

## Senior Companion Program Celebrates 40 years of Support and Friendship in North Idaho



By Panhandle Health District

**HAYDEN, ID** – The Panhandle Health District (PHD) celebrated the Senior Companion Program’s 40th anniversary at today’s annual volunteer awards. The Senior Companion Program provides companionship and respite care to the elderly and disabled in Idaho’s five northern counties.

Program Coordinator, Miranda Hoefert says, “Our support network creates new possibilities and improves the quality of life for people with physical, emotional or mental health limitations, most of whom are elderly.”

Senior Companion activities might include support through visits, providing access to transportation, meal planning and light preparation, playing cards, reminiscing or just enjoying the friendship of a peer. This year alone, North Idaho’s Senior Companion volunteers served over 44,000 hours, traveled 150,000 miles and provided services valued at over one million dollars.

Today’s award ceremony was super hero-themed. Volunteers dressed up in creative garb to emulate their favorite super heroes, such as Superman, Wonder Woman and even the “Crusader Against Alzheimer’s (*pictured above*)!” 56 community members were recognized for their hours and years dedicated to the Senior Companion Program.

“These volunteers truly are super heroes. Because of them, we have enabled hundreds of people to remain in their own homes longer and give families and care givers time off, says Hoefert. “I’ve personally seen these relationships help prevent feelings of loneliness and isolation, while improving self-esteem to the elderly in our community.”

There is no charge to the client or their family for Senior Companion services. Currently, there are only two active Senior Companion Program sites in the state of Idaho – Hayden and Twin Falls. Anyone interested volunteering can contact Miranda Hoefert at (208) 415-5177.