Dominican Hospital Program Offers A Lifeline To Elderly

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Many elderly or infirm people manage living alone just fine — until an emergency strikes.

To insure prompt help for those persons in the event of a medical emergency, Dominican Hospital has been providing hand-held, "Lifeline" telephone terminals.

The Lifeline units automatically dial the hospital when the owner pushes the tab on the hand-held radio transmitter, similar to a garage door opener. If the owner doesn't push the re-set button on the machine for 24 hours, the unit will automatically call the hospital to insure help in the event the owner is unconscious or otherwise incapacitated.

When the transmitter signals the hospital switchboard, the unit number is recorded on a digital readout, enabling the Dominican operator to immediately call back. If the owner doesn't answer, the operator calls a volunteer who goes to the owner's residence to see what's wrong.

The Lifeline system allows persons who might otherwise have to live in a nursing home to remain independent and secure with the assurance that prompt help would be forthcoming in an emergency.

Dominican Hospital began the project two years ago by purchasing the hospital switchboard answering unit. Donations have been used to finance the purchase of some 65 home units.

The Rotary Club of Santa Cruz has recently donated $2,700 for the purchase of six additional units.

Persons who have the units in their homes, if they can afford it, are asked to pay $10 per month into a fund used to purchase additional units.

Persons who wish can purchase a lifetime lease on a unit for a $450 tax-deductible donation and have the unit connected to the Dominican switchboard.

Persons wishing to learn more about the Lifeline program or contribute to it should contact the hospital's community relations department at 476-0220, ext. 1634.