



Somerset County Dispatchers Connect with Seniors

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Dispatchers in Skowhegan are making daily calls to eight seniors in the area. It's all part of the Friendly Caller program.

"We chat and we laugh and joke around sometimes. And sometimes it can get a little crazy. They just laugh back at me and we both wish each other a really good day," said 65-year-old Barbara Roy of Madison.

This isn't her family she is talking about, it's employees at Somerset Regional Communications Center in Skowhegan.

"Somerset Communications happens to be my backup, plus my lifeline. And, of course, first and foremost my family support," she said.

The Friendly Caller program allows seniors independence in their lives and assurance every day. If dispatch doesn't hear from them in the morning, someone calls to make sure they're okay.

"It kind of stemmed out of a need of realizing that we live in very rural area, and have a large, rural population of more elderly people or people who live alone," said Michael Smith, Somerset County Regional Communications director.

Not only is it comforting for seniors, but it's also refreshing for the 911 center.

"Usually people are calling because they have an emergency, and that call breaks up that flow for dispatchers just to have a different feeling with the caller," said Smith.

One dispatcher says she loves the program and they're always looking for more people to include.

"They're funny. They know us by name. Our first names. They know who we are when we call and that they're having a good day. It's always nice just to talk to them," said Kelly McQuarrie, dispatcher supervisor at Somerset County Regional Communications Center.

Roy says she would not be leading an independent life right now without them.

"There's always something they do that says 'You're special and I'm so glad you called. It's in their voice,'" said Roy.

To sign up, call 207-474-6788.

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