

What makes someone a senior?

What defines being a senior? Is it when we retire? A certain age? Is it when we start becoming less active? Or when we become a grandparent? Is it when we get approved to use Medicare or AARP or draw Social Security?

I don't know the answer, nor do I think it matters... unless of course there is a "senior discount" involved, and then



DESIREE PEARCE

sign me up.

One thing I do know is that being a senior doesn't mean that we sit in our rocking chair and watch the days go by. How do I know this? Because that isn't what I see happening around Sheridan.

I see older adults being active in exercise classes, playing pickleball, mowing their lawn, shoveling their walks, raking their leaves, climbing ladders to clean their gutters or paint. They are going from one social gathering to the next, meeting friends for coffee or volunteering at various organizations.

I once visited with a lady who told me, "Never stop trying new things no matter how old you are." I pondered on this for some time and when I saw her again I had to inquire about what things interest her to still learn at the age of 93. Her response was one I didn't expect. She went 87 years without knowing how to swim, but she wasn't going to end that way, so she decided to learn how and ended up going to the YMCA multiple times a week to swim before 8 a.m. It was her routine and one that made her feel better.

I will never forget this story or the many others I've heard as they are my inspiration to move, eat well and not let the number of years I've been alive dictate how I live my life. So back to my question of what defines a senior? To me it is experience and wisdom; it just so happens that those come with age.

DESIREE PEARCE is the health and well-being director at the Sheridan County YMCA.

More Americans hold stocks, for better or for worse

BY STAN CHOE
AP BUSINESS WRITER

NEW YORK (AP) — A plunge in stock prices always stings, but this recent one dug deeper because more Americans are participating in the market, particularly older ones.

Slightly more than half of all U.S. families own stocks in some way, from workers who got automatically enrolled into their 401(k) retirement accounts to day-traders working their personal accounts. The rate of stock ownership is the highest since the dawn of the Great Recession in 2007.

On the whole, higher stock ownership can be a good thing: It means more Americans, not just the wealthiest, have benefited from the record-setting returns that stocks have delivered since the current bull market started in early 2009. But there can be a downside: Many Americans are also keeping bigger portions of their portfolios in stocks than experts recommend, led by baby boomers, which accentuates the impact of each swing in the market. Even Americans aged 75 and over are more likely to own stocks than at any time since the 1980s, according to data from the Federal Reserve.

Some investors may have been blissfully unaware that stocks were growing to an ever-larger portion of their portfolio as stock prices swelled in recent years. Others bought even more stocks because they were afraid of missing out on the amazingly big and smooth gains that the market had been delivering before Monday's loss, the worst day in more than six years.

Either way, nearly 23 percent of savers with a 401(k) at Fidelity had a bigger percentage of their account in stocks than the investment giant recommends, according to the company's most recent data from this past autumn.

Savers nearing retirement, for example, should have a portfolio with roughly 60 percent in stocks and 40 percent in bonds and cash, Fidelity says. The average baby boomer handling invest-



COURTESY PHOTO

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ment decisions for their 401(k) has 70 percent in stocks, according to Fidelity.

"We give them the same advice when the market is high as when it's low," said Jeanne Thompson, senior vice president at Fidelity Investments. "Make sure to check that you're properly allocated and not taking too much risk. Make sure you're able to sleep at night."

FINDING THE RIGHT BALANCE

Investors of all ages can benefit from investing in stocks. Despite their long history of sharp swings in price, stocks have gone on to recover — eventually — from every decline they've had and deliver some of the best long-term returns.

Financial pros generally recommend that younger investors ignore the market's gyrations and, if anything, use drops as an

opportunity to buy more stocks at a lower price. They have the luxury of waiting decades for a recovery. Investment companies often recommend savers in their 20s keep about 90 percent of their portfolios in stocks.

For older Americans nearing retirement or already in it, the math is messier. They may not have as long a timeframe for investing as fresh graduates, but longer lifespans mean they may have more than a decade.

And bonds, which are traditionally supposed to be the safe part of a nest egg, are looking riskier. If interest rates rise as expected, bond fund prices would fall and drag down returns.

"This is the trickiest time, at least in my memory, for an older person, as to where to invest," said JJ Kinahan, chief market strategist at TD Ameritrade.

Regardless of age, investors should be able to sleep at night if the stock portion of their portfolio falls 10 percent or more, which is a relatively regular occurrence for the market. If they can't, they likely have too much invested in stocks.

HOLDING STEADY

John Wall, 65, is semi-retired and keeps a part-time job with a rideshare app to help pay bills.

While sitting in a park in downtown St. Petersburg, Florida, on Tuesday and smoking a cigar as he waited for a rideshare customer, Wall shrugged when asked if he'd do anything different in light of the market dip.

"Work a little harder so I can make money back that I lost," he chuckled. "I'm just going to go on like I have been."

THE INCREASINGLY STOCK-OWNING SOCIETY

Fifty two percent of all U.S. households owned stocks in 2016, up 3 percentage points from three years earlier, according to the most recent data from the Federal Reserve.

Some of the biggest increases in stock ownership have come from households toward the lower end of the income bracket.

Because of the stronger labor market, more people are getting automatically enrolled into workplace plans or can afford to start saving, said Peter Brady, senior economist at the Investment Company Institute.

Workers in the bottom half for income took some of the biggest hits during the Great Recession, and stock-ownership rates for them dropped sharply. "They're finally starting to recover," Brady said.

SENIOR HAPPENINGS

- Wally Ball will take place through March 20 via The Hub on Smith, which has scheduled the racquetball courts at the YMCA to play each Tuesday at 9 a.m. and/or Thursday at 1:30 p.m. (if we have interest). Please sign up at The Hub's front desk for show of interest in either day. Questions? Call (307) 672-2240, ext. 107.

There is a \$1 suggested donation at court time.

- A craft class will take place Tuesday from 1-2:30 p.m. at The Hub on Smith. The casual group of crafters will do a variety of projects for fun and camaraderie. A new project this winter will be painting rocks for the Sheridan County Rocks once a month.

Call (307) 672-2240, ext. 108, for specific rock project dates. New crafters are always welcome.

- A knitting and crocheting class will take place Thursday from 1-3 p.m. at The Hub on Smith. Donna Stubbs from the Fiber House will share her knowledge and skills in an informal setting. Bring your own yarn and patterns.



FUN AND FOOD
BUILD YOUR OWN SALAD
Mondays - Fridays
Entrees include a side, dessert and drink.

ENTRÉE CHOICE* or SOUP/SALAD

Tue- Beef & Cheese Enchilada
Wed- Chicken Ranch Pizza
Thu- Fish Florentine
Fri- Spaghetti w/ Meat Sauce
Sat- Chicken Pot Pie
Sun - Rosemary Pork Roast
Mon- Cabbage Roll

UPCOMING SPECIAL EVENTS

Tue- Burgers & Bluegrass	SC \$2.00	6:30 p.m.	Café
Wed- Gentle Yoga		10:30 a.m.	Fitness Room
Thurs - Snowshoe Hike	Meet at The Hub 9:45 a.m. Depart 10:00 a.m.		Carpool
Fri- Ladies Billiards		1:00p.m.	Billiard Room
Sat- Pinochle Double Deck		12:30 p.m.	Café
Mon- Table Tennis		1:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.	Fitness Room

*entrée only offered for Home Delivered Meals

Lunch Service Hours: 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., 365 days a year at 211 Smith Street Home Delivered Meals (307) 672-6079

Loan Closet, Outreach, and Administration Services, 672-2240. Mondays - Fridays.

Help at Home Services, 675-1978. 232 North Brooks: Mondays - Fridays.

Day Break Adult Care Services, 674-4968. 241 Smith Street: Mondays - Fridays.