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6/28/07

## Checking In

### Turbeville seniors get a special wake-up call

By Konstantin Vengerowsky

Seniors in Turbeville now have the option of waking up to a phone call that will give them the date, a weather report and a short devotional message to get their morning up and running. It is called Operation Senior.

It is a telephone-calling program created to aid senior citizens, residing in the Town of Turbeville who are living independently and want the security of a phone call to check in on them. Every morning from 9-9:30 this automated message is sent directly from the Town Hall to all subscribed seniors in the Turbeville area. The voice these seniors hear is that of Town Administrator Pat Goodwin.

"The whole process is really simple," says Goodwin. "Seniors receive a phone call, pick up the telephone, listen to the message and then hang up."

The automated message, which lasts about a minute and a half, currently allows a call to be made up to four seniors at a time. If no one answers after the first call, the automated machine will make another several phone calls, before sending an email to Goodwin stating that there was no response.

"As soon as I receive the email, either I or one of our volunteers will go directly to that person's house to check up on them," stated Goodwin. It serves as sort of a security system, making sure the senior citizen is in good health and nothing extreme has happened to them.

If no one happens to be home, Goodwin calls the emergency contact number that is filled out on the Operation Senior application. "We've only had one incident so far when a person did not pick up the telephone," Goodwin recalled. "We called their relative and it turned out that they were just at the doctor's office."

Although Operation Senior has been in existence for barely two months, planning for it was a much longer process. It evolved from Turbeville's automated messaging system, PhoneTree. This communication system was installed in the town in 1998, due to a number of concerned citizens who wanted immediate notification in case of a prison breakout from the nearby Turbeville Correctional Institution.

"Thankfully, we have not had any such instances, so the system was not being used," stated Goodwin. "The town administration began brainstorming on ways to put this system in use in our community. We realized we have a growing senior population, so we were trying to find a service that would be both beneficial while at the same time completely free for our citizens."

Goodwin added that he met up with the mayor and several other officials, before taking up the idea to the Town Council.

In May of this year Operation Senior evolved from a concept into a program, involving ten citizens of Turbeville. From then on, every Monday through Friday, these seniors have been taking advantage of the program provided by the Town Administration.

There are several things that Goodwin hopes to achieve with Operation Senior. "We want to help our seniors feel like they can maintain their independence," he stated. "We also want to let them know that we care and want to make a difference in their life."



KONSTANTIN VENGEROWSKY/Manning Times

**Turbeville Town Administrator Pat Goodwin reviews the "Operation Senior" brochure with participant Juanita Henry**

Goodwin wants to stress that this program is completely free to any senior citizens in the Town of Turbeville.

"We're trying to provide a service for our citizens so they will be able to maintain an independent lifestyle," Goodwin stated.

"I think this program is wonderful," said Juanita Hardy, who has been with the program since its inauguration. "I just wait for that phone call, Monday through Friday, it really helps to keep me going."

Any citizens that are interested in the program should call the Turbeville Town Hall, (843) 659-2781, to fill out an application over the phone. Applications are also available for pick up at the same location.

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