Meeting Notes – Aug. 16, 2022

The LaFayette Rotary Club met on Tuesday, August 16. Mrs. Merilyn Vines was responsible for the program. She invited as her guests Julia Ann Hyde, director of the Chambers County Department of Human Resources (DHR); Ms. Monique Freeman, supervisor, adult protective services; and Ms. Pam Vines, adult protective services worker. Julia Ann began by explaining who is eligible for adult protective services. An adult in need of protective services is someone 18 years of age or older who is incapable mentally or physically of taking care of themselves and has no one willing or able to provide them with the necessary care they need. DHR works closely with the Circuit Court and Judge Story in these cases. If the criteria of being unable to care for him/herself is met, conservatorship or guardianship can be applied for. This often falls to the sheriff, Doctors/health care workers are considered mandatory reporters, but anyone who believes an adult has been abused, neglected or exploited must make a report. Statistics indicate that only one in 10 of needed reports are actually made.

Ms. Freeman reports that DHR staff report out on each report that is filed. They always try to involve the family. The individual must be deemed incompetent to care for themselves by a doctor. If no family is available, the sheriff is contacted. There is a critical need for adult foster homes, not only here in Chambers County, but throughout the state.

Ms. Vines starts the actual investigation and identifies the needs after a report has been filed. She is seeing more cases involving younger adults, 30-40 years of age. Often there are mental health or financial issues impacting the individual. It is vital that our DHR network with other counties and states in providing resources to those who need them. Not all adults determined to be incompetent qualify for nursing homes or can afford assisted living. Adults, especially older adults, are often very resistant to leaving the home they have lived in for so many years. Often, family is unwilling or unable to provide the needed support for the individual. These factors make meeting the individual's needs very difficult, both for DHR and for the individual. Ms. Vines reiterated that a person cannot be forcibly removed from their home without first having had an assessment documenting that they are incompetent to care for themselves.

Pictured left-to-right Pam Vines, adult protective services worker; Merilyn Vines, Rotarian; Monique Freeman, adult protective services supervisor; Julia Ann Hyde, director of Chambers County DHR.

Diane Sherriff