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For Immediate Release

VVCC volunteers thanked for helping seniors

May 1, 2019—Sedona—Celebrating invaluable service is at the heart of Verde Valley Caregiver Coalition’s annual Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon held April 18 at Sedona Rouge and Spa. The event honored volunteers who helped 2,200 “neighbors” get the services they need to continue living independently in their homes. Approximately 75 guests and volunteers attended.

“You are helping older adults stay living in their home of choice,” said VVCC Executive Director Kent Ellsworth. “You make the caring difference for so many older adults to continue to enjoy their community, even when they are no longer able to drive.”

Arizona Public Service (APS) co-sponsored the event, while also continuing to help support VVCC’s Guardian Angel Program, which loans emergency alert units to adults at-risk for falling down.

Lori Green, VVCC Board Member and Vice President for Patient Care Service at Northern Arizona Healthcare shared the status and plans for Northern Arizona Healthcare facilities in the Verde Valley. Green also praised the work of VVCC volunteers who transport neighbors to their medical appointments.

Ellsworth recognized volunteers who provide various services: drivers, volunteers who do shopping and pick up medications, volunteers who install and maintain emergency alert units, those who help with pet care, respite care, handy person help and business assistance.

“A real connection to others is vital to the well-being of our neighbors,” he said. “Our volunteers make this connection real.” Ellsworth also called for help in recruiting new volunteers, especially drivers.

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VVCC's Call Center, which matches volunteers with neighbor requests and makes referrals to other resources, handles 1,000 calls per week, with a 99% fulfillment rate for rides requested. The Call Center averages 10 new neighbors each week and enrolled 480 new neighbors in 2018.

VVCC currently has 285 volunteer drivers. Ellsworth said that during 2018 volunteers drove over 300,000 miles, provided 27,900 rides and delivered 25,000 volunteer driver hours.

The wheelchair accessible van awarded to VVCC in 2017 traveled 40,000 miles in 2018 making 3,200 trips. And 85% of the trips were for medical appointments, dialysis, pre-and-post op, physical therapy and primary care.

Ellsworth announced Arizona Department of Transportation has awarded VVCC a second wheelchair accessible van. This will help VVCC transport the growing number of seniors who need assistance with mobility issues.

The Guardian Angel emergency alert units are life-saving and VVCC has 430 units currently loaned to adults at risk for falling.

Ellsworth spoke about the advances being made to VVCC service in 2019. These include new software to assist in the coordination of service requests and new phone technology which will help interoffice communication and response to messages.

Volunteers who went far above and beyond the past year were honored at the event. The most miles driven in 2018 were: 32,702 by Bill Macuri, Cottonwood; 6,040 by John Wozniak, Cornville; 4,859 by Linda Jones, Cornville; and 2,689 by Chuck Burkitt, Cottonwood. Not surprisingly, the most hours of service were supplied by the same foursome: 4,272 by Bill Macuri; 654 hours by Linda Jones, 531 by John Wozniak and 234 by Chuck Burkitt.

In addition, the following volunteers were honored with Service Award Pins for five years of service with VVCC: Chuck Burkitt; Hank Culbertson, Cottonwood; Sean Donovan, Village of Oak Creek; Sally Peck, Sedona; Nancy Rowland, Rimrock; and

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VVCC Board Member Jeannette Sasmor, Sedona. Ten-year Service Award Pins were given to Debbie Schwartz and Norm Sunstad, Village of Oak Creek. Fifteen-year pins were awarded to Jan Anderson and Joe Scully, Sedona.

VVCC thanks the following businesses for donating gift certificates and prizes given to volunteers during the event: Gifts Galore, Sedona Divine, Mary Fisher Theatre, Olde Sedona restaurant, Massage Matters, Judi's Restaurant, Kealyn's Kloset, Sedona Wonder, SNAP Fitness, Jazz Bouquet Floral, Nick's West Side, Namti Spa, Nancy's Hair & Nail, American Mattress, Knit Wits, Szechuan Restaurant, Vino di Sedona, Kachina House Southwest Décor, Arizona Public Service and Mad Love Beauty Salon.

Volunteering with VVCC is flexible and includes many fulfilling roles. If you would like to become a VVCC volunteer, contact Kent Ellsworth at (928) 204-1238 or email: kentellsworth@vvcaregivers.org. Visit www.vvcaregivers.org for a full list of volunteer opportunities.

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