

# SENIOR

## Beautiful art for a beautiful purpose

BY LOIS BELL  
SHERIDAN SENIOR CENTER

SHERIDAN — Colors burst from their frames. Personalities emerge from flat surfaces. There are complete works and there are sketches. Local residents and scenery, old buildings, still life, Crow, the artist's wife and a self-portrait are showcased in watercolor, tempura, conte, pen and ink and casein. Works of art resonate from paper bags, canvas, notebook paper, sketch books and plywood plaques. Some are double-sided works. It is difficult to imagine that such artistry came from the hand of one man. But they do.

After a quarter of a century, the works of Sheridan artist Bill Wright are being brought forth to be shared with the public. At the helm of this movement is local artist, Kim Fuka, who is driven to showcase Wright's work.

Fuka has been friends with Wright's widow, Natalie, for years.

"She was bright and easy

to talk to," Fuka said.

Then one day Fuka got a call. Natalie's house was sold. Would Fuka be willing to help sell Bill's art work? The answer was yes. He had no idea what he would find.

"Bill had a studio at their home and another room where he taught lessons," Fuka said. "When Bill died, Natalie put all his works in one room and closed the door."

When Fuka opened the door to Wright's studio, he was amazed at the amount of Wright's works in there.

"I was just drop-jawed," Fuka said. "There was art everywhere."

Fuka transported Wright's art to his studio averaging two loads each day, a project that took several weeks. He named, catalogued, measured and photographed each piece. Some pieces were titled, many were not. Fuka titled the untitled pieces for the records. To date, he has recorded almost 456 pieces of Bill Wright's works plus works of other artists that the Wrights had collected totaling more than 800

pieces. Fuka is also cleaning and framing unframed works readying Wright's pieces for display and for sale.

"I'm using frames that Bill and Natalie had collected and stored," Fuka said. "I transported a truck and a half of frames."

And the work continues. "The guy was amazing," Fuka said of Wright. "He didn't carry a camera. He would just sketch whatever he saw."

Wright garnered numerous awards and had many showings for his work during his lifetime. He received an Honorable Mention in 1976 for a piece he submitted in a national bicentennial competition to illustrate 200 years of militia defending America. One of Wright's pieces was purchased by the White House. Today, Wright has a work hanging at the Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Sheridan.

The work Fuka is doing for his friend is a gift. Fuka is asking for no payment for his work. He is looking for someone to assist in valuing the pieces. Only one piece in the collection has been discovered to have a



COURTESY PHOTO | LOIS BELL

Area businessman Kim Fuka stands in his studio before a display of some of the works of area artist Bill Wright. Wright's works have not been seen publicly for 25 years. Fuka and friends of Wright's widow are making the pieces available for sale.

price on it put there by the artist.

"And it's most likely worth twice that today," Fuka said.

Fees to value art work range in thousands and tens of thousands of dollars depending on the works and number of pieces. Fuka is hoping to find someone to do the work pro bono. Proceeds from the sale of the pieces will be directed for Natalie's long-term care.

Since November 2015, Fuka has been on the road seeking venues to showcase

Wright's works. Some of Wright's pieces were displayed at Sheridan College's Martinson Gallery and the Fulmer Library in December. Ninety-one pieces are currently displayed at Fuka's Gallery-in-De-Skies studio in Ranchester.

"The Brinton Museum is booked three years out and Ucross is booked two years out," Fuka said.

Undaunted, Fuka presses on. He has arranged for Wright's works to be displayed at the Sheridan Inn during Sheridan's 2016

Rodeo Week July 11-17. A piece will be auctioned at an upcoming fundraiser for Sheridan College on April 30.

Folks can inquire how to purchase any of Wright's pieces.

"This is all to take care of Natalie," Fuka said. "There's a group of us trying to help her. And we are so grateful to everyone's support so far."

Natalie's friends, such as Fuka, are a treasure. But also a treasure is the diverse talent of Bill Wright.

### CENTER STAGE

## You don't have to go it alone — caregiver support

March madness has taken on a whole new meaning in my world! I'd like to share new and upcoming happenings.

I'm sure you have all kept up with Amy Albright's Dementia Friendly Community columns. Keeping up with Amy would be tough for an Olympian but keeping up on her columns is inspiring! That said, one of the Dementia Friendly Community initiatives is "Caregiver Support and Respite" involving, including and caring for those living with dementia and their caregivers. This means support groups, both current and new ones. A

new support group in

Dayton was started just this week. It took a lot of work by many individuals coming together to form this group. The group will meet twice a month at

the Tongue River Valley Community Center. During support group, in an adjacent room there will be adult care for anyone bringing their loved one. Barb Blue, Day Break director, is involved in organizing a "Day Break" respite program to support this caregiver support group. Meeting times will be at 1 p.m. allowing anyone who wishes to come early and have lunch at the community center and then attend group.

The annual Alzheimer's Memory Walk is being held early this year. The date has is set for Wednesday, May 11 at Whitney Park. We make this an easy and enjoyable walk for anyone that can come. I am looking for individuals and organizations to be \$100 or more sponsors. It's great to have teams

involved so get your organization together and form a team — let me know early so I can get T-shirts ordered for everyone planning to be part of this fun event. Your team can have a lot of fun raising money for this event. Call me for ideas! Although this is of course a fundraiser, it is my goal (and always has been) to make this more about awareness than anything else. If we can get the word out to families that there is support out there for them and their loved ones with Alzheimer's and other dementias — I will have accomplished my goal. Each year brings us closer to more resources and finding a cure for this terrible disease. Please set aside a couple of hours on the evening of May 11 and join us for a fun gathering and show your support for friends and loved ones suffering from Alzheimer's.

Another event supporting those with Alzheimer's or other dementias is "The Longest Day," June 21, also known as Summer Solstice. The Alzheimer's Association's fundraising efforts give special support on this day to those living with dementia. This being the longest day of the year can be somewhat compared to what someone living

with Alzheimer's or dementias and their caregivers experience every day. Every day is "The Longest Day" for these folks. The caregiver support groups at the Senior Center will hold a bake sale on June 20 from 9 a.m. to noon in the Senior Center lobby with the proceeds of the bake sale going to our Wyoming Chapter of the Alzheimer's Association. There will also be other community partners supporting The Longest Day event with some of their proceeds benefiting the Alzheimer's Association. We ask for your support by either bringing a baked good or purchasing a baked good or better yet doing both! This event is honoring the strength, heart and endurance of the more than 5 million Americans living with the disease and their 15 million caregivers.

Please feel free to call me with any questions or stop by for a cup of coffee and a visit. I can always use new ideas and feedback! March Madness may spill into April, May, etc.

STELLA MONTANO is the director of Family Caregiver Support Services at the Sheridan Senior Center. Center Stage is written by friends of the Senior Center for the Sheridan Community. It is a collection of insights and stories related to living well at every age.

### SENIOR CENTER HAPPENINGS

• **View works of Sheridan artist Bill Wright** (1926-89) with an afternoon excursion with the Sheridan Senior Center. Deadline to sign up and pay is April 5. Payment reserves your spot. The suggested contribution for Senior Center registered folks is \$12, includes bus fare and lunch at the Tongue River Valley Community Center. For folks who provide their own transportation, \$4.50 is the suggested contribution for lunch. The fee for unregistered folks is \$15.50, which includes lunch and bus fare. Folks not registered with the Senior Center who provide their own transportation, lunch is \$7.50. Call the Senior Center front desk at 672-2240 for bus departure and arrival times and other excursion details.

• **Interested in a trip to Jackson Hole?** The Senior Center is organizing a trip May 25-28. The itinerary includes a tour of Teton National Park, a tour of the Jackson Hole Winery, and the opening night of the 2016 season for the Bar J Wranglers. Price includes round-trip coach bus with Arrow Stage Lines, lodging, breakfasts, dinners, entrance to the Park, and the Bar J

Wrangler Show and dinner. The deadline to register with payment is March 31. You can sign up at the front desk of the Senior Center at 211 Smith St. or sign up with a credit or debit card by phone. Call Lois Bell at 672-2240 for details and to sign up.

• **The second Healthy U! Chronic Disease Management class** is now registering for its upcoming six-week program April 7 through May 19 (no class on April 21). This session is being offered from 5:30 to 8 p.m. in the Community Room of the Sheridan Senior Center at 211 Smith St. There is no charge for the class but pre-registration is required as space is limited to 14 participants. Please pick up a registration form at the front desk of the Senior Center and return your registration to the front desk by April 1.

• **Countdown to the 2016 Keystone Awards!** This annual event celebrates community residents who have shaped the culture of our communities. This year's honorees are Judy Taylor, Jack Pelissier and Esther McKenzie. Tickets are on sale at the WYO Theater. The awards are on Thursday, April 21.

**Sheridan Senior Center**  
"Celebrating 40 Years of Service!"  
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**Fun and Food**  
BUILD YOUR OWN SALAD MON-FRI

Entrees and kiosk include sides, dessert and drink.

Entrée Choice*	or	Soup Kiosk
Sun - Cheese Tortellini in Meat Sauce		
Mon - Egg Sausage Bake		Mexican Beef Soup
Tue - Salisbury Steak		Cream of Asparagus
Wed - Minestone Soup		Build Your Own Salad-ONLY
Thu - French Dip with Au Jus		Southwest Pork Stew
Fri - Baked Breaded Fish With Tartar Sauce		Old Fashioned Chicken Noodle
Sat - Chicken Tetrazzini		

**\*Home Delivered Meals**

Mon- Pinochle/Dbl Deck	1:00 p.m.	Lobby
Tue- Fly Fishing w/Bob Krumm	6 p.m.- 9p.m.	Sheridan College 674-4666 x 2000
Wed- One Stroke Painting	1:00- 3:00 p.m.	Art Studio
Thu- SheridanAires "Sing into Spring"	12:00 NOON	Dining Room
Fri- Bunko	9:30 a.m.	Dining Room
Sat - Biscuits & Gravy Breakfast	7:30 - 9:30 a.m.	Dining Room

Lunch Service Hours: 1 . to 12:45 p.m.,  
7 days a week

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