



The Alleghany Foundation helps the Local Office on Aging Provide Vital Transportation Services to the Elderly.

For over 25 years, Ginger Leitch has connected Alleghany Highland residents 60 years old and over, who are in need, with important services and resources to help them live as independently as possible. As coordinator for the Local Office on Aging (LOA), formerly known as the League of Older Americans, she knows the unique and challenging needs of an aging population in a rural community. Geographical isolation, low, fixed incomes, and family members who live and work outside the community, make it difficult for many seniors who have chronic illnesses, who have difficulty maintaining their household, or can no longer can cook or drive, to stay in their own homes.

With a part time office assistant and case manager, Ginger Leitch works out of the Covington satellite office, reporting to the regional LOA office in Roanoke -- one of 25 Virginia Agencies on Aging. The services and information they provide to the elderly, which Leitch notes is about 25% of the Alleghany Highland's population, are too numerous to mention, but in summary, they help residents in need, by providing nutritious meals, social activities, transportation to activity sites, personal home care, education, and social resource connection. Each day, they fulfill the LOA's mission of helping older persons remain independent as long as possible by enhancing their quality of life. They do this by providing programs to help individuals stay in their homes and avoid early institutionalization, providing support to caregivers, and advocating for quality services, medical care, and housing for the elderly.

And while most programs are paid for through federal, state and local funding, and foundations like the United Way, there are some important services that rely solely on volunteers and funding outside of the LOA program. One of those programs is the Vital Transportation Services, a need-based program that offers door-to-door assistance for residents over 60 who need chemotherapy treatments, doctor's appointments, pharmacy, social services, and other vital services.

Each year, 100 – 125 seniors require door-to-door transportation to health care facilities as far away as Beckley, West Virginia and Richmond, culminating in volunteers driving thousands of miles and donating hundreds of hours. "In 2007 alone, volunteers drove a total 17,965 miles," says Ginger Lietch. "And most of our drivers are over 60 themselves and on fixed incomes, so mileage reimbursement is essential."

In the past, LOA received mileage reimbursement from local fund raising, private donations and corporate foundations, but towards the end of 2008, funding was depleted and some volunteers were not reimbursed for their mileage. That's when Leitch turned to The Alleghany Foundation to request \$10,000 for 2009.

Though the LOA works with about 240 driver volunteers, there are times when a cab or a van service is needed if there are too few volunteers on a certain day. "We are so grateful to have received funding from The Alleghany Foundation for this vital service," says Lietch.

This wasn't the first time the Local Office on Aging received funding from The Alleghany Foundation, though. In 1999, the Foundation awarded two grants totaling over \$134,000. A grant in the amount of \$52,000 was awarded to purchase two extended length, 15 passenger vans to transport seniors to the agency's Diner's Clubs, located throughout the Highlands. Diner's Clubs provide a socialization outlet, nutritious meals, and services such as health screenings and health education to seniors two or three times a week. Additionally, \$82,420 was awarded for a three-year period to help subsidize the LOA's Frail Elderly program. At that time, there was a waiting list of 34 seniors living alone who could not manage housekeeping and other related tasks without assistance.

Considering that the elderly population continues to grow in the Alleghany Highlands, we are fortunate to have an agency like the Local Office on Aging helping out in so many different ways." says Beth Webb, executive director of The Alleghany Foundation. "On behalf of The Alleghany Foundation, it is rewarding to be a part of a program that fulfills the Foundation's mission of improving the quality of life for Alleghany Highlands' residents."

Since its inception, the foundation has granted over \$27 million to the following 501(c)(3) non-profit organizations with the purpose of improving the quality of life in the Alleghany Highlands:

- Alleghany County
- Alleghany County Parks and Recreation
- Alleghany County Public Schools
- Alleghany County Sheriff's Office
- Alleghany County United Fire and Rescue Association
- Alleghany Health District
- Alleghany Highlands Arts & Crafts Center
- Alleghany Highlands Arts Council
- Alleghany Highlands Community Services Board
- Alleghany Highlands Economic Development Authority
- Alleghany Highlands Economic Development Corporation
- Alleghany Highlands Free Clinic
- Alleghany Highlands Genealogical Society
- Alleghany Highlands YMCA
- Alleghany Highlands Youth Soccer Association
- Alleghany Historical Society
- Alleghany Humane Society
- Alleghany Mountain Radio
- American Diabetes Association
- American Red Cross
- Appalfolks of America
- Art Museum of Western Virginia
- Bath County
- Bath County Health Department
- Bath County Historical Society
- Bear Trust International
- Blue Ridge Public Television
- Boiling Springs Elementary School
- Boiling Springs Fire Department
- C.O.P.E.
- C & O Historical Society

Callaghan Elementary School PTO
Charles P. Jones Memorial Library
City of Covington
Clifton Forge Little League
Clifton Forge Main Street
Clifton Forge Nursery School
Clifton Forge Public Library
Clifton Forge Volunteer Fire Department
Covington City Schools
Covington Fire Department
Covington Rescue Squad
Dabney S. Lancaster Community College
Diabetes Education Support Group
Falling Spring Elementary School PTO
Falling Spring Fire Department
Falling Spring Rescue Squad
Greater Alleghany Highlands School Health Consortium
Jackson River Enterprises
Jackson river Technical Center
Local Office on Aging Mill Mountain Theatre
Mountain Soil and Water Conservation District
Mountain View Elementary School PTO
Rockbridge Area Community Services Board
Safehome Systems
Science Museum of Western Virginia
Scott Hill Foundation, Inc.
Sharon Elementary School PTO
Sharon Volunteer Fire Department
Shenandoah Autism Center
Southwest Virginia AHEC
Southwest Virginia Second Harvest Foodbank
Special Olympics
Total Action Against Poverty
Town of Clifton Forge
Town of Iron Gate
Unified Human Services Transportation System (RADAR)
Virginia Hunters Who Care
West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine
Western Virginia Emergency Medical Service Council