

Aging Services helps senior citizens stay independent in their own homes

By Mack Burke Transcript Staff Writer | Posted: Monday, September 21, 2015 9:35 pm

Linda Robillard suffers from multiple sclerosis. She is 75, blind and confined to a wheel chair, and she still lives independently in her own home.

She has challenges, but with the help of Aging Services' housekeeping program, she is living on her terms.

"I was miserable without it," she said. "I used to own a two-story townhouse and I moved to a rent house about 12 years ago and I've had it ever since," Robillard said. "I'm blind and in an electric wheel chair with M.S. I'm able to live independently because they come in and clean twice a month. They're fabulous. They're never late. They're always on time. They always do what I want. They're very nice. I love them."

She said she wouldn't be able to do that without the help of Aging Services. United Way of Norman helps fund Aging Services' housekeeping program, which sends a housekeeper to assist seniors on a regular basis.

"Whatever the senior is struggling to do to maintain their household, our housekeeper takes care of that for them," Aging Services Director Kathleen Wilson said. "That enables that person to continue to live in their own home longer than having to go into an institutional living situation."

Housekeepers also check on the well-being of the people they serve, reporting back any noticeable changes in a senior's state of health and mental capacity.

"I think it's important because these are the people that raised us," Wilson said. "They took care of us when we were small and now it's our turn to look after them. Personally, I think the measure of a society is how well we care for the elderly."

Aging Services' mission is to ensure that seniors have the support they need. Due to cuts in state funding, some of those services are stretched thin.



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Linda Robillard poses in front of her apartment, where she receives assistance from Aging Services' housekeeping program.

“We’re really struggling because state funds are tight for everybody. I’ve been working with elderly people since about 1990 and it’s unfortunate because these people have gotten older and they don’t have alternatives.”

Despite cuts in state funds, Wilson is hopeful that private donations can help Aging Services continue to provide as much care as possible.

“It makes a lot of difference,” Wilson said. “It doesn’t take that much money to have a big impact on what we do here.”

The housekeeping program helps seniors maintain a clean house, but it also gives them the opportunity for consistent interaction. Wilson said seniors can get lonely living alone and a little human contact brightens their day.

“They appreciate it so much, especially the ones that are homebound that have very little contact with other people,” Aging Services housekeeping supervisor Linda Stone said. “There is nothing as satisfying as knowing that when you have done a day’s work you have made people’s lives better and nothing more touching than when somebody says, ‘If it wasn’t for you, I couldn’t still live at home.’ Every time somebody gives even a dollar it means we’re that much closer to helping somebody.”

Visit unitedwaynorman.org for more information on its programs and partner organizations.