



June 2, 2015

Contact: Katie Mintz
Communications
651-431-5605
kathryn.mintz@state.mn.us

Commissioner visits Avon to highlight Return to Community initiative
85-year-old Avon man among more than 2,200 Minnesotans who have left nursing homes

AVON, MINN. – Today Minnesota Department of Human Services Commissioner Lucinda Jesson visited an elderly veteran at his home in Avon to highlight an initiative that has helped more than 2,200 Minnesotans return to their communities from nursing homes.

Return to Community is a partnership of the Minnesota Department of Human Services, the Minnesota Board on Aging, Area Agencies on Aging and Minnesota nursing facilities. Under the initiative, Senior LinkAge Line community living specialists contact people who are using their own funds to pay for nursing home care and offer to help plan for discharge to their home or another community setting. Specialists stay in touch for up to five years with continued support.

“Most of us want to live at home, but after suffering an injury or illness, it can be especially hard to get the services and supports in place to allow a safe return,” said Jesson, who was joined by the man’s wife, adult children and local agency on aging staff who helped him move home. “Return to Community gives older adults and their families the resources they need to carry out their wishes, and at the same time is good for taxpayers.”

Nursing home care is expensive – costing an average of \$180 per day – and is paid for with Medicare or private insurance on a limited basis. Many nursing home residents ultimately deplete their personal assets on care and become eligible for Medical Assistance. Reducing the amount of time they spend in a nursing home leaves more money in their pockets and reduces the need for public spending.

The personal impact is also significant, said Lori Vrolson, executive director of Central Minnesota Council on Aging, which has completed 353 nursing home discharges across its 14-county service area. When a community living specialist from the agency visited the 85-year-old Avon man at a nursing home in Albany after a below-the-knee amputation, he was depressed and said he didn’t feel he had a chance to return home. After several months of planning, meetings with the County Veterans Service Officer and home modifications due to his new wheelchair, he was able to discharge in August 2014.

“When our staff visited him at home and saw for the first time since meeting him that he was smiling ear to ear, the difference this program makes was clear. It means so much to people to be able to live where they want to live, and Return to Community makes it possible,” said Vrolson.

Community living specialists can be reached at the Senior LinkAge Line, 1-800-333-2433.