

# #KnowPublicHealth



## Aging in Place: Achieving a Goal for Many Elders

**Issue:** Nursing home costs continue to increase, creating a burden either on Iowa’s elders and their families who pay for care or on the state’s Medicaid program which that covers about 70% of care provided in nursing homes. It makes sense financially and is most often preferred to provide care at home if possible. In Ringgold County, the Local Public Health Services Grant allows the local public health agency to link people to needed public health services and assure the provision of health care when otherwise unavailable. This grant allows the agency to provide home care services of skilled nursing, home care aide and homemaker services to delay or prevent deterioration and the resulting need for a higher level of care provided in nursing homes.

**Taking Action:** One Iowan’s experience exemplifies the personal benefits and the definite cost benefits of providing home care services. Since November 2012, this elderly Iowan paid a discounted

rate of \$7 an hour for care, based on her income and resources. After an injury, she required hospital and nursing home care but was given the option of staying at the nursing home facility and applying for Medicaid funding for which she qualified. Despite being legally blind, she wished to return home to her apartment with support from the local public health agency. Public health provides a weekly nursing visit and weekly help with housekeeping/laundry tasks; staff also visit twice weekly to help to meet her personal care needs,



**Impact:** This service, at an average cost of \$829.85 a month, has helped this Iowa woman successfully remain in her home and prevented the need for her to rely upon Medicaid funding for her daily needs. The average annual cost for nursing home care is \$73,000 per year. Because of public health, this Iowan is living in her own home at an annual projected cost savings of \$61,789 compared to nursing home care. The independence this Iowa elder enjoys in a place that continues to be her home is, of course, priceless. She is aging in place—an achievable goal made possible for her and many others by her local public health agency.



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*Healthy kids are better prepared to learn.  
A healthy workforce is more productive.  
Healthy communities thrive.*