



*Happy 10th,
KeoweeCares!*

*The story of how Keowee
Key's unique resource came
into existence, and how it has
developed.*

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In 1995 some friends announced that they were moving to an Assisted Living Community. They had just returned from a skiing vacation! They spent their summers hiking parts of the Appalachian Trail. They were in perfect health. But someday, they said, they would need a broad swath of health and human services that weren't available locally. Better to make the move now, while they were still in good health.



Had anyone ever really inventoried the county's health and human services? Not in an easily accessible way, and in 1996 a group of us set out to do so. We enlisted the help of an advisory panel that included the South Carolina Council on Aging, the CEO of the local hospital, the Director of Hospice, a Clemson University gerontologist and three other Clemson professors, a specialist in Adaptive Housing, a researcher from the Strom Thurmond Institute, and elements of the AARP. We identified the resources that would be needed, and a group of Health Sciences students were tasked by their professor to scour the tri-county area to inventory the resources that already existed.

Information Resource:

We began simply as an information resource for those deciding whether to stay or to move. We were not then, nor are we today, a part of the Homeowners Assoc. (HOA). We only serve the one community; our volunteers are all residents of that community, but we are, and have always been, an entirely separate entity. That protects the HOA from liability, should someone decide to sue us, and it insulates us from the shifting priorities of an HOA board whose composition changes every year.

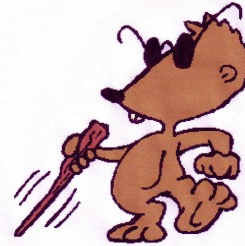
We quickly realized that retirees need access to more than just medical services. Plumbing,

electrical and general maintenance jobs they might have undertaken before, they now preferred to leave to others. But how to sort out the good contractors from the bad?

Recommended Providers List (RPL)

We invited property owners to send us written recommendations about providers that had done an exceptional job, and compiled them. The recommendations could be mailed, faxed or e-mailed, but they had to be from a Keowee Key resident, and they had to be in writing. Almost two hundred contractors are now listed on the RPL, at www.keoweecares.org/recommended.htm

Need-A-Ride? By 1998 we realized that even the healthiest among us have crises from time to time that make it difficult for us to drive. Chemotherapy, hip and knee replacements, etc., can cramp anyone's style, and while friends rally 'round and generously offer help, the temporarily disabled don't want to outwear their welcome. So they hold their requests to the absolute minimum, and pass on a lot of things they would really like to do.

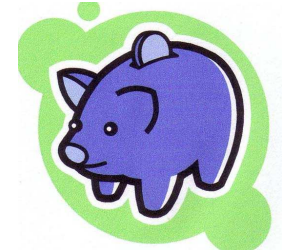


It took a year to develop the program. We needed one hundred residents, each willing to donate just one day a month to driving others, and 245 volunteered! That in itself speaks volumes for the volunteer ethic of Keowee Key's property owners. We drew on the accumulated wisdom of the Beverly Foundation, a resource on senior transportation issues, to tweak the program. Today ours is one of the few communities in the nation able to provide door-to-door transportation to any resident unable to drive, at no cost to the resident, without public funding, and without adding one penny to homeowner assessments! A number of new homeowners report that their decision to buy was influenced by the existence of the *Need-A-Ride?* program.

File of Life: When emergency crews respond to a 911 call for someone who has fallen, suffered a stroke, or had a heart attack, the technicians need information about the victim's medications and allergies before they can administer help. The hospital will want Social Security Number, Medicare and insurance information. The victim may be unable to respond; the spouse may be too rattled to come up with the answers quickly, and valuable time is lost.

In 2003 we teamed up with the **File of Life Foundation** and distributed magnetic card sets on which residents can record such data, then mount the holder on their refrigerator door. It's the first place the EMS technicians will look.

Who pays for all of this? Our web site, brochures, printing and mailing costs, voice mail, dedicated phone lines and File of Life distributions average \$3,000 per year. Licensed as a tax-exempt charity, we launched the first of our annual fund drives in 1999. It was also the *last* of our formal fund-raisers, for the community's response was so generous that we have not held one since. Between the original fund drive, subsequent unsolicited contributions and in memoriam gifts, we are making ends meet.



A golf, tennis, boating and fitness community, Keowee Key attracts activists, and more than one half of its homeowners are still employed. But even the healthiest are beset by problems from time to time, and as KeoweeCares embarks upon its eleventh year, it stands as an example of how a community can utilize its volunteer resources to alleviate such problems. It does so at a minimal cost and without dependence upon HOA funding.

Thank you to all who helped create KeoweeCares, and contribute to making it work!