

For Immediate Release:

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Senior Companions First Year End Report: “Incredible!”

Rock Valley—The first year of the new Senior Companion Program has been very successful, according to Program Director Denise Nelsen.

“We already have 16 senior companions in the volunteer program, and they’re serving 87 seniors on a weekly basis throughout Sioux County,” Nelsen said. “The program is off to an incredible start,” she added.

The Senior Companion program began August, 2005, and shares office space and staff with Foster Grandparents, a program that started in 1974. While Senior Companions serve other seniors who need friendship, transportation help or someone to simply talk with, Foster Grandparents work in schools helping children. Nelsen is director of both programs.

“We are really blessed in this area to have both the quality and number of seniors willing and able to serve in these two programs,” Nelsen said. Both programs give volunteers, age 60+, opportunities to help others in their communities. Eligible seniors receive financial reimbursement. The Foster Grandparent Program receives federal funds, while the Senior Companion Program exists because of gifts and grants.

“The Senior Companion Program was started because our sponsor, the Rock Valley Rotary Club, decided the need was great and they could do something about it,” Nelsen said. “We have a coalition board that advises us and has begun work on sustaining the program with plans to raise awareness and funds.

“The Senior Companion Program is a very effective program that is needed in this area,” according to Coalition member Dayton Vogel. “We’ve accomplished a great deal in one year—having 16 companions serving 87 seniors. This represents more than 7000 hours of volunteer time to help seniors in Sioux County but there are a lot more who need

help,” he said. Families who have seniors in need can call the Senior Companion Program at 712-476-2628.

In addition to Dayton Vogel, other Senior Companion coalition members include Marlowe Van Ginkel, Rev. Jerry Robertston, John Van Zanten, Lisa Schwanke, Monica Collenbaugh, Lisa Van Beek, Melinda Faber, Wilbert Vanden Bos, Jeanne Jungers, Dayton Vogel, and Shelly Peters.

Year-end donations and volunteer requests can be made by calling Senior Companion Program office at 712-476-2628.

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