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Wilton seniors asked 'R.U. OK?'

By JIM KINNEY , The Saratogian

WILTON - Martha Vanyo of Old Gick Road thinks she got off lucky in January when an ice storm knocked out power in Wilton, and most of Saratoga County. "We were only out six hours," Vanyo, 79, said. But she knows she might not be as lucky next time the power goes out, or some other town-wide emergency hits. That's why she was filling out paperwork Tuesday at the Wilton Senior Center to register herself for the town's R.U. OK? program.

Firefighters, an ambulance volunteer and Wilton Town Councilman Ian McGaughey visited with seniors Tuesday in hopes of getting them to sign up.

Here's how the program works: Seniors and others fill out a form listing their contact information and any pertinent medical information. Then if and when there is an emergency, a group of civilian volunteers go through the list and make phone calls to check on the person.

"If they don't get an answer, or if the person needs something, they call one of the fire departments and we go to check it out," said Maple Avenue Fire Co. Capt. Duane Bogardus. Firefighters or ambulance crew members will have access to the fact sheets, so they will know what the needs might be. It could be more fuel for a household generator or a ride to the hospital. McGaughey said more than 200 seniors had already signed up before Tuesday. The town's been working on the program for a few months, even before January's power outages. Last February's wind storm and its attendant power outages got the town thinking.

"During the wind storm, we felt so helpless," Bogardus said.

Assistant Chief John Lant said he fears severe storms and widespread outages may become more common.

Clifton Park already has a similar program.

"It's great," said Jonesville Fire Chief Louis J. Pasquarell who helps run Clifton Park's program. He said it grew out of the fire department's need to learn who in the community had special medical needs, such as kidney dialysis, that would be disrupted during an outage. Pasquarell helped Wilton set up its program.

The Wilton Fire Department, which covers the northern part of town, is also participating.

As for Vanyo, her next project is to get a fireplace that she can use when the power goes out.

Her neighbors invited her over during the last storm.

Anyone interested in Wilton's R.U.OK? program is asked to stop by the [town Web site](#) - or call town hall at 587-1939.

Reach Jim Kinney at jkkinney@saratogian.com or 583-8729 ext.216.



RICK GARGIULO/The Saratogian Helen Conley and a group of seniors listen at the Wilton Senior Center on Traver Road in Wilton as speakers from the Maple Avenue Volunteer Fire Department speak about some of the programs offered to assist EMS workers when going to an emergency call at a senior's home.