

Project Lifesaver keeps clients safe in Wood County

It's been almost 10 years since a boy with autism went missing in Wood County, and hundreds of volunteers and rescue workers spent days searching for him.

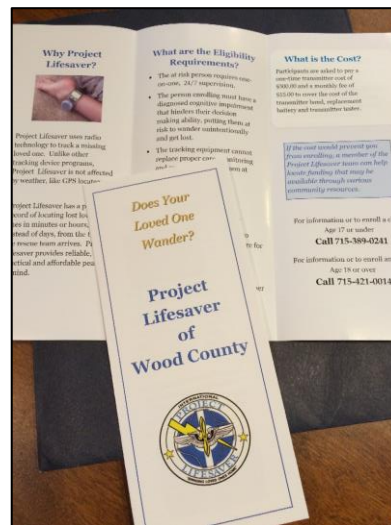
It was around that time that Sara McCormick, now an investigative sergeant with the Wood County Sheriff's Department, was introduced to Project Lifesaver. She soon took over as the program's coordinator. The rescue program had six clients.

“I thought, ‘Heck, we can make this big,’” she told the Alzheimer's caregiver support group at its July meeting. In less than 10 years, the program has grown to 34 clients. Wood County Project Lifesaver clients are in every school district in the county except Port Edwards. They live in memory care units and private homes.

Project Lifesaver is a rescue program for children and adults with cognitive impairments or medical conditions that put them “at risk” to wander away and become lost. People with Alzheimer's who tend to wander or try to leave their home or living space would be candidates for participation.

Project Lifesaver uses radio technology to track missing people. A transmitter on a band, about the size of a wristwatch, can be worn on the ankle or wrist. Batteries are changed monthly by trained sheriff's department staff members. A family or staff member tests the unit daily to ensure it is working by pairing it with a small device. If the light flashes, it's working properly.

The average search time for someone with Alzheimer's who has wandered away is between six and nine hours, McCormick said. With Wisconsin's extreme weather conditions, that's too long. That average search time drops to less than an hour with Project Lifesaver. Instead of employing hundreds of searchers, only one or two people



Project Lifesaver can help find children and adults who wander from home.

are needed to use Project Lifesaver.

Each transmitter has a specific frequency, and searchers use equipment to begin the search at the last known location. They search for a signal and continue to walk toward it, narrowing the search until the lost person is found. “It’s not GPS,” McCormick said. “It’s on the ground, boots walking, with equipment, searching.” It’s not affected by weather, walls, trees or other obstacles.

It costs \$300 for a transmitter. A monthly \$15 fee covers the band, replacement battery and transmitter tester. Scholarships are available, McCormick said. “If you need this, you’re going to get it,” she said.

Some people worry about privacy, but it’s not GPS. McCormick can’t check a person’s location – unless the person has been reported missing and a search is started. “I only care about keeping that person safe,” she said.

To learn more about enrolling an adult in Project Lifesaver, call 715-421-0014.

Employee spotlight

A very personal experience prompted Maria Knoll to become a caregiver.

"My grandmother was sick, and she passed away, and I wasn't there to take care of her," Knoll said with tears in her eyes. That was in January 2015. She became a resident aide at Hilltop in March 2015.



"I love my job, I really do. But I like seeing them smile and appreciate what you do for them," Knoll said of the residents at Hilltop.

"I like to take care of people who can't do things for themselves."

Knoll had to think about whom she admires, and finally settled on her children, "because everything I do is for them." Her children are Michael, 12, Colten, 8, and Mary, 5.

Knoll wants to go back to school to first become a certified nursing assistant, or CNA, and possibly a registered nurse. A trip to Alaska is on her bucket list. "It's very pretty there," she said.

Happy Birthday

Oops! Last month we reported no July birthdays, which was incorrect. Bonnie's birthday was July 7, and Dewey, pictured at right, celebrated July 31.

This month we wish a happy birthday to the following residents:

- Jerome, Aug. 4
- Bart, Aug. 25
- David, Aug. 14
- Glenna, Aug. 30



Alzheimer's caregiver support group

Find out how nutrition can affect dementia at the Aug. 11 meeting of the Alzheimer's Caregiver Support Group. Andrea Wagner, a dietitian at Aspirus Riverview, will be our guest speaker.

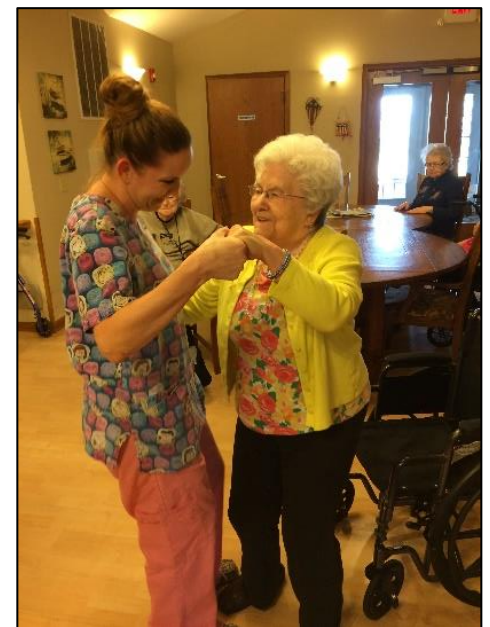
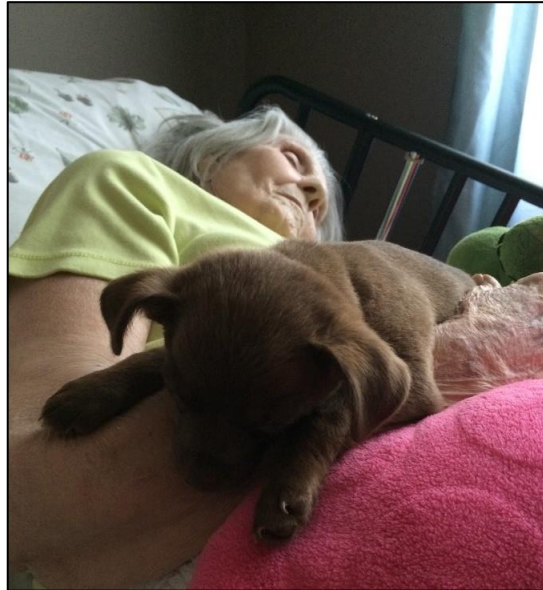
We meet at 9:30 a.m. at the Aging & Disability Resource Center in Centralia Center. Join us for a time of sharing. Call 715-423-7400 for information or to arrange free respite care for your loved one so you can attend.

Memory cafe

Memory cafes are for people with early stage dementia, mild memory loss or cognitive impairment and for family and friends of those affected.

Join us at 10:30 a.m. Friday, Sept. 2 at McMillan Library for lively discussion, refreshments, camaraderie and fun. Call Karen Bradbury at 715-422-2795 for more information.

The Gilead Coffee House memory café is from 9:30 a.m. to 11 a.m. Aug. 9 and Sept. 13 at First English Lutheran Church. Call 715-423-2840 for information.



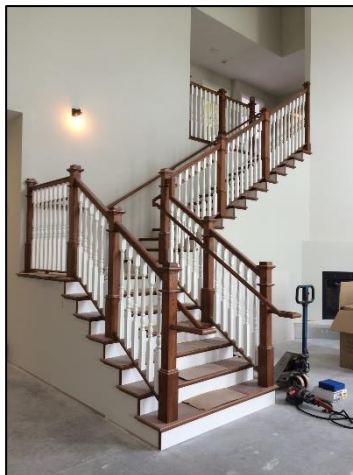
Ginny, top, a new puppy in Shelly's family, made residents happy when she visited. We tried a new game -- like darts with damp sponges, center. The Honeybees brought old-time accordion music for dancing and singing, above and bottom.

Hilltop Grand Village nears completion – inside and out

Construction continues at Hilltop Grand Village. Inside, workers are adding the finishing touches to apartments and common areas. The swimming pool has water and essentially is operational. Painting is done and trim is up. Most light fixtures are installed. Flooring is going in.

Sidewalks, blacktop and lights are the most visible changes outside. Once the landscaping goes in, it will be beautiful.

An open house will be set in September to view the finished facility. Until then, you can watch the progress on Facebook, www.facebook.com/HilltopGrandVillage, and our website, www.hilltopgrandvillage.com.



Join Walk to #ENDALZ

Hilltop has created a team to walk in the Alzheimer's Association Walk to End Alzheimer's. It will be Sept. 24 in Stevens Point.

We would love for you to join us! You can sign up at our team page, act.alz.org/goto/Hilltop.

Our goal is to raise \$2,000. If you can make a donation, that would be awesome. If you can't do that, please let someone know about the walk. While the money raised will support the Alzheimer's Association, telling someone about it will raise awareness about this deadly, devastating disease.

We at Hilltop work every day with people who have Alzheimer's and other dementia. We know how hard it is on people and their loved ones. Let's raise awareness to find a cure or prevention.

The end of Alzheimer's starts with YOU!