

Changing perspectives: Nursing students visit Senior Center

BY LOIS BELL,
THE SHERIDAN SENIOR CENTER

SHERIDAN — Their career aspirations include pediatric nursing, emergency room nursing and hospice care. These are the goals of some of the Sheridan College nursing students who are visiting the Sheridan Senior Center this month. Thirty-two students will visit the Center through September in a partnership Sheridan College has had with the Senior Center for years.

"We were all really surprised how much they (the Senior Center) offer," said Payton Brilz, who grew up in Sheridan.

"I had never been here but I knew about the home delivered meals; I didn't know how big it is," said Sheridan native Kelly Nelson.

Their colleagues visiting with them agreed.

Tioni Erickson from Miles City, Montana, compares her observation of another senior center.

"There, they just drink coffee and play cards," Erickson said.

Erickson does touch on a point: senior center services differ from community to community, structured around each center's board leadership and the characteristics of the community.

Eight groups of four nursing students are visiting the Sheridan Senior Center on Tuesdays and Wednesdays during September. Their schedule begins at 8:30 a.m. and includes tours of bus services, onsite adult care services, home-delivered meals, nutrition services, the volunteers program, activities, community family caregiver support, in-home services and an overview of an in-home nursing assessment

by the center's registered nurse. Thirteen program directors, including Executive Director Carmen Rideout, visit with each group of students.

The students express their surprise at the breadth and depth of the services offered to older adults through the Senior Center.

"This facility speaks to all aspects of elder health such as nutrition and getting out," Brilz said.

Fellow student Haley Kraft, a Billings resident, shares her observation.

"I love that (the Senior Center services) focus on older adults living on their own," Krafts said.

Stella Montano, director of Family Caregiver Services, is included in the students' schedule and shares that she supports family members who bring home a loved one who needs round-the-clock care.

Montano shares that one nursing student had never heard of a program that helps caregivers.

"I was surprised that there's support for caregivers," Kraft said.

"They were very impressed that there's a program that would support the person who cares for the patient," Montano said. "People my husband and my age may know people who have suffered something like a debilitating stroke. These people may still have children at home who are in school and still working and it creates a lot of burden on the family. I share with them that every state has an aging division and within that division is a program called family caregiver services".

The students' visit is also very participatory. As part of their onsite visit, nursing students will accompany a volunteer who delivers home-delivered meals and participate in an activity that is scheduled the day



COURTESY PHOTO

Sheridan College nursing students, from left, Tioni Erickson, Payton Brilz, Haley Kraft and Kelly Nelson join in a craft class during a visit to the Sheridan Senior Center. Thirty-five first-year nursing students in groups of four will spend a day learning about Senior services on Tuesdays and Wednesdays during September through a long standing relationship between Sheridan College and the Senior Center.

and time of their visit.

Jane Perkins is one of the center's directors who visits with nursing students during their day at the Senior Center. Perkins is the director of activities, what Perkins likes to call the "Fun Department."

"When I visit with them, I tell them everything required of my job," Perkins said. "I show them a calendar of scheduled events on a weekly and monthly basis. My job is to cover exercise and social aspects."

Community partners and volunteer teachers teach exercise and health-related activities such as reflexology. Perkins likes

to jump in with community partners to organize entertainment. Fun Department partner Jean Harm oversees craft classes and organizes day trips and short overnight trips.

"Most of the students say they're really surprised at all the things that happen at the center," Perkins said. "One student was surprised that the Senior Centers offers theater and choir. One student observed it's like a YMCA for seniors."

"It's changed my perspective on what a 'senior citizen' looks like," said one student.

CENTER STAGE

First Day of fall is also national Fall Prevention Day

When we think of falls, we naturally think of fractures, and when we think of fractures we think of loss of our ability to be fully functional. Among older adults, according to the National Council on Aging, falls are the number one cause of fractures, hospital admissions for trauma, loss of inde-



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pendence and injury related deaths. More than one in three people age 65 or older will have a fall this year, resulting in more than one

million fall injuries treated in emergency departments yearly including 650,000 hospitalizations and more than 20,000 deaths. With statistics like that, the fear of falling can be paralyzing, resulting in seniors decreasing their activities of daily living, not taking that daily walk, not being as social as they were when younger, even avoiding leaving the house. This fear is understandable but the fear itself can be debilitating. Instead of letting this fear of falling direct our lives, let us focus on what we can do to prevent falls and promote life. We need to prevent falls and promote independence, but not with fear.

How do we do this? We can start by exercising our independence. Martina Navratilova states that our fitness should be driven

by the functionality that we want in our bodies and the independence we want in our lives. In her video she states that our exercise needs to improve balance, enhance posture, boost stamina and strengthen our core. Preventing falls comes down to bones, balance and behaviors.

So how do we improve our bone health? We need to eat a balanced diet that ensures we get enough Calcium and Vitamin D which are crucial for building and maintaining strong bones. We need to do weight bearing and muscle strengthening exercises, mix up your routines, dance, hike, or take a brisk walk. We need to develop and keep healthy lifestyle habits, avoid smoking, heavy consumption of alcohol and salty foods. We need to talk to our primary care provider to develop a plan to protect and manage your bone health as you age. Balance? Excellent balance as well as optimizing your vision dramatically reduces your fall risk. Hearing and vision both increase our awareness of our surroundings and can reduce our risk, have your vision and hearing checked regularly. For balance we all need to increase our balance training exercises, Tai Chi or Yoga are excellent exercises that help balance and flexibility.

We have covered bone

health and balance but possibly the hardest part is to change our behaviors. We need to embrace these positive changes in our daily routine, it is never too late to form healthy habits to protect ourselves from falls and thereby protecting our bones. Instead of using a negative motivator that focuses on the injury such as, "I don't want to have a fall and end up in a nursing home," set a positive goal such as, "I want to be able to walk 2 miles a day," or, "I want to go hiking in the mountains," or, "I want to be able to walk the new puppy with my grand-daughter."

The Senior Center has many programs for seniors including many that will improve our overall functioning and stability, come over to our place and see how we can help you maintain your independence.

The ninth annual Falls Prevention Awareness Day was observed on Sept. 22 — the first day of fall. The event raises awareness about how to prevent fall-related injuries among older adults. The theme of this year's event is "Ready, Steady, Balance: Prevent Falls in 2016."

DAVE SCHWAIGER is the registered nurse 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

- Fall colors trip/hike to Tongue River Canyon on Tuesday, Oct. 4. Hike the canyon trail or relax in the shade. The suggested contribution for registered seniors is \$13. The cost for unregistered hikers is \$15. The fee includes lunch and bus fare. Depart Heritage Towers at 8:45 a.m., Senior Center at 9 a.m. Return departure at 1 p.m. Pre-pay and sign up by Sept. 29 at the Senior Center, 211 Smith St.

- Are you getting the maximum benefits from your Medicare Part D prescription coverage? Don't throw your money out the window or get caught in changes in the New Year. A review of your Medicare prescription coverage could help you stretch your dollars. Free review of your Medicare Part D prescription coverage will be available at the Senior Center. Appointments can be made as of Sept. 26 for October. Call 672-2240. Don't wait and be locked out of this valuable and free service.
- Veterans, please allow us to put

your military profile on the Sheridan Senior Center's Wall of Honor. We are conducting interviews with veterans Sept. 26 - Oct. 21. Please plan to make an appointment by calling 672-2240 to share your story and be photographed to be placed on our Wall of Honor during Veterans Day week. If you have wonderful photos of you in uniform, we will scan your photo and return it to you.

- Have you been married 50 years or longer? Let us celebrate you at the Golden Age Dinner featuring prime rib on Saturday evening Oct. 15 at the Senior Center. You must reserve and pay for your tickets in advance. Payment reserves your spot. Tickets go on sale Sept. 30 at the Senior Center front desk. The cost is \$15 per person. Checks, cash and credit cards accepted. Phone-in reservations will be accepted with a credit card, payment, 672-2240. No reservations can be taken after Friday, Oct. 7.



"It's a place for fun, laughter and good camaraderie!"
- Barbara Hill

Sheridan Senior Center
"Celebrating 40 Years of Service!"
www.sheridanseniorcenter.org

Fun and Food
BUILD YOUR OWN SALAD MON- FRI

Entrees and kiosk include sides, dessert and drink.

Entrée Choice*	or	Soup Kiosk
Sun - Hot Turkey Sandwich		Potato Leek Soup
Mon - Beef Stroganoff/Egg Noodles		Cream of Asparagus
Tue - Turkey Fillet		Turkey Noodle
Wed - Chicken Enchilada w/ Salsa		Creamy Potato
Thu - Broccoli Beef		Clam Chowder
Fri - Oven Fried Chicken		Western Egg Bake, Link Sausage, Potato Medley, Dessert

*entrée only offered for Home Delivered Meals

Mon - Pinochle	Double Deck	1:00 p.m.	Lobby
Tue - Bingo		12:00 p.m.	Dining Room
Wed - Koltiska Pumpkin Patch Day Trip	Depart HT	1:45 p.m.; SC 2 p.m.	
Fri - B.A.M		9:30 a.m.	Community Room
Sat - Woodcarvers		9:00 a.m. to Noon	Art Studio

Lunch Service Hours: 11:30 a.m. to 12:45 p.m.,
7 days a week
211 Smith Street Sheridan, WY 82801 (307) 672-6079
Senior Center Main Phone: (307) 672-2240

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