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'211' program celebrates a year of calls

By RIC ROUTLEDGE
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STORYCHAT: 1 Comment

HARTFORD CITY -- Even as it celebrates its first anniversary, LifeStream's 211 program still fights for attention.

The program allows any resident in seven counties to dial 211 with questions about where to get help for almost any kind of social problem.

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Officials were in Hartford City Monday morning and Grant County Monday afternoon to celebrate 211's first year of service.

Phil Oleksy has been director of 211 since it began last April.

"We provide answers to people in need of help in any social services," he said.

Most of the questions are financial needs of some

Anniversary celebrations

The 211 service is celebrating its first anniversary this week. Officials met with the public in Blackford and Grant counties on Monday.

The public is invited to have birthday cake and learn more about 211 during the following sessions:

- **Jay County:** 11 a.m. today, Portland Area Chamber of Commerce, 118 S. Meridian St., Suite A.
- **Delaware County:** 2:30 p.m. today, LifeStream office, 1701 Pilgrim Blvd., Yorktown.
- **Henry County:** 10 a.m. Wednesday, New Castle-Henry County Community Library, Jennings Room, 376 S. 15th St..
- **Randolph County:** 11 a.m. Thursday, Winchester Area Chamber of Commerce, 112 W. Washington St.
- **Madison County:** 2:30 p.m. Thursday, The Anderson Center of St. John's Health System, 2210 Jackson St.

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sort -- rent, utilities, food, sometimes medication -- but also cover counseling, employment, legal assistance, home delivered meals, shelter and education among other areas.

"They ask us everything from where they can find childbirth information to assistance for funeral services and about everything in between," Oleksy said.

The service is free to anyone in Blackford, Grant, Jay, Randolph, Henry, Delaware and Madison counties, and is available 24/7.

211 is a service provided by LifeStream and is supported by grants and donations.

The service has become more than just a call center, according to Jim Allbaugh, vice president of operations.

"It is one of the pieces of the puzzle of economic and service development," he said. "It helps the United Way and community foundations to understand the needs that are being met and those that are not. We provide some needs assessment data back to the counties."

About 65 percent of the residents of the seven counties have access to 211, and about 85 percent of Indiana residents do. Ken Adkins, CEO, said the dream is to have every county in the nation covered by the free service.

The local 211 service averages about 50 calls a day.

Overall, 211 received 12,144 calls in its first year, with 13,000 need being met and 370 unmet which, he said, means 97.2 percent of the callers received referrals.

He also said that many local residents were not familiar with the service.

"They know what 911 is, but they haven't heard of 211," he added.

People have even asked what the phone numbers is, thinking 211 is only the name of the service. "It's also the number you dial," Allbaugh said.

STORYCHAT 

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This is a wonderful service. A year ago, I was dealing with an elderly friend and had no idea where to get help. After many calls to several local agencies, I called 211 and got an immediate answer.

Keep up the good work!

Posted: Tue Apr 17, 2007 7:44 am

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