



Connections Area Agency on Aging

Terri Martin from Connections Area Agency on Aging spoke at the Treynor Optimist Club on November 14. She has worked there for about a year. It was formerly called Southwest Iowa Aid. They cover 20 counties and have three offices.

The mission of Connections is "To enhance the quality of life for elders in our service area through education, planning, and coordination of services. They have three separate programs. Foster Grandparents is a program where volunteers, age 55 and over, work one-on-one with children in schools, head starts, and day care centers. Senior Companions are volunteers, age 55 and over, provide companionship and respite to homebound seniors and adults. Terri manages the Retired and Senior Volunteer (RSVP), a program that invites adults 55 and

over, to use their experiences and skills as a mentor in the 'reading Buddy" program, as an Ombudsman in a local long-term care facility, or for driving a "Meals-On-Wheels route. The Foster Grandparents and Senior Companions require a minimum of 15 hours per week and provide a stipend of \$2.75 per hour.

On July 1 Connections took over the Meals-On-Wheels program from the Red Cross, who wanted to focus more on their mission. They currently have 130 clients receiving meals each day, Monday through Friday. They have eight routes and deliver a hot bag and a cold bag of food.

The Ombudsman acts as the eyes and ears for quality care in Nursing homes. They visit with residents and assess if their needs are being met. Three hours per month is required.

The Reading Buddy program has four people at Longfellow, Carter Lake, and Bloomer schools. Fifteen hours of reading with a needy child can increase their reading level two grades. They mainly work with First through Fourth grades.

Connections is funded through a three year grant from the State. They are in their second year. They can be reached at 712-328-2540 or 800-432-9209. Lifelong Links (www.lifelonglinks.org) is a state website that refers aging Iowans, disabled Iowans, veterans, and their caregivers to local agencies like Connections.