

Around Town

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**By Billy Ray McKelvy**

**De Queen Mayor**

Beginning this summer, Arkansas will be the 42nd state to implement 211 telephone service that can guide state residents to important social services and volunteer opportunities.

Gov. Mike Beebe announced the 211 system on Feb. 15. When the service goes online, callers who dial 211 can find out about essential services available in their area. Examples include:

- Basic human needs such as food and clothing, shelters and rent and utility assistance.
- Physical and mental health resources such as Medicaid, Medicare, ArKids First, crisis intervention services, drug and alcohol intervention and rehabilitation.
- Employment support, job training, transportation and education programs.
- Support for elderly and disabled Arkansans such as adult day care, home health, respite care
- Support for children, youth and families, including childcare, after school programs, Head Start, etc.
- Volunteer and donation opportunities.

The statewide 211 service is a collaborative effort between the Arkansas Public Service Commission and Arkansas United Way, which will manage the service. It is funded through local United Way contributions, federal grants and private contributions.

The 211 service is a free, easy-to-remember resource for people with low literacy skills, travelers and people dislocated by disaster. It will be available 24 hours per day and does not require Internet access. Organizations can reach more people by being included in the 211 database.

For more information, you can go to [www.arkansas211.org](http://www.arkansas211.org).