

# Community Action Team: The First 50 Years

## Part 2: Helping Seniors Keep their Independence and Health

By Leanne Murray

When Community Action Team (CAT) was created in 1966, one of the original programs was set up to serve the older residents of Columbia County. Fifty years later, senior programs are still at the heart of their community service work. In most cases, CAT performs its work with older adults as the designated Area Agency on Aging (AAA). Each county in Oregon has an AAA; some are stand-alone organizations and some are housed within another agency as is the case in Columbia County.

22% of Columbia County residents are currently 60 years old or more and the percentage is anticipated to increase to almost 30% by 2020. In order to plan for serving this growing population, CAT recently conducted an extensive survey and hosted town hall meetings in order to gather input from the community at large and then prioritize the services made available to seniors. The data gathered will be incorporated into a four-year plan, but will also be shared with other organizations throughout the county so they may also address the community feedback. Topics covered included community supports and services, health, mental health, and substance abuse ser-

vices, recreation, transportation, housing, and preventative health education. The plan will be submitted to the state in early October and goes into effect January 1<sup>st</sup>.

To illustrate the impact CAT services have on older residents, three CAT clients shared their experiences



79 year old Shelbia Adams continues to live independently in her own apartment with assistance from CAT.

and observations.

Shelbia Adams is often surrounded by friends and neighbors at her apartment in Scappoose. With a southern accent that belies the Alabama roots she left behind 61 years ago, she quickly charms her way into a newcomer's heart. Adams has lived alone since 2002 when her husband of 47 years, Roger, passed away. After a hospital stay in 2014, her home-visiting physical therapist put her in touch with CAT. Staff came to her home to meet her and assess her particular needs, and then enrolled her in a program called Oregon Project Independence (OPI).

OPI funds allow clients who are at least 60 years old to hire home care workers for a variety of services that help them maintain independence in their home. Some one may be ineligible to receive

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