

News

GRADD received grant for BEC program

By Christie Netherton Messenger-Inquirer

Sep 18, 2021

The Green River Area Development District received a \$120,000 grant Thursday that will help fund the Benefits Enrollment Center.

The grant, funded by the National Council on Aging, was awarded to 58 other organizations and programs throughout the country, only two of which are in Kentucky, according to GRADD community services manager Leslie Wilson.

GRADD was a recipient of the grant based on the BEC's continued efforts in connecting seniors to available benefits.

BEC offers what Wilson calls, "a one-stop shop" for screening individuals for eligibility in roughly 3,200 different benefits programs.

These programs, she said, range from Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP — formerly known as Food Stamps), property tax credits, Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) and Medicaid and Medicare savings programs to assist with the costs of premiums.

"The Benefits Enrollment Center is a tremendous resource for seniors and disabled individuals in the GRADD communities," Wilson said.

Individuals can be eligible for such programs, according to Wilson, based on age, income or disability.

"It's a whole umbrella of services that it's screening for based on the individual client's condition," she said.

She said the goal is to assist at least 2,000 individuals throughout the duration of the grant, which runs for two years, starting Oct. 1.

"It's a huge savings to the individual if we can maybe offset some of their Medicare premiums, maybe help with some of the prescription drug coverage, help them with their utility costs," she said. "It can be several thousand dollars a month that they could be looking at based on what that person would be eligible for."

Wilson recalled one individual who the center was able to save around \$5,000 month by working alongside other community partners such as the LIHEAP program and Audubon Area Community Services to help get them on SNAP benefits, heating and cooling assistance, as well as rent assistance.

She said the majority of the service can be completed over the phone, as well.

Individuals interested in a Benefits screening, or organizations that would like to schedule an outreach event can contact the GRADD office at 1-800-928-9094. The screening tool is also available at www.benefitscheckup.org/gradd and is accessible to anyone.

Christie Netherton, cnetherton@messenger-inquirer.com, 270-691-7360