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More than just a meal

In response to concerns by policy makers about a lack of community services for older American, the Older Americans Act was passed in 1969. Then in 1978 the National Nutrition Program for the Elderly was consolidated to provide congregate and home delivered meals, nutrition screening, education and counseling as well as an array of other supportive services.

In 1979 the Vilas County Board recognized the need to provide services to the older residents and by resolution, formed the Vilas County Commission on Aging. While a variety of programs such as the Benefit Specialist, Chore, Escort, Alzheimer's Family Caregiver Support and National Family Caregiver Support have been developed and offered for area seniors over the past 30 years, the Nutrition program was, and remains, a vital part of the agency. In fact, if you ask a local senior what the Commission on Aging is all about you are likely to hear about their favorite Senior Dining Site.

The Wisconsin Department of Health Services, Bureau of Aging and Disability Resources administers the Senior Dining program in Wisconsin and seeks to: reduce hunger and food insecurity; promote socialization; and promote the health and well-being of older individuals by assisting such individuals to gain access to nutrition and other disease prevention and delay the onset of adverse health conditions resulting from poor nutritional health or sedentary behavior.

It's a big job, but according to Sue Richmond, Nutrition Coordinator, "The Senior Dining Sites provide more than just a meal for our Vilas County seniors. They experience food, fellowship and fun. We combine good food with socialization and nutrition education, occasionally bringing in speakers on pertinent topics."

In 2009 over 14,000 meals were served at Senior Dining Sites throughout the county. Another 12,000 home delivered meals were distributed by volunteers to those seniors who can no longer cook and/or drive. Vilas County seniors age 60 and over can attend meals at any of the six sites throughout the county. The suggested donation for a meal is only \$3.00.

Currently meals are being served at the following Senior Dining Sites: Kalmar Senior Center in Eagle River; Phelps Senior Center in Phelps; 1938 North in Land O’Lakes; The Boulder Beer Bar in Boulder Junction; Fibbers in St. Germain and the Lac du Flambeau Senior Center in Lac du Flambeau. Information on each dining site, along with other programs and resources available to seniors, can be found in our free Senior Resource Directory, available at the Commission on Aging office located in the Courthouse at 330 Court St in Eagle River and at various locations throughout the county or by calling the Commission on Aging at 715-479-3625 or 1-800-374-1123.

Photo Caption: Nutrition Coordinator Sue Richmond “clowning around” with Blackie Nagel and other seniors at the Kalmar Center in Eagle River as part of the Food-Fun-Fellowship nutrition program.

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