

A bountiful helping of conviviality

BY LOIS BELL
SHERIDAN SENIOR CENTER

SHERIDAN — “I could sit around and not come out of the house,” Dorothy Johnson said. “But I wouldn’t enjoy that. You know, you live longer if you’re around people.”

Johnson has discovered there is more to eating than what’s on your plate. Dining with others not only offers nutritional benefits but other non-nutritional benefits as well.

Have you thought of dish- ing up a bountiful helping of conviviality for yourself at meal time?

You won’t find it on a menu unless someone invents and names a dish “conviviality.” So, what is it? And how is it beneficial?

Conviviality is the quality of being friendly and lively. With March being recognized as National Nutrition Month, what does conviviality have to do with nutrition?

If you haven’t figured it out yet, meal time is more than about the food. The ambiance of getting together may be even more important than the food itself. Studies show that the social

health affects by eating with others are beneficial at all ages but become more important as we get older.

Johnson looks forward to sitting with friends for lunch at the Senior Center.

“It’s the spirit. Not so much to eat but to have fun,” said Sally Robbins, one of Johnson’s co-diners.

Robbins and her husband, Paul, enjoy dining with Johnson and friends Rich Reed and Paul Dubas several times each week at the Senior Center’s dining room.

Johnson and her husband, Farren, began participating in Senior Center activities in their hometown of Mountain View. They didn’t break stride getting connected to the Sheridan Senior Center when they moved to the area.

At the time, the only person they knew in town was their son.

“To get to know people, it’s good to come to the Senior Center,” Johnson said.

Johnson was appreciative of the invitation by new friends at the Senior Center who invited them to eat with them since Farren soon become confined to



COURTESY PHOTO

Dorothy Johnson, lower left, and friends have discovered a big helping of conviviality when they gather for lunch at the Senior Center’s dining room at 211 Smith St. With Johnson, from left, are Paul Robbins, Rich Reed, Sally Robbins and Paul Dubas. Gathering for meals with others has benefits in addition to nutrition.

a wheelchair. The couple looked forward to lunch with friends at the center.

Johnson had directed a public health office for more than 20 years and found it hard to cook for two as Farren was diabetic. The balanced and nutritious — and diabetically adapted — meals at the Senior Center were just part of daily enjoyment for the Johnsons.

“It’s important to have a balanced meal and something you don’t have to eat three times a week,” Johnson said.

Nutritionally balanced meals thwart malnutrition

in older adults, but studies show that dining with others in a convivial setting has other benefits.

One benefit is connection and feeling part of a community.

The routine can give people social connections with positive emotional perks to look forward to.

A sense of structure — such as dining together — can lead to a reduction in stress.

Conviviality is evident at all of the Senior Center’s meal sites in Sheridan County. Whether dining in Story on Tuesdays, Heritage

Towers in Sheridan or in the Tongue River Valley Mondays through Fridays, or at Big Horn on Thursdays, the people who gather are there for more than the meal; they are there for the friendship.

“What a better way to meet than over food?” said Barb Blue, director of the Senior Center’s Day Break adult day care program.

Blue and the Day Break team try to seat the people they serve together with others of similar interests. Blue has seen friendships form over lunch.

“For me, lunch is an activ-

ity,” Blue said.

Jane Perkins, director of fun at the Senior Center, coordinates and schedules activities, including music and entertainment during the lunch hour.

“My hope is to make the atmosphere as positive as possible,” Perkins said.

It must be working. Johnson, Dubas, Reed and the Robbins enjoy their time together more than what’s on the menu.

“It’s the activities, too,” Dubas said. “We have a lot of fun.”

Yes, a bountiful helping of conviviality is on the menu.

Join us on Friday, March 17 for a traditional St. Patrick’s Day lunch and entertainment!

Fun and Food

BUILD YOUR OWN SALAD Mondays - Fridays

Entrees and kiosk include sides, dessert and drink.

Sheridan Senior Center
“Celebrating 40 Years of Service”
www.sheridanseniorcenter.org

	Entrée Choice*	or	Soup Kiosk
Tue, Mar 14	Chicken Tetrazzini		Pork Soup
Wed, Mar 15	Cheese Tortellini with Meat Sauce		Chicken Curry Soup (mild)
Thu, Mar 16	Asparagus & Ham Quiche		Turkey Noodle Soup
Fri, Mar 17	Corned Beef & Cabbage		No kiosk Mar 16 - 19
Sat, Mar 18	Ham & Pasta Salad		No kiosk Mar 16 - 19
Sun, Mar 19	Chicken Pot Pie		No kiosk Mar 16 - 19
Mon, Mar 20	Beef Fajita		Corn Chowder

*entrée only offered for Home Delivered Meals

March is National Nutrition Month: “Put Your Best Fork Forward!”

Tue - Crafts	1:00 p.m.	First United Methodist Church	215 W. Works
Wed - Senior League Bowling	1:00 p.m.	Cloud Peak Lanes	No Sign Up
Thu - Pinochle Single Deck	12:30 p.m.	Senior Center	
Fri - Begorra & Erin Go Bragh !!	11:30 a.m. to 12:45 p.m.	St Patrick’s Day	

Lunch Service Hours: 11:30 a.m. to 12:45 p.m., 365 days a year at 211 Smith Street
 Building hours: 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Mondays - Fridays
 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Weekends and Holidays
 211 Smith Street Sheridan, WY 82801
 Home Delivered Meals (307) 672-6079
 Senior Center Main Phone: (307) 672-2240 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Mon - Fri

Are you getting your dose of Vitamin F?

I checked the worldwide web for observations in March just for fun, but there were so many that I decided to focus on National Nutrition Month, in the area of caregivers.



STELLA MONTANO

Caregivers have to be very resilient to do the jobs they do, day in and day out. Caregiving can take its toll, therefore, good nutrition is very important in their lives and the people they care for. Let’s take a moment and look at a couple of scenarios in what could be part of a caregiver’s life:

- Bob is so worn out by caring for his wife who has dementia that hot dogs or a can of soup are all he can manage to put on the table for dinner.

- Judy cares for her parents each day after a long day’s work and helps them with dinner. By the time she gets home, she is so tired, she skips dinner.

How can you as a caregiver take better care of yourself, not just during the month of March, National Nutrition Month, but every day?

Nutritious eating promotes good health and builds strength and stamina needed when you are a caregiver. Sometimes just getting through the

day takes extra effort. Did you know that the Senior Center provides wonderful, nutritious meals every day? Yes, even on holidays — 365 days a year!

You can choose to come into the Senior Center and select from the regular meal or from the soup, salad and sandwich bar (Mondays through Fridays) and then take dinner home from our “grab and go” station.

We have homemade wonderful soups from our kitchen. Or, if you are unable to come in for your nutritious meal and you qualify for home-delivered meals, you can enjoy the same delicious meal that is being served at the Senior Center in your own home.

Our souls need a good dose of nourishment, too, so coming to the Senior Center and visiting with friends and staff will add Vitamin F to your daily need of supplements.

Never heard of Vitamin F? Dr. Oz calls your friends your Vitamin F and counts the benefits of friends essential to our wellbeing. Research shows that people in strong social circles have less risk of depression. If you enjoy Vitamin F (the warmth of friendship) along with nutritious meals from the Senior Center, I guarantee your stress level will decrease.

Lack of hydration can wreak havoc on our systems and this is an area that I hear caregivers always concerned

about. Maybe not as much concern for themselves but certainly for those they care for. Most of us do not get the recommended eight 8-ounce glasses of water a day.

My dad always tried to count his morning coffee and the coffee he drank with his meals as part of the recommended daily intake. Unfortunately, coffee does not count because it is a diuretic. Sometimes we need a little bit of advice on how to make the best of our liquid intake.

The Senior Center’s registered dietitian, Georgia Boley, is available by appointment here at the Senior Center. She can offer support for you and your loved one. She can also offer ideas for eating a balanced diet, selecting healthy snacks and overcoming barriers to healthy eating.

Enjoy all that March brings — St. Patrick’s Day (corned beef and cabbage are delicious here at the Senior Center), Daylight Savings Time and spring, which begins this month. Does that mean no more snow? Probably not, but stop by for your dose of Vitamin F and enjoy a meal with us.

GUEST COLUMNIST STELLA MONTANO is the director of family caregiver services at the Sheridan Senior Center, a program that supports those of all ages who are caring for others. 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

- Did you know that Sheridan has a community loan closet? The closet has crutches, wheelchairs, shower benches and other equipment for use by people of all ages. Hours for questions or to check out equipment are Mondays through Fridays, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at 672-2240. The community loan closet is located at the Sheridan Senior Center at 211 Smith St.

- Join Executive Director Carmen Rideout on Monday, March 20, at 1 p.m. to learn more about the Senior Center and its mission. New

residents to the community, volunteers, business owners and employees are welcome to come. No need to call ahead — just show up.

- A trip to the Mountain Meadow Wool Mill in Buffalo will take place March 28. Lunch and transportation is included in the trip fee. The suggested contribution for individuals registered with the Senior Center is \$20. The cost for nonregistered travelers is \$24. Payment reserves your spot. Stop by the Senior Center receptionist station at 211 Smith St. to pay and

sign up Mondays through Fridays, 9 a.m. to 3:45 p.m. You may reserve your spot with a credit or debit card by calling 672-2240. The deadline to pay and sign up is March 23.

- A trip to Glacier National Park with the Senior Center will take place Sept. 9-13, but sign-up is required by May 1. Interested in more information or signing up? Call Peg Martin at Brittain World Travel for details, Mondays through Fridays, 672-2481. Brittain World Travel is coordinating this trip for the Senior Center.

- A hike is planned for the first day of spring, March 20. Take a chance on a nice sunny day and explore Sheridan’s South Park walking path. Advance sign-up is required. Treats will be available (a contribution is appreciated). Meet at the Senior Center at 1 p.m. to carpool to the trailhead. Difficulty level is easy. Bring a hat, sunscreen and water. Binoculars and camera are optional for participants. Wear weather appropriate clothing and good walking shoes for the walk through the park.

GROW YOUNGER

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