

Senior Options serving county's elderly

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(Fifteenth in a series about
United Way-funded agencies in
Laurens County.)

There is an organization in Laurens County dedicated to serving the needs of its elderly residents. When area seniors are in danger of going hungry or in need of medical attention, or just need a little help in their golden years, Senior Options is here to provide for them.

"We're a Laurens County Council agent," said James Hill, executive director of Senior Options. "We provide meals for homebound individuals, transportation for non-emergency medical treatment, we take the



A helping hand: Volunteers at Senior Options prepare care packages for elderly residents of Laurens County.

elderly grocery shopping and to on-staff nurse for families who doctor's appointments, and we work during the day and need provide adult daycare with an someone to care for them."



Senior Options provides a number of activities for seniors to take part in. "We have an exercise room, a diner's club and a Foster Grandparent program that allows the people we serve to connect with and mentor students at local elementary schools," Hill said.

His organization offers something of an alternative to all the nursing homes in the area. "All our programs are day programs," he said. "We are not a living facility. And it's not based on income either. This isn't a welfare program. Everyone who

Senior Options, 4A

Senior Options

From 1A
is 60 or over qualifies for our services."

In an aging society, something like Senior Options is needed so often it strains Hill's capacity. "Potentially one out of five Laurens County residents are seniors, which gives us a challenge," Hill said. "United Way helps us out with all these programs. Last year we estimate that we served 70,000 meals, we traveled 785,600 miles transporting seniors, and we spent 7,000 hours in our daycare pro-

gram. The United Way helps us be able to afford all those costs."

Last year, Senior Options received \$28,000 from the United Way of Laurens County.

"We contract with federal programs through the Older Americans Act of 1965," Hill said. "Every dollar we get from the federal government has to be matched with a quarter from us, so local support is very important to us. We raise money through our memberships, from contributions, and from giving from the families we serve. I tell

people every quarter they give us turns into a dollar."

"Senior Options does so much to provide care for the elderly," said Caroline Thomas, the director of the United Way of Laurens County. "So many residents benefit from their meals-on-wheels program, the transportation and daycare service, and various other things that they do in the community. They really provide a great ministry to our elderly citizens."

Thomas is proud of the help United Way is able to provide.

"We provide a lot of funding for their programs and services," she said. "They have a huge transportation program that can take elderly patients to the doctor and things like that, plus the meals-on-wheels program. Our United Way dollars go toward providing meals and helping with transportation costs."

"Meals, transportation and daycare are our biggest needs," Hill said. "Getting access is a challenge for people. We have 20 vehicles running five days a week, three running on Saturday,

and none on Sunday. And our daycare is open during the day for people who need support and the families who need to have their needs met while they're at work."

Hill said the United Way's support is essential. "We would be greatly limited and hindered in our work without the United Way," he said. "We would be limited under the Older Americans Act, so their contributions probably help triple our service. Our three main areas are meals, transport and daycare, so that's

where most of the funding goes."

Thomas believes that helping Laurens County's seniors is its own reward. "Last year, their meals-on-wheels programs served 70,000 meals, and that's important because so many of our elderly residents are unable to go out on their own and are confined to their homes," she said. "So this allows us not only to provide for their needs, it also gives volunteers a chance to interact with them in a way that's very rewarding."