



Lake County Board of Commissioners
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PRESS RELEASE

DATE: August 23, 2018

Lake County Begins Launch of New Volunteer Guardian Program

Lake County is proud to announce the formation of a new volunteer guardian program, a partnership between the Lake County Probate Court and Lifeline, Inc. The program is made possible with the help of several funding sources including, the Lake County Senior Services Levy, Lake Health, the Lake County ADAMHS Board, and Lifeline.

“Realizing that our aging population in Lake County was going to present significant new challenges, my colleagues and I on the Board of Commissioners in 2015 authorized a comprehensive study to identify gaps in senior citizen services that would need to be addressed. This study indicated that a formal guardianship program was not only important, but also sorely needed,” Commissioner Daniel P. Troy related. The conclusions of this study were also reaffirmed by assessments done by other agencies such as the Lutheran Metropolitan Ministry and Lake County’s Lifeline agency. “When Lake County citizens approved the Senior Services levy last fall, it moved the task of creating and structuring this volunteer guardianship program from a concept to a reality,” Commissioner Troy added. “I’m excited about this great collaborative partnership of the Commissioners, Lake Health, the ADAMHS Board (and its wonderful network of not-for-profit service agencies), and, of course, LIFELINE. I’m also very proud of the fact that, once again, we have found a way to work together to ensure the best in quality of life in our county, and especially that of our senior citizens.”

The volunteer guardian program will provide legal guardians to serve as concerned, caring advocates and surrogate decision-makers for indigent, incompetent adults who cannot care for themselves. The program will work across systems and organizations to jointly resolve the complex life barriers presented by persons in need of a guardian and will utilize both paid staff and volunteers.

“I am very excited to have the Probate Court join in partnership with Lifeline and the Lake County Commissioners’ Office to establish the new *Lake County Volunteer Guardian Program*,” said Lake County Probate Judge Mark J. Bartolotta. “With the changes in our population, the need for this program continues to grow every year, as more and more people are unable to care for themselves. After several years of planning, this launch is the culmination of tremendous efforts by many dedicated professionals to bring this most important program into existence. It will provide a valuable and necessary service to those citizens who are in need of assistance in their lives, because in Lake County we take care of our own,” Judge Bartolotta concluded.

Lifeline plans to have staff in place and begin training in early October, after which time volunteer recruitment will begin. Volunteer guardians will be needed to look after the emotional, social, financial and physical well-being of these vulnerable adults.

“We will work with the Probate Court to create a strong and comprehensive volunteer guardian program. The need for increased guardianship services came up time and again in the focus groups for our 2017 Lake County Community Needs Assessment and we’re so pleased to be able to fill that gap and be a part of the solution,” said Carrie Dotson, Executive Director of Lifeline. “We’re very thankful to our funding partners for making this program possible and we’re looking forward to getting up and running!”

To learn more about the Lake County Volunteer Guardian Program or serving as a volunteer guardian, contact Lifeline’s Director of Community Services, Michelle Mezaris, at (440) 354-2148 x225.