

Reduced funding challenging senior services

FROM THE SHERIDAN SENIOR CENTER

SHERIDAN — A recent article in the Casper Star-Tribune reported how Senior Centers across the state are being negatively impacted by the state budget cuts. Following is an interview with Carmen Rideout, executive director of the Sheridan Senior Center, on how state budget cuts are affecting the center here in our county.

Q: How have the funding cuts to senior services affected the Sheridan Senior Center?

Rideout: We have been negatively affected by the state budget cuts. The 4 percent or \$130,000 cut in what we were awarded this year will be challenging. Our fiscal year begins Oct. 1, 2016, and the board of directors is expected to approve a balanced budget at its September meeting. We operate on a very narrow margin. There is not much we are able to cut on the expense side of things because we are already very slim or efficient in how we operate, however we are definitely looking at ways to be even more efficient and ways to spend less. They are talking about even more drastic budget cuts for the 2017-2018 budget year.

Q: What challenges does reduced funding present to the

Senior Center?

Rideout: This is troubling as the demand for the community services we provide continue to increase. Our services include many opportunities to stay well through our meals that are offered every day, social activities, exercise classes, pool tournaments and volunteer experiences. We also provide many supports when people need extra help by delivering meals, providing transportation, adult day care, help with bathing, housekeeping and meal preparation.

Without these services some wouldn't be able to live at home. The average annual cost in Wyoming for the community services that Senior Centers provide is \$2,000 versus the average cost of a 24-hour skilled nursing facility at \$75,000 per year.

Investing in community services is cost effective for individuals, families, communities and the state. Our Wyoming Home Services Grant was cut by 18 percent or about \$50,000 this year. Currently we have more than 30 people on a waiting list for services funded through this state grant.

Q: What is the Senior Center doing to address increasing need for services in an environ-

ment of reduced spending for operations?

Rideout: I would love to focus mostly on increasing our revenues. Raising the fees for services is the way traditional businesses address deficits. This can be challenging to many of the people we serve who have little to no disposable income. Their monthly budget is low and fixed because they no longer work as they have in the past.

Even a small increase may mean they cannot pay a bill and they will sacrifice health, safety and wellness to do so. Another financial dynamic older people face is that any money saved is there to last their lifetime which is uncertain, so they are very conservative in their spending, even if it is to stay healthy and well.

The opening, growth and generous community contributions to the Green Boomerang Thrift Store has been our latest endeavor to generate more income for services. Our move to Main Street was a tremendous opportunity. We will continue to develop this mission driven store.

We are also working to grow our Loving Legacy Endowment by educating people on how endowments work and how a planned gift can be made. We have an



COURTESY PHOTO

Haley Roberts stands in the display window of the Senior Center's Green Boomerang thrift shop. The thrift shop helps generate revenue for the center.

ambitious goal of \$10 million by 2025. This would help us get through tough years and allow us to be less dependent on government dollars.

Q: What can the community do to support services to

seniors in Sheridan County?

Rideout: I have provided some suggestions in my Center Stage column on this page. Please take a moment to read and to consider helping the Senior Center in one of these ways.

www.thesheridanpress.com

How is the Senior Center doing with state budget cuts?

A number of Sheridanites have asked me how the Sheridan Senior Center is doing? Surely we must be OK because there is so much activity at the center; it seems so busy and we

are all still smiling! In addition we completed a very successful fundraising campaign a year ago so we must be set for a while, right?

Yes — there is a lot happening. As you know we are open every day of the year and we are truly serving older adults and families of multiple generations. The demand for our services is growing and there are many

opportunities for development of existing and new services.

Yes — we have had tremendous support from the community throughout our Celebrating Generations and Building Community Campaign. The \$9.5M raised came from federal and state grants and an amazing array of generous Sheridan individual donors and foundations. We are grateful for every gift from \$1 to \$1 million. These funds have been raised and pledged over a five year period.

Yes — we too have been negatively affected by the state budget cuts. Grant awards from state and local sources are 4 percent or \$130,000 less than what we were awarded this year. This will be challenging. We operate on a very narrow margin. There is not much we can cut on the expenses side of things without cutting back on services.

How do we increase our income and continue to serve those most in need. Our grants and funding sources are such that we only get what we spend and there is little opportunity for growth. Our customers make payments and contributions to the cost of their services however many are on a fixed and limited income. How can Sheridan continue to support the center as the vibrant hub of service for older people and their families?

1. If you are already eating with us, don't let our new construction October 2016 through August 2017 stop you and if you are over 60 and want to start eating with us, please come down. This will help us maintain revenues as usual. For example the funds we receive for our meals is based on the how many meals we serve. If we serve less meals, we receive less dollars.

2. Continue to give. Your contributions of dollars (from \$1-1M) really do make a difference. Our Celebrating Generations and Building Community Campaign is over, however, we depend annually on gifts throughout the year from individuals and foundations through specific grants, memorials, and the holiday spirit and operation independence campaigns. These

dollars truly set us apart from so many other centers.

3. Shop and Drop at Green Boomerang Thrift Store on Main Street. Donations of gently used and re-sellable items are greatly appreciated. We have been able to keep our expenses at the store minimal due to our fabulous volunteers who work in the store and the wonderful donated space we occupy. The dollars earned from sales at the store are used to serve people in need.

4. Volunteer your time. We have a staff of 93 full- and part-time employees. If we did not have the volunteer force we have, there is no way possible we could serve the 2,500 people we do currently. More than 600 volunteers help us in so many ways and this is something we will need more of this year and in the future to provide services to a growing number of people growing older in our communities. Help us serve. Share your skills, talents, and time.

Yes — despite all the good things happening and the positive can-do attitude we still need your support! Thank you Sheridan!

GUEST COLUMNIST CARMEN RIDEOUT

has been the executive director of the Sheridan Senior Center since 2001. "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

- Are you a grandparent raising a grandchild? There is a monthly group for you! The September GRG meeting is Sept. 21 at 5:30 p.m. and meets at the Senior Center, 211 Smith St. This month's topic is on the subject of bullying with guest speaker Sheridan County School District 2 staff member Jennifer Black. Dinner is provided and activities for children while the adults meet. For details, call Stella Montano at 675-1978.
- Bluegrass & \$2 Burgers is set for Sept. 20 from 7-9 p.m. on the Senior Center Dining Room Stage. Come listen to some fun music. No need to sign up in advance.
- A trip to Koltiska Pumpkin Patch on Sept. 28. Come pick your own pumpkin for pie or for a

Jack-O-Lantern or just to get out to the country. Depart Heritage Towers 1:45 p.m., Senior Center 2 p.m. Registered seniors suggested contribution of \$5, unregistered \$7 for the bus ride. Cost of your pumpkin is not included. Free refreshments at the barn. Pre-pay and sign up at the front desk of the Senior Center at 211 Smith St. by Sept. 22.

• Fall colors trip/hike to Tongue River Canyon on 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. Fee includes lunch and bus fare. Depart Heritage Towers 8:45 a.m., Senior Center 9 a.m. Return departure — 1 p.m. Pre-pay and sign up by Sept. 29 at the Senior Center.

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 - Country Ribs		
Mon - Parmesan Chicken		Cream of Cauliflower
Tue - Taco Salad/Chips		Zesty Bean Soup
Wed - Chicken Pot Pie		Chinese Beef Soup
Thu - Fish Florentine		Old Fashion Chicken Noodle
Fri - Pork Wings		Minestrone
Sat - Baked Potato Bar w/ Ham & Cheese Sauce or Chili		

*entrée only offered for Home Delivered Meals

Mon - B.A.M.	9:30 a.m.	Community Room
Tue - Bluegrass & \$ 2 Burgers	7 p.m. to 9 p.m.	Dining Room
Wed - 3 rd Wed Open Mic	11:00 a.m.	Dining Room
Fri - Chicken Foot Dominoes	9:30 a.m.	Dining Room
Sat - "Made In Front of You Omelet" Breakfast	7:30 a.m. to 9:00 a.m.	

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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