

Question, persuade, refer could save a life

BY LOIS BELL
SHERIDAN SENIOR CENTER

SHERIDAN — Those in the audience were age 14 and older. Every hand in the room went up when the presenter asked, “Do you know of someone who was lost to suicide or who lost someone to suicide?”

Most would prefer to not have to talk about the topic of suicide. But it’s this difficult topic that Wendy Bruso will broach. Bruso is a member of the Prevention Management Organization of Wyoming, Sheridan County Office. She is on a mission to change the conversation around the topic of suicide.

Bruso was the presenter at the Sheridan Senior Center’s February “When I’m 64...or more” life planning lecture series. The series is made available free to the community through partnerships between community professionals, such as Bruso, and the Senior Center. In Wyoming and the United States, men age 60 and older are the population most at risk for suicide.

“I’m afraid if I ask and they tell me, I won’t know what to with that,” said attendee Inez Johnson. “We’re such fixers in our society.”

“In difficult conversations, we try to make things better,” Bruso told the audience. “We don’t know how to respond.”

But Bruso was ready with tips.

“Sympathy disconnects us from people,” Bruso said. “But empathy connects us.”

Should someone tell you they are considering suicide, Bruso shared that there are three steps one could use that could save someone’s life.

“First,” Bruso said, “you have permission to reach and connect. We connect with people every day when we ask them how they’re doing or if they seem down. Use these same connection skills when someone is going through a really rough place.”

Bruso teaches the technique of Q.P.R.: Question.

Persuade. Refer.

“Using QPR training doesn’t make you a therapist or psychiatrist any more than CPR training makes you a doctor,” Bruso said. “It’s just a tool to help you get someone to

a skilled professional.”

Bruso encourages her audience to be direct in the first step: question.

“Ask them, are you thinking about suicide? Asking them does not plant the idea in their head. It actually reduces their anxiety,” Bruso said.

According to Bruso those considering suicide are carrying a heavy load and feel hopeless and helpless. Many don’t know how to ask for help. Often many are suffering from mental illness and don’t know it.

“Our society doesn’t handle this topic well at all,” Bruso said. “This goes back to suicide being taboo to talk about.”

Bruso encourages the audience to tell someone that they care about them. Listen. Then go to the next step: persuade. Convince them that they need help. Then stay with them until you know they are connected with a professional.

Attendee Harvey Miller asked a pointed question: “What if they tell you to mind your own business?” It’s a legitimate concern.

“What would you rather have?” Bruso asked. “Losing a friendship in an effort to help someone or them losing their life?”

Bruso uses the analogy of helping someone who breaks an arm: you would drive them to the emergency room or to a doctor. The same technique can be applied to helping someone who has admitted they are considering suicide.

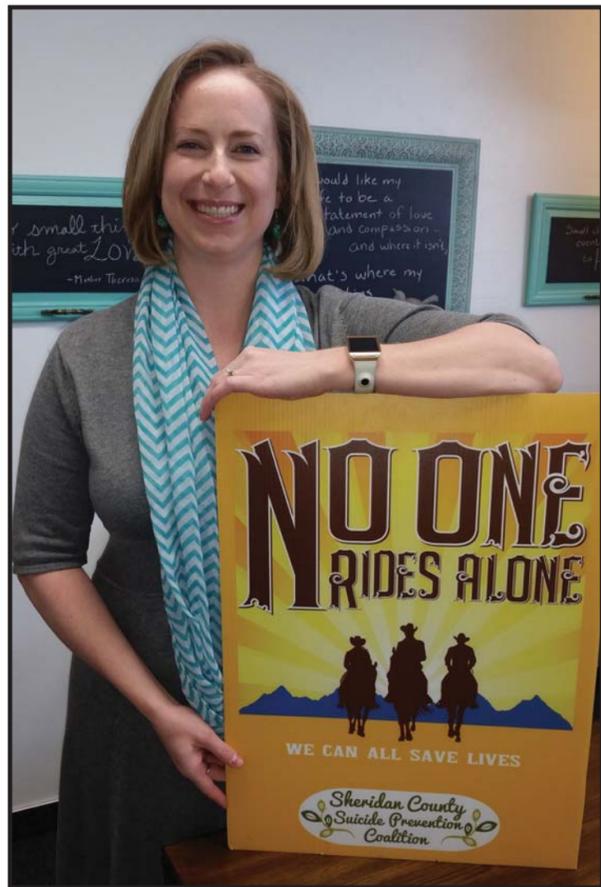
Seeing that someone at risk is connected to a professional could be calling 911 or driving them to the police or to a counselor. You may sit with them while they dial the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1 (800) 273-8255.

The Sheridan Police are the most highly trained staff in Wyoming when it comes to suicide intervention, according to Bruso. She advises that if you believe — or know — that a weapon is present, don’t put yourself in danger. This is the time to call 911.

There are also supports for those struggling with the thought of suicide (see Senior Center Happenings on this page).

Following the three steps of suicide intervention — question, persuade and refer — can save someone’s life.

“You have permission to check in with people,” said Bruso. It’s one more way of letting someone know that you care about them.



COURTESY PHOTO | LOIS BELL

Men age 60 and older are most at risk for suicide, according to Wendy Bruso, professional with the Prevention Management Organization of Wyoming in Sheridan. Bruso was a speaker at the Sheridan Senior Center’s “When I’m 64...or more” February community presentation offering tips on how one can respond when someone is at risk for suicide.

Tips from Wendy

Tips from Wendy Bruso, community prevention professional, Prevention Management Organization of Wyoming, Sheridan County Office

- Suicide Prevention team members use the phrase “died by suicide” instead of “committed suicide.”
- Research tells us that the majority of individuals who have died by suicide also had a mental condition.
- Using the phrase “died by suicide” acknowledges that the person who died by suicide died from a disease (such as a mental condition). To relate this to something more familiar, we wouldn’t say someone “committed cancer” because we know they died from a disease. Mental conditions are also medical diseases, and this is something we are just now really starting to understand and share with the public. Knowing the link between mental conditions and suicide makes it that much more important to be taking care of our mental health and getting mental support, just like visiting a doctor on a regular basis.

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CENTER STAGE |

What’s up with all those Mini-Buses?

Have you ever noticed that if you are out driving from one end of town to the other, you are likely to see a lot of Mini-Buses? Why is that? Well the answer is that on a typical weekday, we have eight buses on the streets of Sheridan and our service area includes every part of town and a good portion of the county.

The nature of the transportation that we provide means we are in nearly every neighborhood during the course of the day. We provide “door to door” service. We don’t follow a specific route. So each of these eight buses are taking the most direct route between where we pick up our riders and the rider’s ultimate destination.

Many times our riders are headed to the same place, for example, the Senior Center or medical row. And that is why you may see three or more Mini-Buses at the same location.

We have a sophisticated dispatch software that uses a complex algorithm to figure out which bus will be the quickest and most efficient to use for a particular trip. It uses GPS to know where every address is and it estimates with good accuracy the time that it should take to perform the trip. And it also knows where every bus is and who is on it and where they are going. The program also knows if a particular rider has any special requirements like if they will need to use a lift to get in the bus. And we can even add extra time to a particular person’s profile if we know they will need extra care using the bus. The dispatch software adds that time into its calculations. It’s really a neat system and makes the dispatcher’s job a lot easier.



STEVE AINSLIE

Steve Ainslie is the transportation director of the Sheridan Mini-Bus. 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.

As sophisticated as the software is however, it is not perfect and that is where the human touch of the dispatcher comes in. There are a number of subtle issues that the software is just not equipped to handle. For example, it knows that 10 out of the 12 buses we operate are ADA accessible. That is the bus can accommodate people who use a wheelchair or walker. What the software does not know is that eight of the buses use lifts and two of the buses use ramps. Some riders can’t use ramps. And two of the eight buses with lifts load from the rear of the bus and the remaining six buses load from the curb side. Some of the places that we go have no room to deploy a side loading lift so we have to send a rear load bus.

Some of our riders use large power chairs and therefore need our biggest buses as they won’t fit in the smaller ones. Even the order in which a driver should pick up riders when more than one will be riding at a time is something the software can’t calculate but the dispatcher has to. These are the kinds of things that our dispatchers have to know.

Last year we provided service to about 800 unique individuals in and around Sheridan. That is a lot of locations to keep in mind when dispatching a bus. But the people who do our dispatching have years of experience and do a phenomenal job. I am always amazed at the depth of knowledge about Sheridan our dispatchers have. That human touch is one of the most important things that help us get our job done.

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SENIOR CENTER HAPPENINGS |

• **No one rides alone. There is help if you or someone you know is considering suicide.**

— National Alliance on Mental Illness recovery support group, Wednesdays, 5:30 p.m. First Christian Church, 102 S. Connor St., Sheridan (enter on the west side, down stairs, first door on left)

— Survivors of Suicide Loss, second and fourth Thursdays of each month, 5:30 p.m., 205 W. Loucks St., Sheridan. Contact Dawn Sproun at slayphotocounseling@yahoo.com or 752-7016.

— Call the Lifeline at 1-800-273-8255

— Text “start” to the Crisis Text Line at 741 741.

— Chat online at

www.crisischat.org

— National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1 (800) 273-8255.

• **Savor the flavor!** Learn to flavor your foods with alternatives to salt. Try new herbs and spices. Join registered dietitian, Georgia Boley, in a hands-on participatory demonstration on Tuesday evening, March 1, 5:30 p.m. at the Senior Center. You will have the opportunity to sample while there. This is a free community presentation offered through the Sheridan Senior Center’s “When I’m 64...or more” life planning lecture series. All ages are invited. No need to call ahead — just walk in.

• **The Senior Center is hosting**

pool tournaments on the first Saturday of each month. The first Saturday tournament is at 9 a.m. on March 5 at 211 Smith St. Cue up and come! For more information, call Jane Perkins, Activities Director, at the Senior Center at 672-2240.

• **Greeting card and scrapbook creators.** Join us to learn to make beautiful homemade cards or lay out a scrapbook bag! Sat., Feb. 27, 12:30-3:30 p.m. in the Art Studio at the Senior Center. There is no charge but please call 672-2240 or stop by the front desk at 211 Smith St. to sign up. Supplies will be provided or you can bring your own projects to work on.

Sheridan Senior Center
“Celebrating 40 Years of Service!”

www.sheridanseniorcenter.org
Fun and Food
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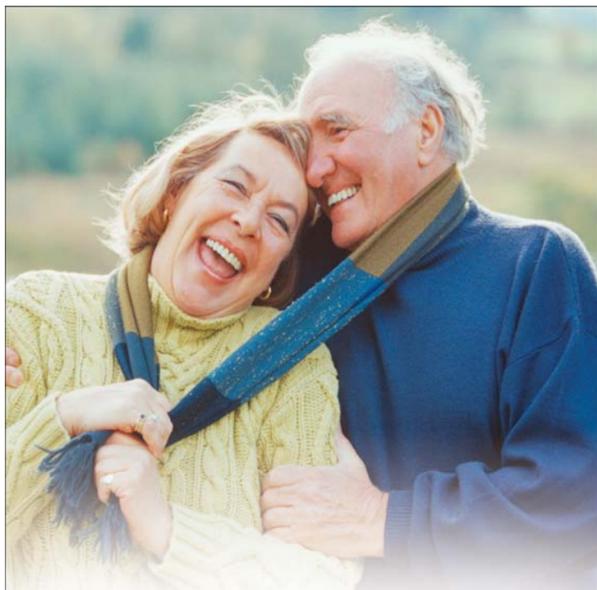
Entrees and kiosk include sides, dessert and drink.

Entrée Choice*	or	Soup Kiosk
Sun – Chicken Fried Steak		Corned Beef Soup
Mon – Turkey Fillet		Build Your Own Salad Only
Tue – Chili		Pawtucket Chicken
Wed – Pork Chop Supreme		Cream of Cauliflower
Thu – Cheeseburger Deluxe		Taco Soup
Fri – Parmesan Fish		
Sat- Sloppy Joes		

***Home Delivered Meals**

Sun- Pinochle Double Deck	1:00 p.m.	Lobby
Mon- Nails by Maxine	9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.	Day Break
Tue- Bingo	12:00 p.m.	Dining Room
Wed- Bridge	12:30 p.m.	Community Room
Sat- Ranchhand Breakfast	7:30 to 9:30 a.m.	Dining Room
Handmade Cards	12:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.	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



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