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Schoharie Together aids aged

New group has churches, government work as allies

By Jim Poole

An unusual alliance of churches, government and others is reaching out to help the elderly and other shut-ins during the pandemic.

Aptly named Schoharie Together, the group will deliver food and medicine to those isolated at home.

"The goal is to keep our most vulnerable population safe at home," said Ray Richards, pastor of Calvary Assembly of God in Cobleskill.

The idea for Schoharie Together started small in Seward. Town Supervisor Earlin Rosa described his wife,

Wendy, as "very proactive," and Ms. Rosa left notes for residents on their road, offering to get what they needed while at home.

"From that, we thought, 'Why can't we scale this up?'" Mr. Rosa said.

The Rosas saw churches as a way to identify and reach out to elderly shut-ins and the handicapped. And to contact those who weren't churchgoers, the county Office for the Aging got involved.

The OFA has a data base of older residents who may need help, said Director Nancy Dingee, but newly-formed Schoharie Together is looking

for more with "no other supports."

However, nobody has an estimate—or even a guess—of how many isolated elderly and handicapped there are.

Elderly and/or shut-ins who need help can call Ms. Dingee or Meg Parsons at OFA, **518-295-2001** or Pastor Richards at **518-231-5098**. Those who know of an isolated person needing help can also call.

Those responding will be asked a few questions and choose what they need from churches' food pantry list. Volunteers will deliver the free food and medications, if any are needed.

In addition to the weekly deliveries, a plan is being developed to stock food pantries throughout the county with

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—Pastor Ray Richards

emergency items such as milk, eggs, cheese, bread and more.

Having government and churches work together is rare, but such collaboration is necessary during the pandemic, Pastor Richards said.

"The beauty is in the partnership," he added. "Each part plays a little bit."

The effort is somewhat similar to the weekly backpack program being done by The Joshua Project and Fusion

Community Church, though the target audience is different.

"The Joshua Project takes care of kids," Pastor Richards said. "We take care of the elderly, the other end."

Although Mr. Rosa credited Pastor Richards with "doing the heavy lifting" for Schoharie Together, he said the Town of Seward will help re-stock church food pantries as supplies dwindle.

"It's the right thing to do."

put taxes to work for those we care for," Mr. Rosa said.

The OFA can also purchase food for Schoharie Together, Ms. Dingee said.

County government has a grant "to use as we see fit," and may help supply food, according to Conesville Supervisor Bill Federice, Board of Supervisors chairman.

"Yes, we'll support Schoharie Together," Mr. Federice added. "We'll do everything within our means to support volunteer efforts."

Schoharie Together is also seeking funds from the public. To donate make out a check to Cobleskill Area United Ministries, PO Box 145, Cobleskill, or to the Schoharie County Office for the aging, 113 Park Place, Suite 3, Schoharie.