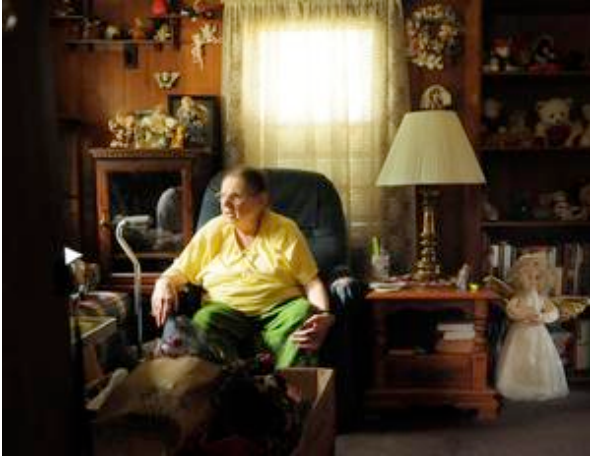


Grant provides Holland seniors with independence, security



Dennis R.J. Geppert/Sentinel Staff
Helen Wellwood packs up her dolls as she prepares to move from her home. Wellwood, who lives by herself, has a life-saving button she can push if she falls again.



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By **LISA ERMAK**

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Holland — The personal emergency response service was given to Helen Wellwood as part of a \$7,200 grant from The Community Foundation of the Holland/Zeeland Area.

With the grant, the Gerontology Network, a West Michigan service provider for senior citizens, has been able to equip five seniors from the Holland/Zeeland area with the devices that can be worn around the neck or on the wrist.

They hope to eventually help about 30 seniors.

Brandee VanVuuren, manager of Life Connections, said clients who live alone and have a high risk of falls or medical issues can apply to receive the personal emergency response service, and its cost is covered fully or partially, depending on the senior's income.

"If something were to happen, they would get help quicker," VanVuuren said of the service.

Wellwood, who has back problems, falls often and can't get up, so having her bracelet has helped her to get paramedic assistance in about 15 minutes if she takes a spill.

"I can hardly get out to get my mail. I fall in the road and in the house. All of a sudden it's down we go," she said.

"One time I fell and just screamed, 'Help me! Help me!' and the neighbor across the street heard. She couldn't get me up, so we called Lifeline."

Wellwood has lived in her home on 32nd Street for about 25 years and enjoys her independence and taking part in crafts, sing-alongs and games at Evergreen Commons two days a week.

"It's peace of mind for her. She said she's already used (the bracelet) a couple times," VanVuuren said.

Wellwood plans to move out of her home into a senior apartment next month, but plans to live independently.

"I have to be thankful that I can get around and be by myself."

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