

Volunteering: Why it feels so good to give

BY LOIS BELL
SHERIDAN SENIOR CENTER

SHERIDAN — Why do people volunteer? Volunteers are essential to many religious, civic and nonprofit organizations. Four volunteers recently shared how they came to volunteer and why they give of their time and talents.

was surprised to see all the neighbors get together to thresh the grain," said Gene Caiola, who grew up in the Little Italy section of New York City.

Caiola was hooked by the spirit of volunteerism and launched a lifetime of volunteering in addition to a career and raising a family. As the commander of a Veterans of Foreign Wars post in the 1950s, Caiola gained experience

in recruiting and directing volunteers.

Today, with his wife, Diane, Caiola volunteers at their church in several capacities.

"There's always something at church," he said.

Outside of church, the couple volunteers to prepare the Big Horn Historical Society's newsletter for mailing.

Caiola also delivers meals to the Sheridan Senior Center's Big Horn meal site on Thursdays.

"I enjoy it as I get to visit with people I know as we lived there for 25 years. It gives me time to catch up with people," Caiola said.

A charter member of the Big Horn Lions, Caiola was part of a team that recently cleaned up Sackett Park in Big Horn.

"It (volunteering) keeps me busy a little bit," he said. "I don't consider what I do anything particularly fantastic."

Diane Caiola also branches out to volunteer on her own. One of her passions is serving at Sheridan's Lunch Together program. The lunches are offered at the First Christian Church Mondays through Fridays at no charge to all ages.

"I want to serve the hungry, to see that people get something to eat," she added.

Helen Jordan
For Helen Jordan, vol-



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Linda Jeffers finds that volunteering at Heritage Towers helps her feel connected to her mother, Helen, who was a resident and volunteer at the Towers. Volunteers such as Jeffers discover fulfillment in volunteering as varied as their personalities and gifts they bring to organizations throughout Sheridan County.

unteering gives her purpose. Jordan is a familiar face for many people who come for lunch to the Senior Center. Jordan readies the beverage bar in the dining room for coffee, water and tea, bringing her 26 years experience in the Veterans Affairs Medical Center kitchen after she retired in 2007.

"I came to check out the Senior Center, to see what it's all about," Jordan said.

Jordan observed the volunteer who was prepping the beverages at the time and thought that would be something she could do. When the position came

open, Jordan was asked if she could step in. It was an immediate yes for her. Jordan recalls she expanded the beverage bar service by bringing beverage carts to card-playing groups at the Senior Center.

Jordan chooses to come almost every day of the year, treating her volunteerism for the beverage bar as a job.

"It helps me a lot because it helps me get out of the house, be around people and keep from being bored sitting around and eating a lot," Jordan said. "I like it here. It gives me a reason to get up."

Linda Jeffers

For Linda Jeffers, volunteering at Heritage Towers helps her feel connected to her mother, Helen, who was a resident and a volunteer at Heritage Towers.

Jeffers cherishes her connection to the residents and volunteers at Heritage Towers.

After her mother died, Jeffers continued to volunteer over the lunch hour at Heritage Towers.

She does whatever needs to be done from dishing portions, to carrying trays to tables, delivering meals to homebound elders in the building or helping with special meal events. Jeffers will also step in to fill another volunteer's spot when needed.

"I think mother would be proud to know I'm doing what she did," Jeffers said.

Jeffers also volunteers one day each week delivering newspapers to patients and departments at Sheridan Memorial Hospital.

"That's an interesting job. Sometimes (patients) just want you to visit for a few minutes," Jeffers said. "It's only one day a week and it takes only an hour. Some people are so, so happy to get it (the paper). It's a nice service done by the hospital."

"Why wouldn't anyone want to volunteer?" said Jeffers. "It feels good to give."

CENTER STAGE

Older Americans Month 2016 – Blaze a trail

Writing from the women's prospective, the appearance of Grandma (now Nana

for most) has most certainly changed from long skirts and aprons to leggings and boots but the goal of raising and providing love and support for families has not changed.

However, what is changing, is our ideals for what our retirement will bring including how we see ourselves "being" at the age of 60. Do we digress, as some may see it, to the stereotype of the rocking chair granny?

Or do we add on to the life we have built along the way, blazing a trail for ourselves and others.

May is a month of fresh beginnings. Perennials bloom once again, blazing a trail of bright color. May is also when we celebrate Older Americans Month, acknowledging the perennial contributions of older adults to our nation. The 2016 OAM theme is Blaze a Trail. The Administration for Community Living will use this opportunity to raise awareness about important issues facing older adults. They will also highlight the ways that older Americans are advocating for themselves, their peers and their communities.

Your community, Sheridan, standing as its own peninsula, is working/ preparing to encourage you

to stand ready for the rest of your life. We have the professionals with information regarding housing, medical, financial advice, physical and mental health and, my favorite, fun!

Social activities mean different things to individuals and finding a new hobby is part of blazing a trail of color. It's kind of like planting tulips in the fall and forgetting what color they were. You discover this when they bloom in the spring. Plunging into something you've never tried before can be a mystery but it's worth the wait in the end.

The Senior Center Fun Department continues to strive to offer, promote and encourage people that are 60 years of age and older to try something new. (I won't use the 'bucket list' analogy. We're too busy to carry a bucket around.) We'd rather carry around the script for the Young At Heart Players, the music book for the SheridanAires next Follies concert — which has been rescheduled to June 2 and 3 — the new pool que for pool or ping-pong paddles to use on the new table. Find out how it feels to learn a new card game and meet new friends in the meantime. Ask Jean about our day trips to Eatons', Devils Tower and Deadwood. Hikes and picnics are being planned for the summer. If you like travel, Lois will be escorting you to Jackson Hole to Bar J Wranglers Ranch and Medora. There's too much to mention! Oh, wait...don't forget we have exercise classes happening in the building or you may want to come check out one of our bikes for the day. You can always volunteer. Come to the Senior Center

and we'll help you draw a map of what your "trail" might look like. If we don't have it here we'll connect up with a partners in the community and find it!

I found "60 perfect reasons you should be psyched about turning 60" on an online edition of the Huffington Post. Allow me to list a few of my favorites but #60 is the icing on the cake.

2. You know who your real friends are and they aren't your college roommates.

56. You know the value of anyone that makes life easier for you.

57. You have amassed a rich diversity of experiences in which to draw on when facing a challenge.

58. You know that elders aren't the only ones you can learn from, the younger people have a perspective worth being open to.

60. You realize that beyond a shadow of a doubt 60 is just a number so why stress it?

We've all been forced to "blaze on" in the world of electronics. That's our first indication that we can either build-on to what we know or build from scratch with something new, but keep blazing on.

Please take time to acknowledge the contributions and influences of the past and current older persons in your life. Share your story and bring or send them to Jane Perkins at 211 Smith St. They will be on display the month of May at the Senior Center.

JANE PERKINS likes to refer to herself as the director of fun 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.



JANE PERKINS



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