

New wave of seniors changing Senior Center services

BY LOIS BELL
SHERIDAN SENIOR CENTER

SHERIDAN — There's a new wave of older adults coming and they don't want the same things as their parents. From differing tastes in activities to food, younger elders are challenging senior centers across America to rethink the way they connect with them if they want these younger elders to cross the threshold of senior center doors. The Sheridan Senior Center is in the midst of this wave.

"Many people don't want to acknowledge they are aging. Some think you have to 'need' to come here, not that you want to be here. You don't have to be 'old enough,'" said Jane Perkins, the "fun" director at the Sheridan Senior Center.

Perkins touches on an important issue the Sheridan Senior Center and other senior centers face: many people think that you must need senior services to utilize what they have to offer.

"We nurture the mind, body and soul through activities," Perkins said. "We provide a comfortable place to do something different. It's a safe place to try things you've put on hold for awhile."

Perkins and assistant, Jean Harm, work to provide a variety of activities at the Senior Center. Working months in advance, they schedule artistic venues, exercise and wellness programs, lecture presentations from history to current events, day trips, and entertainment for a quarterly calendar. Other program directors work with Perkins and Harm to schedule and offer health management, nutrition education and support group programs for the community at the Senior Center.

While young elders have differing tastes,

this generation will face the same issues as their parents. Maintaining a healthy lifestyle, dementia care, caregiver support, exercise, wellness, nutrition, enriching experiences and support for living at home will continue to be paramount to older adults. And the Sheridan Senior Center can be a good place to start for help.

But these younger elders are not flocking to senior centers for help...yet.

A feasibility study commissioned by the Sheridan Senior Center in 2011 set in motion the direction of the Sheridan Senior Center to expand, transform and build its facilities and services to serve the new generation as well as the current generation of older adults.

Today, the community can see the beginning of changes at the Sheridan Senior Center with the construction of a new Day Break facility next to the current building at 211 Smith St. Day Break supports families by offering a place for older adults during the day when living at home alone may not be feasible.

Changes to the Senior Center's facilities will continue through the remainder of 2016 and the first half of 2017, the result of a prior year-long capital campaign headed by community volunteers.

But transformation is not limited to changing the physical facility of the center: the Senior Center is also looking at redesigning services and programs to meet emerging demands.

Public bus transportation in Sheridan underwent a new look and name earlier this year to emphasize that bus service in Sheridan is not limited to elders. This door-to-destination service is available to riders of all ages and the new look is designed to reach out to the wider commu-



COURTESY PHOTO |

Younger elders are more likely to engage in participatory and intergenerational activities than their parents. The Senior Center is looking at how it can reach out to this generation while continuing to provide popular activities. This group recently hiked an area trail through a partnership this summer with the Sheridan County Land Trust and the center.

nity.

New menus, expanded food hours, daily breakfasts, and carry out meals are all on the table, so to speak, for discussion, to meet emerging lifestyle choices and needs of the new senior population.

And while the Sheridan Senior Center looks at the viability of services to elders, other programs will continue to be offered

such as in-home services for personal care and in-home support.

The center will continue to offer a wide variety of activities, serve as an information portal for community services and provide support for independent living to older adults. So, when the new wave of elders comes to town, the Sheridan Senior Center is ready for them.

CENTER STAGE |

Miss Indian America and rodeo recollections

We used to call rodeo week "Rodeo Days and Indian Nights." There would be rodeo events during the day and special night shows such as "Dancing Waters" at night. Afterward you could visit the teepee village set up near the calf shoots at the rodeo grounds on the south end.

I was 13 years old then and a member of the Masonic Lodge's Job's daughters.

Well I remember that the Rodeo Queen used to be elected by the audience by applause. This was in the early 1950s. Then one year, an Indian girl was elected Rodeo Queen by the audience. I think that's the year things began to change in Sheridan. Up until then,

things weren't always real friendly toward the tribes.

Then someone came up with the idea of the Miss

Indian America pageant. There were then a Rodeo Queen pageant and a Miss Indian America pageant. At the first Miss Indian

America pageant, every tribe from all over the United States sent their representatives. Many would send more than one

girl. The pageant was up at the fairgrounds. It was a big group on stage and in stadium seats. I was an usher from Job's Daughters for the pageant and it was so big that it ended about 2 a.m. and 3 a.m. for me after I went to the Palace Café on Main Street for a cherry coke.

Their costumes were beautiful. The Navajos wore silks; the Crows wore rawhides. That was the year Lucy Yellowtail won. I think it was 1953.

The first Miss Indian America pageants went into the wee hours of the morning. I think every nation sent their girls from all over. Then, in time, they picked one girl to represent their nation at the pageant.

Some of the contestants did a talent on stage and some didn't. They were always judged in their native costumes. There were onstage questions. I think there were interviews of the girls with the judges early in the day that the audience didn't see.

The winner would be assigned a chaperone who would go with them the following year as they traveled the United States.

I was disappointed that no television network ever picked up the pageant but I wouldn't really know as I didn't have a TV.

I liked going to watch the girls play native games during the day. I would

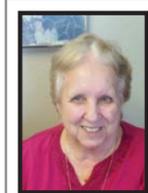
take bags of candy to their village at the fairgrounds. I loved giving candy to the children there and talking with the elders. In those days it was called penny candy but you couldn't call it penny candy these days. Some folks could go trade with the tribes but I never did. I just liked taking candy for the kids.

The tribes were always a big part of the rodeo parade. One year, the New York department store on Main Street, Steven Fryberger, entered a float made into a large Indian headdress. I think Miss Indian America rode on that float that year. The floats used to be huge, always beautiful from the different Sheridan businesses. There was a lot of chicken wire and napkins used then!

My dad and husband used to run the calf shoots at the rodeo for many years.

I'm going to the rodeo again this year. Every year I get my tickets early. This year I got them in February. I've got six grandstand tickets and two Gold Buckle Club tickets for every performance this year. I think I've been to every rodeo except one.

JOYCE PELESKY is a longtime Sheridan resident and a recent great-great-grandmother. 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.



JOYCE PELESKY



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Tue - Summer Hike	Depart at 9:00 a.m.	Lobby
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Thu - Horseshoes	9:00 a.m.	Kendrick Park
Sat - Ranch Hand Breakfast	7:30 a.m. to 9:00 a.m.	Dining Room

Senior Center Main Phone: (307) 672-2240
Lunch Service Hours: 11:30 a.m. to 12:45 p.m.,
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