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## WI Talking Book and Braille Library (WTBBL)

This service enables individuals who are unable to read or handle regular printed materials, due to a physical or visual handicap, the ability to access audio books and equipment, and Braille materials. If eligible, you can receive these items and return them (postage free) through the U.S. Postal Service. For more information, call toll-free at 1-800-242-8822 or visit their website at <http://talkingbooks.dpi.wi.gov/>.

## FEBRUARY is National Low Vision and Age-Related Macular Degeneration Awareness Month

According to the National Eye Institute, Low Vision impacts approximately 135 million people worldwide.

**What is Low Vision?** Low vision is recognized as a visual impairment that can not be corrected with glasses, contact lenses, medicine, surgery, etc. and that limits your ability to perform everyday activities. Low vision is caused by a variety of conditions, diseases, and injuries. Glaucoma, cataracts, diabetic retinopathy, and age-related macular degeneration are some common causes of low vision.

**WARNING SIGNS!** Have you noticed any of the following, even when wearing your glasses or contact lenses?

- ⇒ Difficulty seeing at a distance (i.e. reading traffic or store front signs)
- ⇒ Difficulty seeing up close (i.e. reading books)
- ⇒ Trouble making out the faces of familiar people
- ⇒ Difficulty making out colors
- ⇒ Experiencing hazy or blurred vision
- ⇒ Feeling like it is dim, even when all the lights are on

If yes, consult an eye care professional for further evaluation.

### Living with Low Vision

Low vision affects our ability to do everyday tasks, so it becomes necessary to find ways to minimize these limitations. There are a number of resources, including adaptive equipment and other modifications, available to help individuals with low vision maximize their abilities and live a fuller life. A good place to start is to consult with your doctor, and contact agencies that specialize in low vision services and supports. Please see our Community Spotlight article on page 4 for information on two resources that do just that!

**NFB Newsline (Newspapers by Phone)** Brought to you by the Wisconsin Talking Book and Braille Library, Newsline allows you to keep up on the latest news by accessing your preferred newspaper publication over the telephone. Folks with visual or physical limitations that prevent them from reading a traditional newspaper can call in 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and listen to over 300 publications. There are options to change the voice you hear, and the rate of speed of reading. Contact the Wisconsin Talking Book and Braille Library toll-free at 1-800-242-8822.

## LINGO-BUSTER: Social Security Retirement

If you're like a lot of folks, you may be looking forward to the freedom and flexibility retirement offers, something that is often limited while we are busy working and raising kids. To make the most of this period in our lives, most people rely on Social Security Retirement benefits to ensure it is a financially secure time. It is important to take some time to learn about your options, in order to plan for a retirement that is best for you.

**Here are a few basics about this benefit to help you get started...**

**How do you qualify?** The Social Security Retirement (SSR) benefit is available to individuals who have earned enough credits by paying Social Security taxes through employment earnings. In general, 40 credits are needed to qualify (or 10 years of work). The payment amount is determined by how much you earned in your lifetime and by your age when you begin to receive your retirement benefit. In certain circumstances, spouses and children may be eligible for a benefit based upon your Social Security retirement account.

**When can you collect benefits?** You can collect your full retirement benefit when you reach full retirement age, which is determined by the year you were born. To determine your full retirement age, visit <https://www.ssa.gov/planners/retire/ageincrease.html>. If you choose to delay taking your retirement benefit, your benefit amount will increase until you reach age 70. You may also choose to take early retirement. Early retirement can be taken as early as age 62 and up to your full retirement age. However, your benefit amount will be reduced if you take early retirement. In addition, employment earnings can impact the amount of an early retirement benefit.

We recommend taking some time to explore the Social Security website at <https://www.ssa.gov/retire/>. There is a lot of information available that will help you better understand your Social Security Retirement benefit and plan for the retirement that is best for you.

## Silver Alert

The Silver Alert Program was signed into law in Wisconsin on April 11, 2014, as a notification program for older adults with cognitive impairments who go missing (similar to Amber Alerts for children). This program enables law enforcement throughout the state to use the existing Crime Alert Network to promptly send statewide notices when a senior citizen with Alzheimer's disease or other dementia is missing. To use this alert system, individuals should call 911 to report a missing older adult.



# Wisconsin ACCESS

[www.access.wisconsin.gov](http://www.access.wisconsin.gov) is a fast, easy-to-use internet tool that can help you “access” public benefit programs in Wisconsin.

Use [www.access.wisconsin.gov](http://www.access.wisconsin.gov) to:

## # Check it Out!

- Find out if you qualify and apply online for public benefit programs (health, nutrition, etc.)
- Add-a-Program for members with an open case who want to apply for another program.
- Check the status and get up-to-date information about your benefits.
- Report changes – an easy way to meet the requirement that you report changes within 10 days (about your income, assets, shelter and medical expenses, living arrangements and contact information).
- Renew your benefits and submit FoodShare and Child Care Six-Month Report forms.

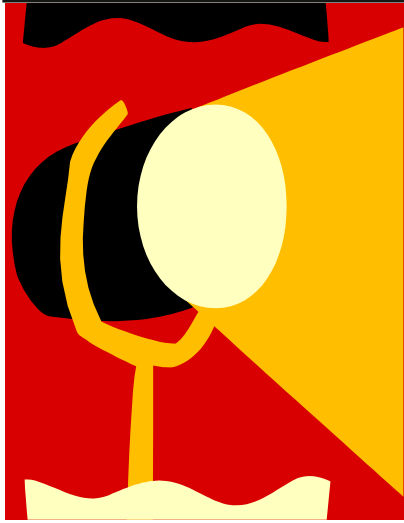
The screenshot displays the Wisconsin ACCESS website with the following elements:

- Am I Eligible?**
  - > Nutrition, Health & Child Care
  - > Prescription Drug Plans
  - > Energy Assistance
  - > Tax Credits
- Apply for Benefits!**
  - > FoodShare
  - > Health Care
  - > Family Planning Waiver
  - > Child Care
- Login to Account**
  - > Check your benefits
  - > Report changes
  - > Renew your benefits
  - > Manage health care
- OR Create an Account**
- Community Partners**
  - ◆ Login
  - BadgerCare+ express enrollment for Children and registration for Community Access Points
  - Learn More
- Providers**
  - ◆ Login
  - BadgerCare+ express enrollment for pregnant women and children
  - Learn More
- Employers**
  - ◆ Login
  - Obtain information about reporting health insurance data
  - Learn More
- Wisconsin's health, nutrition and child care programs
  - Learn More

Wisconsin has made changes to the ACCESS internet tool, making it more user-friendly and efficient:

### What's Changed?

- ⇒ Some questions are now mandatory & no longer optional
- ⇒ Possibility of an immediate determination for backdated coverage (when applicable)
- ⇒ The filing date will now be the date the online application is submitted
- ⇒ ACCESS may determine immediate or “Real Time Eligibility” for BadgerCare Plus and Family Planning Only-Services applicants who answer a set of preliminary questions
- ⇒ Updates to the “Help” feature provides users with more information
- ⇒ Auto-fill features for certain MyACCESS account users.

**COMMUNITY  
SPOTLIGHT**

**Wisconsin Council of the Blind and Visually Impaired**
**&**
**The Office of the Blind and Visually Impaired**

We'd like to introduce you to the Wisconsin Council of the Blind and Visually Impaired and The Office of the Blind and Visually Impaired. These two agencies work with individuals of all ages deemed legally blind or visually impaired. Here's how the two agencies work within the community:


**The Office of the Blind and Visually Impaired (OBVI)**

provides rehabilitation services to help individuals to achieve their own goals of independent living. Through in-home visits or in group settings, OBVI staff teach techniques and using technology for daily activities of living, such as mobility, communications, and personal cares. The objective is to help people adapt or adjust to vision loss while maintaining their independence.

Eligibility for OBVI requires that someone must be documented or observed to have central visual acuity of 20/70 or less in their better eye, with best correction; or a person's field of vision is constricted so much so that it impacts their daily life. Individuals who have a permanent or progressive visual impairment which is expected to impact their ability to live at home independently are also encouraged to apply. The office can be reached Monday through Thursday at 608-757-5203. Additional information and resources can be found by visiting: [www.dhs.wi.gov/blind](http://www.dhs.wi.gov/blind)


**Wisconsin Council of the Blind & Visually Impaired**
**Wisconsin Council of the Blind and Visually Impaired (WCBVI)**

provides one-on-one Low Vision evaluations that assess a person's visual abilities. WCBVI provides instruction in the use of optical and non-optical aids, as well as orientation and mobility training and guidance for computer technology. In addition, they operate the "Sharper Vision Store", which includes many useful and unique items to help people with daily activities. Some specialized items are available at a low cost, and they maintain a list of used adaptive equipment for sale. They supply free white canes, with eligibility. WCBVI is also very involved in outreach, education and legislative advocacy.

Anyone who is legally blind or visually impaired is eligible for services, however, there may be a cost depending on the service. Home visits are possible. For more information, call WCBVI at 608-255-1166 (local) or 1-800-783-5213. The Sharper Vision Store can be reached at 608-237-8100/800-783-5213. The program is staffed Monday through Friday from 8:00 am to 4:30 pm. Further information can be found by visiting [www.wcblind.org](http://www.wcblind.org)

# Combat Cabin Fever This Winter!



Step inside Olbrich Botanical Gardens and discover Bolz Conservatory, a year round sanctuary where you can find exotic plants, flowers, a waterfall, and birds. Olbrich offers a lot of indoor activities to beat those winter blahs such as a Garden Book Club; Tai Chi and yoga classes; as well as art and healthy living courses. December brings the Holiday Express Train Show and Holiday concerts offered weekly on Sundays at 2 pm. You can visit the website at [www.olbrich.org](http://www.olbrich.org) for class offerings and other events or visit in person at 3330 Atwood Avenue, Madison.

Madison School and Community Recreation (MSCR) offers additional classes for adults, families, and individuals with disabilities throughout the year. There are various art and enrichment classes, outdoor adventures, adaptive/inclusive recreation opportunities and more listed in their website or program guide. Visit [www.msqr.org](http://www.msqr.org) or phone 608-204-3000 to learn more about what's available.



MADISON  
PUBLIC  
LIBRARY

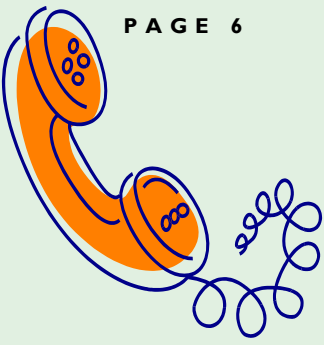
For anyone struggling with mobility or physical issues that prevent them from visiting their local library, the Madison Public Library offers a Home Service Program. Individuals with ongoing physical conditions or residents of retirement homes, assisted living facilities, or participants in an adult day care facility can use this service. Eligible individuals must live within the City of Madison. Anyone interested in books, audiobooks, music, or magazines can check them out; only videos and DVD's are not allowed due to shorter loan times and higher demands. For residents at assisted livings, retirement homes, healthcare or adult day centers, the library offers regular delivery options or a pre-assembled collection for delivery. This program works with volunteers to deliver the library materials. Anyone interested in utilizing the service, or volunteering can contact 608-266-6314.

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**SPARK!** Spark! is an interdisciplinary arts program for adults with memory loss. Each month, the Madison Children's Museum hosts adults with dementia or Alzheimer's to view and discuss art from their collection. The program allows participants to make original works of art, meet people, share stories, and revive memories. Admission to the workshops is free, however advance registration is required. More additional information, contact 608-256-6445, ext. 156 or email: [registration@madisonchildrensmuseum.org](mailto:registration@madisonchildrensmuseum.org).



madison children's museum



# I Called the ADRC!

Ann recently called the Aging and Disability Resource Center of Dane County after moving to Madison from a rural area in western Wisconsin. Ann was now living with her daughter and grandson but they were busy with work and school, so she spent most of her days alone. She was feeling very isolated – as she wasn't familiar with Madison, she didn't know anyone, she didn't drive and had no transportation. When she called the ADRC, Ann asked about resources to help her get to a grocery store and hair salon.

Janie, an ADRC Information & Assistance Specialist, suggested several options for Ann, including the Senior Group Transportation offered by Dane County Senior Centers which provide rides to meal sites and certain shopping destinations. During their conversation, Ann mentioned that her apartment was very close to a Madison Metro bus stop, so Janie also told her about the "Bus Buddy" program.

The "Bus Buddy" program offers people age 60+ the opportunity to learn how to use the Madison Metro bus system with the help of a trained volunteer who is an experienced bus rider. Ann said she had thought about using the bus but wasn't comfortable trying it on her own; it seemed scary for someone who didn't have any public transportation in the small town she came from!

Ann really liked the idea of having a Bus Buddy volunteer with her to show her the "ins and outs" of how to ride the city bus.

Janie helped Ann contact RSVP (Retired Senior Volunteer Program), the local agency that coordinates the Bus Buddy program. Soon a volunteer met with Ann and together they rode the bus to and from East Towne Mall. On their next few trips together, Ann and her Bus Buddy practiced different routes to other shopping locations that Ann selected.

Ann was so excited about her new skill that she reported back to Janie! Ann told Janie that she now was using the Metro bus on a regular basis to get groceries and services. Ann said she realized that riding the bus was actually very easy once she experienced it with the help of her Bus Buddy. Ann also learned that even people with mobility challenges can ride Madison Metro buses. If a person using a walker or wheelchair cannot use the stairs to get on the bus, the bus "kneels", or lowers to curb level, to enable the person to walk or roll directly into the bus without having to use the steps. RSVP Bus Buddy volunteers can help people try out this feature too.

Ann and her volunteer plan to work on learning some additional routes, including a stop at her local community and senior center – so she can meet new people and get active! Hopefully Ann's story encourages more people to use the Bus Buddy volunteer program and ride the Madison Metro city bus!

## Looking for a Few Good Volunteers to

### Battle the Snow!

**Is your snow blower tuned up & ready to go?**

**Are your shovels handy?**

**Are your boots ready to hit the ground?**

**Will you let “old man winter” defeat your neighbors?**

**Will you step up & serve your community?!**



For some, the first snow fall leads to building a snowman, sledding, snow shoes, or other outdoor adventures. For others, snow brings the stress and worry of trying to find help to shovel or plow their sidewalks and driveways. Every winter, some of our neighbors with physical disabilities or who are advanced in age need assistance with snow removal. Although there are a few programs that offer this service, they often lack enough volunteers to meet the demand and may have to turn down requests. If you are willing and able, please consider volunteering to remove snow or perform yard work for your fellow community members who need a helping hand.

Independent Living, Inc. needs volunteers for their Chore Corps program, which provides yard work (and help with light household tasks) for the elderly (55+) and those with a disability. For questions about the Chore Corps program, please contact the Chore Corps Volunteer Coordinator at 608-268-9641.

Dane County Time Bank is another great way to volunteer – and you can exchange your time spent shoveling snow for help with something you need. [www.danecountytimebank.org](http://www.danecountytimebank.org) or 608-663-0400.

Additionally, the Senior Coalitions/senior centers in Madison, and throughout Dane County, who work with those age 60+, are always looking for volunteers for their chore service programs. To help those older folks in your neighborhood, contact your local senior center or in Madison call:

- \* North/Eastside Senior Coalition: 608-243-5252
- \* South Madison Coalition of the Elderly: 608-251-8405
- \* West Madison Senior Coalition: 608-238-7368
- \* East Madison/Monona Coalition: 608-223-3100

“One kind word can warm three winter months.”

—Japanese Proverb





# Who's Who at the ADRC!

The Aging and Disability Resource Center of Dane County is happy to add **JOY SCHMIDT** to our staff. Joy is the ADRC's new Dementia Care Specialist. We thought you might like to know a little bit more about her!



Joy, where were you born & raised?

**I was born in Gary Indiana.**



**I spent a lot of my childhood at The Dunes National Lakeshore!**

Who are the people you hold most dear to your heart?  
**And my main squeeze, Ted!**



**My daughter, Emily. My son, Eric.**



Where did you go to college? **Indiana University in Indianapolis.**

Any pets? **An 80 lb. 43 mph greyhound named Alfie! He's retired from racing.**



What do you like to do for fun?

**Work, kayak, cook, walk in the woods, be near water.**



If you were stranded on a deserted island, what 3 things would you want with you?



**I would just need my kayak and my partner and we would get the heck off that island!**

Fan of any sports teams? **Nope! Don't like 'em.** [Editor's Note: Joy clarified that while not a sports fan, she *appreciates* The Packers!]



Favorite thing about Madison or Dane County? **The lakes!**



So, Dementia Care Specialist, that sounds like a big job. What led you to this job and how are you qualified? **All the jobs here at the ADRC are big! In all seriousness, I have a variety of experience from direct care, social work, community and volunteer coordinating; plus I was already working on dementia friendly communities in my previous role and I did a lot of professional and community education about dementia.**





### Can you explain how you might be able to help a caregiver who contacted the ADRC?

I can work with people with various forms of dementia and with their families and caregivers who may be:

- ◆ Wondering about changes in their memory and what's "normal". I'm trained to do memory screenings – at no cost to the customer.
- ◆ Concerned about how to talk to someone who is declining and needs more support. Maybe they don't know how to bring the subject up or what is involved in getting tested.
- ◆ Planning to move their loved one into a memory care unit and need advice about how to have that conversation.
- ◆ Experiencing family members in different places in terms of understanding the disease and how family members can work together to support the person with dementia.
- ◆ Struggling with behavior challenges and need suggestions on how to deal with them. For example, how to approach their loved one about unsafe driving or concerns about wandering.

I really like helping people problem-solve, communicate, and understand different approaches to caregiving situations for someone with dementia.

### You've got important projects going on! What's a Dementia Friendly Community?

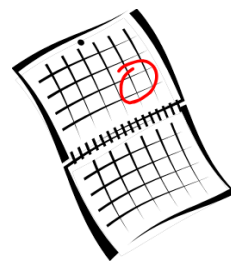


This is super fun and I hope to involve other ADRC staff in these projects. We are working in a number of the smaller towns and cities in Dane County to collaborate with lots of people in the community - including the Boys & Girls Club, the Alzheimer's & Disease Research Center, the Wisconsin Alzheimer's Institute, many of the senior center/focal points and businesses - to create Dementia Friendly communities. It's an international movement that is helping to raise awareness of the needs of people with dementia, as well as, the needs of family caregivers. Businesses, churches, and other organizations are coming together to learn about the signs that someone may be living with cognitive issues, and to find better ways to communicate and to serve them. It's bringing people together around the issue and building compassion and acceptance. The goal is to have people with cognitive challenges and their caregivers be supported and included in daily community life. It is helping to change environments and to simplify information shared so that someone with dementia can navigate these environments further into the disease. The goal is that people will be able to live independently longer if their community understands and supports them.

**What's LEEPS? Does it involve jumping around?** It could involve jumping around if the person is able! LEEPS is a program that connects a volunteer with a person who has dementia and is living in their home. The volunteer helps the person with dementia to exercise— both physically and mentally— and to socialize. These types of activities have helped individuals maintain their function longer and slowed decline. An additional benefit is respite/time off for the primary caregiver. The exercises are designed specifically for the individual, and the socialization is done outside the home. I'm hoping to work with students and recruit other volunteers and participants for LEEPS!



## The Sampler! Interesting Events going on in your Community:



### **Olbrich's Holiday Express: Flower and Model Train Show**

When: December 5 – December 31, 2015

Where: 3330 Atwood Ave, Madison

What: Throughout December, visitors can view large-scale model trains as presented by members of the Wisconsin Garden Railway Society. There are also elaborate LEGO constructions along the track from members of the Wisconsin LEGO Users Group (WisLUG). For more information, check out [www.olbrich.org/events/holidayexpress.cfm](http://www.olbrich.org/events/holidayexpress.cfm) or call 608-246-4550.

### **Arboretum Walk: Solstice**

When: December 21, 2015 – Starts: 4:00 pm – Ends: 5:30 pm

Where: UW Arboretum Visitor Center; 1207 Seminole Hwy, Madison 53711

What: Join us for the sunset on the shortest day of the year. Free naturalist-led hike. Meet at the Arboretum Visitor Center (enter at 1207 Seminole Hwy then proceed east 1 mile to the Visitor Center).

Sponsored by UW Madison Arboretum 608-263-7888 or [info@arboretum.wisc.edu](mailto:info@arboretum.wisc.edu)

### **Red Cross Holiday Blood Drive**

When: December 24, 2015

Where: Alliant Energy Center Exhibition Hall

What: Donors and volunteers are needed for the 30<sup>th</sup> Annual Holiday Blood Drive. You can find out more information to volunteer or donate at [www.redcrossblood.org/badgerhawkeye](http://www.redcrossblood.org/badgerhawkeye) or call 1-800-Red Cross (1-800-733-2767).

### **Well Expo (Healthy Living for Women)**

When: January 15 & 16, 2016 Friday, 3:00-8:00 pm and Saturday, 9:00 am- 4:00 pm

Where: Monona Terrace, 1 John Nolen Drive, Madison 53703

What: Attend the Well Expo and experience two days of lectures, presentations, and demonstrations in the areas of health and wellness. See [www.mononaterrace.com](http://www.mononaterrace.com) for more details.

### **Candlelit Snowshoe**

When: January 16, 2016

Where: Aldo Leopold Nature Center, 330 Femrite Drive, Monona.

What: Experience snowshoeing in a whole new way! Bring your snowshoes and explore the enchanting trails lit up by luminaries. Call 608-267-4919 for more information.

### **YWCA Circle of Women Fundraiser**

When: February 25, 2016

Where: Alliant Energy Center Exhibition Hall

What: The YWCA created this event to encourage philanthropy among women and provide an opportunity to network with others from diverse social, ethnic, economic, educational, and cultural backgrounds. Men are also welcome to attend. For additional information, visit [www.ywcamadison.org](http://www.ywcamadison.org) and click on "events".

### **Read Across America Day**

When: March 2, 2016

Where: Nationwide

What: It's Dr. Seuss' birthday so what better way to celebrate than join forces and read! "The more that you read, the more things you will know. The more that you learn, the more places you'll go."

— Dr. Seuss, I Can Read With My Eyes Shut!

- \* The first New Year was celebrated 4,000 years ago by the ancient Babylonians.
- \* The Time Square New Year's Eve Ball was first dropped in 1907 after a ban on fireworks. It started with a 700 pound ball adorned with 25 watt bulbs made of iron and wood. Today, the ball weighs 11,875 pounds, measures 12 ft. in diameter and has 2,668 Waterford crystals.
- \* The use of a baby to signify New Year's began around 600 BC in ancient Greece.
- \* The first places to welcome the New Year are Samoa and parts of Kiribati, while Baker Island (US) is among the last.



## **The Affordable Care Act: Get Help through the IRS**

If you are receiving health care coverage through the Affordable Care Act, you may be surprised to learn that there is a tax credit available to those with low or moderate income. It's designed to help individuals and families afford health insurance purchased through the Health Insurance Marketplace. Individuals can choose to have the credit paid in advance to their insurance company to lower monthly premiums, or claim the credit later when filing tax returns for the year. If you choose to have the credit paid in advance, you will reconcile the amount paid in advance with the actual credit you calculate when you file your tax return.

**You are eligible for the premium tax credit if you meet all of the following requirements:**

- Health insurance is purchased through the Marketplace.
- Household income meets eligibility requirements (between 100 and 400% of the Federal Poverty Limit).
- Affordable health coverage that provides minimum value is not available through an employer plan.
- Health coverage is not available through a government program, like Medicaid, Medicare, CHIP or TRICARE.
- Do not file a Married Filing Separately tax return (unless you meet certain exceptions).
- Cannot be claimed as a dependent by another person.

Federal law determines the premium tax credit on a sliding scale. Persons with a lower income get a larger credit to help cover the cost of their insurance. In other words, the higher your income, the lower the amount of your credit. There is a form to help figure out the amount of credit (Form 8962). You must complete this form to claim the premium tax credit and reconcile any advance credit payments with the premium tax credit you are eligible to claim on your return.

Filing electronically is the easiest way to file a tax return, plus it has additional options to assist filers including free Volunteer Assistance, IRS Free File, commercial software, and professional assistance. Information about the tax credits and the Affordable Care Act are available on [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov).



2865 North Sherman Avenue

Madison, WI 53704

Web: [www.daneadrc.org](http://www.daneadrc.org)

Email: [adrc@countyofdane.com](mailto:adrc@countyofdane.com)

Phone: 608-240-7400

TTY: 608-240-7404

FAX: 608-240-7401

Toll Free: 1-855-417-6892

**STOP IN – CALL– EMAIL– REQUEST A HOME VISIT**

**OFFICE HOURS:**

**MONDAY - FRIDAY 7:45 A.M. – 4:30 P.M.**

**OTHER HOURS BY APPOINTMENT**

**BILINGUAL STAFF & INTERPRETERS**

**AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST**



**The Mission of the ADRC**

To support seniors, adults with disabilities, their families and caregivers by providing useful information, assistance and education on community services and long-term care options and by serving as the single entry point for publicly funded long-term care services while at all times respecting the rights, dignity and preference of the individual.

**Our Experts can help you with information about:**

- ◆ Assisted Living & Nursing Home Options
- ◆ Caregiver Supports
- ◆ Housing Options
- ◆ In-Home Personal Care
- ◆ Meals & Nutrition Programs
- ◆ Rental & Energy Assistance
- ◆ Respite Care
- ◆ Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid
- ◆ Support Groups
- ◆ And Much More...

**Our Services are Confidential!**

**If you would like to receive our newsletter by email, please contact us at [adrc@countyofdane.com](mailto:adrc@countyofdane.com)**