Service many years ago on the federal Senior Companion Program, but now we've broken away and started our own program," said Janene Ducharme, Anoka County's senior kinship coordinator.

Anoka County's new program, in operation since June 2019, offers senior citizens an opportunity to connect with someone who can pick them up and transport them to doctor visits, pharmacy,

done," Ducharme said. "If you could see the looks on peoples' faces. It's like a huge relief to them. It's a big deal to invite someone into your home, but this helps people remain in their home."

The volunteer and the client work together to establish the schedule for their time together, she said.

Ducharme begins the process with a "matching meeting."

"It's a chance for me to help the client decide on what days and hours will work best, and lets the client and the volunteer get to know each other," she said. "Most clients want someone from their neighborhood," Ducharme said.

don't turn anyone away."

Clients are referred to the county by neighbors, nurses, family members, social workers or the police department, Ducharme said. "Anyone can refer someone to us," she said.

Volunteers are paid a \$2.65 hourly stipend plus the cost of mileage. They are able to serve as few as two to four hours a week, though some opt to work as full-time volunteers, she said. "The money helps them," Ducharme said, adding that volunteers may choose where in Anoka County they prefer to serve.

"Volunteerism is changing," Ducharme

do their volunteering at church, or at their grandchild's school."

Federal Senior Companion Program (SCP)

The federal Senior Companion Program (SCP) trains active seniors who want to earn extra money and pairs them with a home-bound older adult in need of friendly support, or at a nonprofit organization that serves older adults.

Companions typically work 20-30 hours each week. Companions can work three, four, or five days Monday through Friday.

Companions must be

bound or who participate in an approved "volunteer site," such as an adult day-time care center or neighborhood center.

Another option for aging in place

Independent Living Solutions, a Fridley-based company in operation for the last 11 years, offers senior citizens another way to remain in their homes.

"We are age-in-place specialists offering full-service architectural design and remodel services to accommodate all levels of impairment," their website said. "With the right modifications to your home, you can continue to be as independent as possible."

hand rails and lighting.

"We do a lot of bathrooms and grab bars," Megahan said. "There's a trend now that instead of moving, people are fixing things to be their forever house. If you can spend five or 10 more years in the home, you've saved \$100,000 of assisted living care."

Bathroom modifications can typically be done within a week or so, he said.

Another of the company's services is mold remediation. "If we are remodeling your bathroom and find hidden mold, we can remove it," their website says. "Our certified mold inspectors identify and re-

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Anoka County's new program, in operation since June 2019, offers senior citizens an opportunity to connect with someone who can pick them up and transport them to doctor visits, pharmacy, grocery store or out for lunch.

The program's 60 clients are allowed help for two to four hours a week. "They can get things

that helps people remain in their home."

The volunteer and the client work together to establish the schedule for their time together, she said.

Ducharme begins the process with a "matching meeting."

"It's a chance for me to help the client decide on what days and hours will work best, and lets the client and the volunteer get to know each other," she said. "Most clients want someone from their peer group, someone to chat with. Socialization is huge to senior health."

Though the service is based on a sliding fee or donations, she added, "We

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"Volunteerism is changing," Ducharme said. "We're finding it's getting harder and harder to get volunteers. Many volunteers are still working, and more and more people seem to want to

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Companions typically work 20-30 hours each week. Companions can work three, four, or five days Monday through Friday.

Companions must be over the age of 55, physically active, and able to handle the responsibilities of being a companion.

Recipients of a companion are frail older adults who are home-

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Brent Megahan, owner of the company, said upgrades can include walk-in tubs, grab bars, bathroom modifications, roll-in showers, ramps, stair lifts,

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Bathroom modifications can typically be done within a week or so, he said.

Another of the company's services is mold remediation. "If we are remodeling your bathroom and find hidden mold, we can remove it," their website says. "Our certified mold inspectors identify and remediate your home from mold and mildew."

If seniors do choose to move, Megahan said, they're usually looking for a smaller one-level home.



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