THE 411 ON BROWARD 2-1-1
HELP IS JUST A PHONE CALL AWAY
BY RICHARD SHELLENE

For some emergencies we know to automatically call 911 for the police, fire department or for medical services. And if you need information, we all know to call 411. But what do you do when you have a situation that is not your typical emergency, but just as much a threat or crisis to your life? Call Broward 2-1-1.

The organization is a county-based crisis number that is manned by trained counselors. Its goal, regardless of your financial status, is to connect you with someone that can help you. Services help everyone from kids to seniors and everything in-between.

"It is ALWAYS available, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. We will answer rain or shine, or even during a hurricane," says President and CEO Sheila Smith, a Coral Springs resident for the last 12 years. Broward 2-1-1 relocates some of its counselors to the emergency operation centers during extreme weather or emergency situations, so they are always accessible.

Broward 2-1-1 can connect you with more than 1,000 groups and agencies, and over 4,000 programs. "Our phones are answered by professionally trained counselors," says Sheila. Some of the services they offer include a suicide hotline, and assistance for those with physical or mental disabilities. Among these is the Senior Touchline.

Senior Touchline ensures the well-being of seniors that live on their own and have no family or friends in the immediate vicinity. Participants receive a call once a day (or as scheduled) between 6 a.m. and 11 a.m. If they do not answer, their designated contact is called. If there is no answer by the participant or the emergency contact, the call is escalated and emergency services are contacted for dispatch to provide assistance as needed.

"The nice thing about the program is that the same person usually calls you every day, so you often build a familiarity and relationship with our staff," Sheila shares.

You may be eligible for Senior Touchline if you are 60 years of age or older and live alone without nearby friends or family. If you meet the program criteria, Broward 2-1-1 will have your information on hand in the event emergency services are needed. The service is easy to register for – start by simply calling 2-1-1.