

AGING



BRIAN DAVIES/The Register-Guard

Caregiver Christie Goss assists Ruby Reed in the kitchen of her Eugene home. Goss drives Reed to her doctor appointments and on shopping excursions. "She is a blessing to me," Reed said.

HELP WANTED

Seminar aims to help laid-off workers find jobs as caregivers

By RANDI BJORNSTAD
The Register-Guard

In math, everyone learns that if you multiply two minuses together, you end up with a plus. In one way, that's how Barbara Susman sees the opportunity that will be the topic of a seminar called "Caregiving as an Encore Career," to be presented at Lane Community College in early March.

"Right now, because of years of recession, we have a lot of people 50 years and older who have lost their jobs and are chronically unemployed," says Susman, the director of LCC's Successful Aging Institute and its Senior Companion Program.

"Many people thought they had their retirement lives all set up but now find they need to work after all, because their retirement savings have been eroded, or they've been laid off. In either case, it's very difficult for them to get jobs."

That's obviously a minus. So is the number of people who



Shopping list in hand, caregiver Christie Goss helps Ruby Reed to the car for a shopping trip.

are even older and have health, mobility or cognitive problems but desperately want to remain in their own homes. They could afford to hire someone to help them a few hours a week, but they don't know where to find the assistance.

Combining these two minuses is where Susman sees potential for a positive outcome.

"We need to find flexible, interesting work for people in their older years that doesn't require more schooling," she says. "And we have a large unfilled demand for people to help elderly clients with a variety of activities that allow them to maintain independence in their own homes."

Becoming a professional caregiver won't make anyone rich, Susman admits, "but it can be personally very rewarding, and some jobs also offer health benefits."

Furthermore, she says, there is training available through LCC's

Turn to **CAREGIVING**, Page D2

Caregiving: The seminar will cover required skills, highs and lows of the job

Continued from Page D1

Successful Aging Institute, and some local caregiving agencies pay \$1.50 more per hour to people who have completed the program.

The purpose of next month's one-day session is to give potential caregivers an overview of what it takes to become one and — for those who think it sounds like a good idea — to determine if they need formal training and how to go about getting it.

"The health care field is one of the only areas of the economy that is growing, and this part of it does not require a lot of time or money to learn," Susman says.

"Of course, it's not a job everyone would like or would be suited for, and that's one of the purposes of this seminar,

CAREGIVING AS AN ENCORE CAREER

What: An all-day conference to examine professional caregiving as a job and how to pursue it

When: 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. March 7

Where: Lane Community College main campus, 4000 E. 30th Ave., Building 19

Cost: \$10 includes lunch

Registration: Go to lanecc.edu/sai or call 541-463-4634; deadline is Friday

Sponsors: LCC's Successful Aging Institute, AARP Oregon, Lane Council of Governments' Senior and Disabled Services and Lane County ARC

to help people decide if it's a job they'd like to pursue."

For those who believe it might be a good fit, the training offered through LCC is relatively easy.

It takes only 40 hours of class time, and the \$359 tuition is relatively inexpensive as training programs go.

The caregiving seminar, which costs \$10 and

includes a hot buffet lunch, will include panelists from 10 organizations involved with professional caregiving.

They will discuss required skills, the highs and lows of caregiving and what a job working either for a facility or as an independent contractor entails. Caregivers also will speak about their experiences working with elderly and disabled

people who have physical or mental challenges.

"The goal is that people who are interested make the connections they need for whatever their next step might be," Susman says.

"While we're focusing on the needs of older workers, anyone of any age who is interested in pursuing the idea of becoming a professional caregiver is welcome to attend."

The deadline to register is Friday.