

Attention low-income seniors: free air purifiers available!

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Contributing Writer

Illinois Valley Wellness Resources, a local nonprofit organization with a mission of helping senior and disabled individuals stay comfortably in their own homes, is giving away new air purifiers to those who qualify.

Illinois Valley Wellness Resources Programs Director Laura Mancuso submitted a grant application to the Oregon Health Authority under their emergency preparedness and environmental health program and was awarded \$65,000 to invest in air purifiers and replacement filters!

“We want to help preserve the health of older adults during wildfire season, particularly those coping with emphysema, COPD, asthma, heart disease, or are immunocompromised,” Mancuso said. “Also, those with infants in the home can qualify.

“These purifiers can cover an average area of up to 500 square feet,” she explained. “The units are intended to create a ‘clean room space’. This isn’t for a whole house, but to provide people with at least one safe space with clean air during wildfires.”

The Centers for Disease Control says seniors with lung issues or heart problems are at higher risk from wildfire smoke; and that in general, older adults who often have lower immune system responses are more likely to be affected by all types of smoke.

Mancuso consulted with the state’s emergency preparedness staff for recommendations for air purifiers and numerous models are now available for Valley residents.

So, who can apply?

Mancuso said, “Age limits regarding eligibility are confusing, because health conditions can trump the age card.” Thus, she’s encouraging people to contact her to determine if they qualify. And again, the program also aims to protect babies, who with their smaller, less developed lungs, are more vulnerable to harm from wildfire smoke.

People can stop by the I.V. Wellness Resources office to fill out an application on Tuesdays and Thursdays, between 1-3:30 p.m., or by appointment. The office is located at 315 Caves Highway, Suite C, in the Options complex, right next to the KXCJ radio station. Reach Mancuso at 541-592-9781 - call or text - or email ivwellnessresources@gmail.com.

Many know Mancuso as the editor of the Illinois Valley News, but for the past seven years she’s also been coordinating IVWR. She brings a wide professional skill set, dedication and ample resourcefulness to the table.

Plug in - help out your elderly neighbors!

“We really want older adults and those who are disabled in their homes to know that they’re not alone and that a number of great programs exist to help bring more comfort and care into their lives,” she said.

“We also have the Adopt-A-Senior program and we’re always looking for volunteers

to bring seniors to their medical appointments or to help accomplish small jobs around the house. This program also helps isolated residents stay plugged into their community.”

As a thank-you for pitching in, volunteers can receive gift cards for providing transportation for appointments, grocery shopping, errands, light gardening – and for just cheering people up!

There’s also a Caring Callers program for isolated seniors and disabled who’d like to have a phone buddy to make friendly wellness checks. The Caring Caller can make daily or weekly phone calls as needed to prevent loneliness and promote safety and friendship.

IVWR also has a health-access support program to assist people, who, for example, might be dealing with cancer and must travel out of the Valley to get treatment.

“We provide gas cards and other kinds of assistance after people receive a serious medical diagnosis like that,” Mancuso added. “It’s so important that people know they’re not alone. We’re here to help people get the resources and help they need to stay well, regain their health and to stay in their own homes.”

Helping local elders get safe, reliable assistance!

IVWR also shares their “Resources Referral List” of potential helpers, handy people, yard workers, firewood assistance, housekeepers, pet and computer helpers and various service people who are available to Valley seniors.

“This list is a big part of our program,”

Mancuso said. “Safety for our seniors is very important, so I have met with all of these workers for hire. I do the vetting for our seniors, to make sure they are bringing reputable and honest people into their home space. This means I do background checks and screenings - and I verify references provided when these people go through our interview process.”

Also, IVWR provides free classified ads in the Illinois Valley News so seniors can advertise for health or household needs; and each week, the paper publishes the Senior Spotlight that provides a senior bulletin with the Food & Friends Menu along with health and medical information.

Finally, Mancuso is also currently doing a survey to assess what local seniors’ needs are, and she “encourages people to do the survey to help us determine what their needs are and the best ways we can help them. It’s all about helping them stay well in their own homes.”

You can access the survey at the IVWR office or at the I.V. Family Coalition in the lobby at 535 E. River St.

IVWR also has a Facebook page that shows the application for an air purifier and provides more information about the other programs offered. Again, reach Mancuso by calling or texting 541-592-9781, or emailing ivwellnessresources@gmail.com. Or, stop by the office at 315 Caves Highway, Suite C on Tuesdays and Thursdays, from 1-3:30 p.m., or by appointment.

IVHS track team shows well at state



Congratulations to team members on their placements!

Sophomores, Jessame Pope; 3rd in 300 hurdles 49:44

Matt Ellis; 4th in Javelin 155’3”

Gritt Charitram; 4th in High Jump 6’0”

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Senior John Charitram 5th in High Jump 5’10”

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