

May is older Americans month: Blaze a trail!

BY LOIS BELL
SHERIDAN SENIOR CENTER



COURTESY PHOTO |

Unveiling new experiences isn't limited by age as recently demonstrated by the cast of the melodrama "The Paper Bag Bandit Rides Again" recently performed at the Sheridan Senior Center by the Young at Heart Players. May is Older Americans Month celebrating the contributions of older Americans.

SHERIDAN — Who says that the month of January has the monopoly on new beginnings? Hats off to those who realize that a new beginning can begin at any time of the year. And huzzahs to those who had the epiphany that new beginnings can begin at any age of life.

May is recognized as Older Americans Month, a recognition that was begun in 1963 under President John F. Kennedy. First called Senior Citizens Month the name was later changed to Older Americans Month.

Since 1992, the Administration on Aging has announced a theme around which to rally during May for older Americans. The 2016 theme is "Blaze a Trail" waving the flag to celebrate the ongoing contributions to our communities that older Americans make.

If you haven't gotten off the bench about trying new things just because "you're too old," here are a few individuals whose names will be shamelessly tossed out to see if one inspires you to some action of your own choosing.

Author Laura Ingalls Wilder wrote "Little House on the Prairie" when she was 64 and continued writing until she was 76. Colonial father Benjamin Franklin was 70 years old when he signed the Declaration of Independence, indicating he was very actively involved with the radical notion and creation of a new democratic society. Have you heard of Doris Haddock? At the age of 89, Haddock walked from Los Angeles to Washington, D.C., to raise awareness about the need for campaign finance reform. Five years later, at the age of 94, Haddock ran for a seat in the U.S. Senate.

One does not need to look around the country or into history to discover older residents blazing a trail. In Sheridan County, there are a number of residents who are blazing new trails if even for just themselves. At age 79, Big Horn resident Bill Conrad has set as a personal goal to be the oldest cyclist in the Cycling Around North Dakota's Sakakawea Country annual cycle tour covering 400 miles on the tour.

Octogenarian Billie Johnson continues to volunteer her time between three nonprofit organizations; in 2015, Johnson was selected as a Wyoming Jefferson Award honoree. Two years ago, Kitty Norris-Guile jumped into stage performance—something she had never done before. Stage performance and line memorization scared her. Norris-

Guile discovered she could perform on stage and continued; Norris-Guile will be turning 68 next week and recently appeared in the melodrama "The Paper Bag Bandit Rides Again."

Conrad, Johnson and Norris-Guile are just three examples of the many Sheridan residents who are trying new things, blazing new trails whether in community service or for personal enrichment.

Ask someone you know doing something new and different at an older age when they decided to head off on their new venture. Chances are they will not tell you that they

waited for Jan. 1. They likely declared another date their own personal New Years Eve to head in new directions.

May is Older Americans Month and an invitation to "Blaze a Trail!" Maybe the trail is making new friends, learning a new skill or participating in an activity you've been meaning to do. Maybe it's time to streamline your life, downsize your activities and take time for introspection. The month of May could be the new Jan. 1 for you and a time to take off to blaze your own personal trail into new experiences. Who knows? You may be the person held up to be inspiration for others.

CENTER STAGE |

Check out the Senior Center to blaze your trail

One of the things that I do at the Senior Center is to layout and publish the Senior Center's quarterly newsletter. I just finished the draft of the summer edition and boy! am I amazed at all the things we have to offer.

Let's face it: most folks just want the newsletter for the menus.

It's fairly obvious when we hear that they didn't know about an activity that was published on page 3 because the menus are on pages

8, 9 and 10 (or something like that). But we do know of folks who go beyond the menus. These are the folks who sign up for Jean Harm's day trips, volunteer because they saw a call in the newsletter and come to events because "I read it in the newsletter." One fan of the Senior Center's newsletter tells me that she likes to curl up and read it "cover to cover."

May is Older Americans Month and this year's theme is "Blaze a Trail!" I'd like to have you consider personalizing this rallying call and make it your own. Call it, "Blaze My Trail!" and get out there to try something new. Not sure where to start? I'd suggest a baby step into the Senior Center. Read the flyers, ask around. Find

out how to get the Senior Center's newsletter for free via the Senior Center website at www.sheridanseniorcenter.org or by email. For a nominal annual suggested contribution, you can get a hardcopy (if you're like my husband, part of the experience is the feel of the page and turning them).

In the upcoming summer edition of Center Stage, yes, there are the menus. And our kitchen team pays attention to making special meals for notable days and holidays.

But there are also ongoing art and exercise classes such as arts and crafts, Tai Chi and gentle yoga. There is Bluegrass and Burgers on the third Tuesday of each month. You can listen to music for free and indulge in a freshly grilled burger for \$2 if you wish. For the gamers among you, we offer Bunco, Dominoes, pinochle and bridge. There's a fan club that loves putting puzzles together. For avid readers, there is a library where books are available on an honor system.

There are also special events and performances such as our upcoming community choir's Sheridanaires Spring Follies in June (and we've been known to pack the house), the Sheridan Rodeo Parade Broadcast in the dining room and special guest

musicians who perform over a lunch hour.

For those of you who like a good outing, find out the wonderful day trips Jean Harm has scheduled for the summer. Jean has a lot to offer including a few overnight trips around Wyoming such as one to Cody, Heart Mountain Confinement Site, with a Red Canyon Wild Mustang tour included.

You may be ready to dabble your toes into travel but don't want to travel alone or know how to plan a trip. Consider our three-day trip to the musical in Medora referred to as the "Branson of North Dakota." (You will want to check out day trips and travel sooner than later as there are deadlines to sign up and pay for those).

So, if you're ready to try something new — blaze a new trail for yourself — consider checking out the activities at the Senior Center as one of the places that may be calling your name. We're not asking you to marry us — just try out something that catches your attention and see if it's a fit. If it's not, please consider trying something else. If it is, we welcome you as a fellow adventurer!

LOIS BELL is the communications director 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.



LOIS BELL

Sheridan Senior Center
"Celebrating 40 Years of Service!"
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Fun and Food

BUILD YOUR OWN SALAD MON- FRI
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Entrée Choice*	or	Soup Kiosk
Sun - Honey Ham		
Mon - Beef Fajita w/Salsa		Chicken Noodle Soup
Tue - Pork Wing		Beef Stew
Wed - Meat & Vegetable Pizza		Chili
Thu - Turkey Tetrzini		Mexican Beef Soup
Fri - French Dip w/au jus		Cream of Asparagus
Sat - Ham & Pasta Salad		

***Home Delivered Meals**

Mon - Senior Companions	2:00 p.m.	Community Room
Tues - Devil's Tower Day Trip with picnic lunch	Leave senior Center 8 a.m.	
Wed - Gentle Balance Yoga	10:30 a.m.	Community Room
Thurs - Writer's Group	2:00 p.m.	Art Studio
Fri - Older Americans Day with First Interstate Bank	11:30 a.m.	Dining Room

Lunch Service Hours: 11:30 a.m. to 12:45 p.m.,
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SENIOR CENTER HAPPENINGS |

• Like to quilt? An unfinished quilt has been donated to the Senior Center.

Anyone who wants to help finish the quilt may do so. The quilting frame is set up at the Green Boomerang Store, 226 N. Main St. The store hours are Wednesday – Saturday, 9 a.m. – 4 p.m. When finished, the quilt will be sold and proceeds will come to the Senior Center.

• Summer is a great time to explore and travel! The Senior Center is offering

some "big" trips this summer:

— Big Horn Basin Tour: Lovell/Kane, Heart Mountain Confinement Site, Red Canyon Wild Mustang tour, Cody. June 28 – 30, \$375 per person. Cost includes two nights motel, admission fees, one lunch and transportation. Reservations and payment required by June 14. Details are available at the Sheridan Senior Center at 211 Smith St. or by calling Jean Harm at 672-2240.