

Register Guard August 24, 2015 - Senior Companion Program in Lane County needs senior volunteers

The Senior Companion Program in Lane County has been helping seniors age in place and stay independent for more than 35 years and demand for companions continues to grow.

“We have 66 potential clients in the area that are looking for senior companions,” says Barbara Susman, director of the LCC’s Senior Companion Program.

The program is searching for senior volunteers to serve as companions to frail seniors throughout Lane County.

Not only is it beneficial to be of service — “Some volunteers say it gives them a reason to get up and do something in the morning,” Susman says — the gig provides an hourly tax-free federal stipend (\$2.65 an hour) plus reimbursement for meals and mileage.

Senior companions must be older than 55, on a limited income, and be able to volunteer 15 or more hours every week. The program provides extensive training and support as well.

Common things companion volunteers do include visiting with the client, transporting them to appointments and to the store, stay with the client so their caregiver can have a break and, importantly, watch out for the client and pay attention to changes that could impact them.

“They’re the eyes and ears for the senior disability coordinators,” she says. “It helps triage where to provide services.”

If you’re interested in volunteering, call 541-463-6260 or go to www.lanecc.edu/scp/about-program. (If you’re interested in getting visits from a companion, call the Aging & Disability Resource Connection at 541-682-3353.