



## Expert in the field: Dave Toler

*By Ellen Waldman*

*October 27, 2014*

What if there was one place you could call and get authentic information? What if it was free? If you have questions about an issue related to aging, now you can find help here in the Rogue Valley. One phone number — 855-673-2372 (ORE-ADRC) — and website ([ADRCofOregon.org](http://ADRCofOregon.org)) are a direct entry into this array of services.

The Aging and Disabilities Resource Connection (ADRC) of Oregon has been up and running in the state for five years. In Jackson County, they have been “live” since July 2013. At first, they received about 20-30 calls per month. Now it’s closer to 200 calls and they expect 300 calls a month by early next year. Many of these calls are from Ashland.

I was fortunate to learn more about this service from Dave Toler, who is the director of senior and disability services through the Rogue Valley Council of Governments (RVCOG) for the last two and a half years. He has lived in the Rogue Valley area for 25 years and has been an administrator in the nonprofit and local government sectors for 18 years. Dave served on the Three Rivers School Board for 10 years and was a Josephine County Commissioner from 2007-2011. Dave knows his stuff from the inside out, and he shares his enthusiasm for this program with you here.

Who calls the ADRC?

DT: We get lots of calls from family members and their caregivers. The largest sectors are aging people and those with disabilities. The “adult children” are the second most popular group. Some live locally or they might be caregivers from a distance.

How do they find you?

DT: It’s organically growing now as a statewide supported system. There is word of mouth and advertising through the Department of Human Services, radio and TV programs.

What are some specific needs when they call for help?

DT: The two biggest needs are housing and transportation. This is very challenging, and the most difficult as the agency is not funded for this. There is not enough affordable housing for these two groups. It’s also very difficult if you don’t drive, unless you live in specific areas in the Rogue Valley. (Note: I will address transportation in another column).

Many people call and they don’t know what they need. Typically, they might need to talk about their situation first. The counselors on the phone are really good at asking the right questions. It’s important to have a live voice from the community who knows the resources that are available.

What is the range of services people can expect from the ADRC?

DT: This is a gateway program. The “heart” of the ADRC is "options counseling." It begins with an initial contact of a 15-30 minute conversation. If requested, referral is then made to trained staff that can go visit in the home. Sometimes this takes several hours and more than one visit. We are experts on the resources and options that are available and appropriate to them. A very important piece is care transitions. This could be from the hospital to nursing care, back to home, or to a community-based facility.

What needs is the ADRC not able to address?

DT: There is a very small, limited program for housing and transportation, with no real funding. But through counseling, we may find they are eligible for other resources we can draw upon. If they need options counseling, it is intended to help for two to three months only. After that, other paid services can provide continued long-term support.

What do you like about working with this organization?

DT: I believe the best job is one that nourishes my heart and soul. What I do is helping people every day. This is a good profession; it sustains you. We are all going to face this, if we're lucky. It feels good to know we can help folks navigate this difficult time.

We know that qualified referrals are making lives safer and happier for all these seniors and their families and friends. We have a community that cares, and here's one way to access it.