

SENIOR

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Happy to provide in-home care

BY LOIS BELL
SHERIDAN SENIOR CENTER

Her exuberance about her work is evident, immediately making one wonder if they have such passion for their work. Casi Bluemel is a certified nursing assistant, and she loves what she does.

"Each day is a new day with a new outlook," Bluemel said.

As a C.N.A. with the Sheridan Senior Center, Bluemel takes care of elders living at home.

She provides healthcare needs under the supervision of the Senior Center's registered nurse via a care plan.

What is a day for Bluemel like? Each one varies.

On Wednesdays, Bluemel will start her day wrapping the legs of one client in his home who she visits four days a week. She then visits a second client, someone living with dementia.

Bluemel sees this client Mondays through Fridays. She will help dress her and do her laundry. Once each week, Bluemel will bathe this client and clean her house.

"She doesn't leave the house, but she has two daughters who are very attentive to her," Bluemel said, recognizing she supports not only her client but her client's family.



COURTESY PHOTO |

Casi Bluemel is a certified nursing assistant with the Sheridan Senior Center's Help at Home program. C.N.A.'s provide paraprofessional help with healthcare needs under the supervision of a licensed nurse.

Bluemel moves on to a third client living with multiple sclerosis. "We shower three times each week," Bluemel said. "She's very routine-oriented and can handle one question at a time." It took some time for the two ladies to find their compatible rhythm, but it did

develop over the months. A fourth client is a veteran who lives in an apartment complex and needs some basic housekeeping and laundry assistance.

"There are stairs in the complex, and he's recovering from surgery," Bluemel said, noting she helps by taking laundry up and down to the laundry facilities.

On to a fifth client who is living with his retired daughter and son-in-law.

"I help him shower and get dressed," said Bluemel. Many children are not comfortable bathing their parent and welcome the professional help.

On Wednesdays, Bluemel attends weekly staff meetings of the Sheridan Senior Center's Help at Home team with fellow C.N.A.'s, home-makers, director and nurse. There are updates, problem-solving discussions and training. Bluemel realizes she is part of a team of paraprofessionals who support not only the community, but each other.

"(My work) makes me feel that I am needed and I'm helpful," Bluemel said of her job. "I can't tell you how many times a day my clients say thank you and how much they appreciate me."

C.N.A.'s provide paraprofessional health services in a variety of

venues, such as hospitals, nursing homes, assisted living facilities and home health care agencies. Bluemel has worked in both a nursing facility and now for the Senior Center's licensed home health care program, Help at Home.

"I didn't know what home health care was all about," Bluemel said.

But she liked the ability to work independently and to get to know someone through what she calls one-on-one time.

She is able to provide assistance not by going room to room, but by going home to home.

Bluemel and her fellow C.N.A.'s follow a care plan developed by the Senior Center's registered nurse. Her schedule is structured but allows her the time to get her work done.

"(The clients) become my family because it seems I sometimes spend more time with them than my own family," Bluemel said. "But it's really awesome to really provide this. I'm very happy; I'm very fortunate."

November is National Home Care Month, honoring the service of home health care and hospice professionals.

"It's an overall amazing process in what the need is," Bluemel said. "People can stay in their homes, and they seem calmer and happier. I'm very, very happy to help."

CENTER STAGE |

Burger Bowl Drive through

I found good ground pork at the grocery store. Not sausage. Just ground pork with no seasonings. I have seasoned my own ground pork for sausage — good quality spices, no sugar, no preservatives — since my days as a young wife and the days of Milt Johnson and the

Banner Store, where we bought meat in bulk and stocked the freezer.

RENEE MEADOR |

dow, and I made the Flying Saucers. With the pie iron hot, I'd lay in a slice of white sandwich bread, then the cooked hamburger patty and all the trimmings topped with another piece of bread. When the pie iron closed, bread crusts were trimmed off and the edges sealed. Soon, out came a warm toasty flying-saucer-shaped sandwich.

Our favorite Flying Saucer sandwich was the pizza burger, a hamburger patty slathered with marinara sauce, mozzarella cheese and pepperoni.

The pepperoni was homemade from fresh, lean, ground pork. After Julia's spice blend seasoned the meat, it was hand-shaped into a log a little over an inch in diameter. That log simmered on the grill edge. Spicy hot basil wafted instead of hamburger and french-fry grease. When cooled and sliced thin, that pepperoni was better than any cured sausage or meat stick ever invented!

Besides learning Julia's sausage seasoning recipe, I had a lot of fun that summer interacting with disembodied voices who had no clue that I could hear every word. Sometimes I had the whole family's order before they ever shushed a carload of hungry kids, turned to the speaker and said, "Miss, we're ready to order." Other times I recognized the car and just blurted, "What do you want?" to a good friend (got in trouble for that one).

When everything was shipshape inside, ready for the next rush, my duties included policing the grounds. Trash bag in hand, I'd head out to the open center of Burger Bowl's semicircular, gravel driveway to pick up the detritus of meals eaten at the picnic tables provided. Roy Orbison, on the 45-rpm record player, crooned "Only the Lonely" on repeat over our outdoor PA system.

So, this morning, I ponder the life experiences sizzling aromatically in my frying pan. Almost as interesting as when I bake lasagna, but that's another story.

RENEE MEADOR is a Sheridan resident and has frequently contributed columns to Center Stage. 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 |

• The Senior Center's SheridanAires Winter Concert is coming! This popular annual event will perform on two dates:

Thursday, December 1 at 1:30 p.m. A \$2.00 suggested contribution at the door is requested for the matinee.

• The SheridanAires evening performance is Friday, December 2 at 6:00 p.m. Dessert will be offered (no dinner this year). A \$6.00 suggested contribution is requested for dessert. Please call 672-2240 before December 1 to let us know you are coming.

• Christmas Luncheon Party Tuesday, Dec. 6 at the Open Range Restaurant at 11:30 a.m. Participants are responsible for paying for their lunch; the price is \$8.95 plus tax and tip. There will be a "White Elephant" gift exchange. Wrap an

item you no longer need or want but do not put your name on the package. Sign up by Dec. 1 at the Senior Center front desk or by calling 672-2240. The Goose Creek Transit bus will pick folks up at their home for the regular bus fee. Call 675-RIDE (7433) for bus reservations by Dec 1. Participants must schedule their own rides directly with the bus to the restaurant and back home.

• The Senior Center new hours are 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Mondays through Fridays. Weekend and holiday hours are 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. The building will be open at 7:30 a.m. on select Saturdays that breakfast is served.

Check the Senior Center website's Center Stage newsletter link for dates for breakfasts at www.sheridanseniorcenter.org.

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