

## A caregiver's survival toolkit

BY LOIS BELL  
SHERIDAN SENIOR CENTER



Caregiving for a loved one can take a toll on the well-being of the caregiver. Mike and Yvonne Buchan and Damian Carrillo are three caregivers who value the weekly support group they attend at the Senior Center.

SHERIDAN — If you are caring for someone who is ill, frail or when the daily activities of living have become a struggle for them, you are a caregiver. Caregiving can be as simple as helping someone get ready for bed or preparing or getting them connected with meals or even bathing. Caregivers care for their spouse, their parents, their adult child, a friend or a neighbor with meals, transportation, remembering appointments or even medication management. “What I see is that oftentimes a spouse thinks ‘I’m just the husband’ or ‘I’m just the wife,’” said Stella Montano, director of Family Caregiver Support Services at the Sheridan Senior Center. “They don’t see themselves in a caregiver role. But their loved one’s needs have gone way beyond being able to do for themselves.”

But as your loved one’s needs increase, so does the demand on your time and energy...and on your health. “Caregivers always tend to put their loved ones

first,” Montano said. Montano is passionate about supporting the caregivers in their role. This includes teaching caregivers to take care of themselves. “I like to use the analogy when you’re traveling and you’re on a plane,” said Montano. “The flight attendants will tell you that in the case of an emergency and should the oxygen masks deploy, you are told

to put your mask on first before taking care of anyone around you. The same goes for caregiving. If you don’t take care of yourself, you’re not able to take on the demands of caregiving.”

Montano has seen time and again when demands of caregiving have taken their toll on caregivers’ health sometimes to the point of hospitalization.

She offers the following five tips for a survival toolbox for caregivers. Your first tool? Accept help. Have a list of ways others can help you. Someone may be willing to sit with your loved one for a couple of hours while you take a break or run much needed errands. Ask them to pick up groceries or accept an offered meal. It’s important to focus on what you are able to provide and know that you are doing the best you can. No one is perfect so let go of that guilt that you are not doing enough.

A second important tool for a caregiver: set realistic goals. Break large tasks into smaller steps that you can do one at a time. Prioritize, make lists and establish a daily routine. When you have a routine, those helping you will know your routine.

Tool No. 3: Get connected. Find out about resources in your com-

munity that can help you. In Sheridan, the Senior Center offers transportation, Day Break Adult Day Care, adaptive equipment, home delivered meals, housekeeping, personal care and respite services. Call the Senior Center at 672-2240 for specifics.

Don’t underestimate the value of support groups. This is Tool No. 4. Participants know what you’re going through. They can validate your reality, provide encouragement, and help with valuable problem solving.

And Tool No. 5? Montano encourages caregivers to set personal health goals.

“Set regular appointments to see your doctor,” said Montano. “Make sure you let your doctor know that you are a caregiver.” If your doctor knows that you’re a caregiver, they can support your decision for using community support services.

Montano also recommends to caregivers to set some personal health objectives such as taking walks, listening to favorite music while you make dinner, staying hydrated and using whatever form of relaxation you may choose.

“Caregiving is not a sprint, it’s a long-distance run,” said Montano.

Stocking your metaphorical caregiving toolkit can support you as a caregiver as you care for and love another.

## Check these resources before hiring in-home care

FROM THE SHERIDAN SENIOR CENTER

SHERIDAN — If you are caring for an ill loved one, hiring professional health help can be a smart move for not only their care but also respite for you. Consult your physician on what help would be beneficial for you.

You can always utilize a professional licensed home health agency such as the Sheridan Senior Center, or a private business, but you can also hire directly.

Proceed cautiously before bringing someone you don’t know into your home to care for a loved one. Following is a list of contacts that the Senior Center uses to follow up on an applicant’s background that can help you get the best information on someone you are thinking of bringing into your home.

1. First, plan to interview applicants as if you are an employer rather than a client. Think professional and don’t be shy in asking direct directions to get the best insight if the applicant is a good fit for your family.

Set up a place outside of your home to conduct the interview. Public places where there are people around are good choices such as the public library, a local coffee shop or a quiet corner in a restaurant. The applicant is also interviewing you and would probably appreciate a public place since they don’t know you either.

2. Background check: Before the interview, it would be a good idea for you to download a form for a background check from the Department of Family Services. This step checks if the applicant has a background of abuse against a vulnerable adult. Go to <http://dfsweb.wyo.gov/central-registry>. The applicant has to sign this before you can mail it in so it is best to bring this form to the interview. If you don’t have a computer at home, check with the local library to use their computer. There may be a fee for pages printed so check with the library assistant first.

If you want to proceed with an applicant, mail \$10 and the signed background check form to the

Department of Family Services. It will take 10 days for a response on this step of the interview process. You can ask the applicant to do this, also, and bring back the response to you at a future date (and at a location away from your home).

3. Check on the applicant’s CNA license from the Wyoming State Board of Nursing at <https://nursing-online.state.wy.us/verifications.aspx>. Licenses are renewed every two years so a current report does not necessarily mean the applicant is currently working under a licensed nurse. At the interview, ask the applicant for the name and contact information of the nurse who is supervising him or her.

4. Do a criminal background check: the applicant will need to be fingerprinted for this step. In Sheridan, fingerprinting is done at Cedar’s Health Clinic located at 813 Highland Ave. in Sheridan. The phone number is 673-5501. There is a fee and the interviewer can ask the applicant to pay for this.

Two standard FBI 8-by-8-inch blue applicant fingerprint cards are completed and appropriate fees in the form of a certified check or money order made out to the Office of the Attorney General are sent to: Division of Criminal Investigations, ATTN: ATS, 208 South College Drive, Cheyenne, WY 82002. For complete details go to <http://wyomingdci.wyo.gov/dci-criminal-justice-information-systems-section/criminal-records-section/criminal-history-checks>

5. Check with the Sheridan Police Department for any interactions the applicant may have had with them: 45 W. 12th St., Sheridan. Phone: 672-5609.

6. If you want the successful applicant to drive your loved one to appointments or outings, check their driving record with the Wyoming Department of Transportation: 5300 Bishop Boulevard, Cheyenne. Phone: 307-777-4375.

It is a lot of work but well worth the effort for the integrity of bringing someone into your home.



*Why does Loretta Horton like to come to the Senior Center?  
“I come to see Jane Perkins!”*

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**Fun and Food**  
BUILD YOUR OWN SALAD MON- FRI

Entrees and kiosk include sides, dessert and drink.

<b>Entrée Choice*</b>	or	<b>Soup Kiosk</b>
Sun – Swedish Meat Balls over Egg Noodles		
Mon – Western Egg Scramble		Zesty Beef Soup
Tue – Swiss Steak/Tomato Sauce		Spicy Lentil Soup
Wed – Chicken Sesame Stir Fry		Beef Stew
Thu – Pork Wing		Meatball Soup
Fri – Beef Pot Roast		Mexican Chicken Soup
Sat – Turkey Pot Pie		

**\*entrée only offered for Home Delivered Meals**

Mon - Caregiver Support Group	10:00 a.m. & 5:30 p.m.	Conference Room
Tue - Bingo	12:00 a.m.	Dining Room
Wed - BAM Exercise	9:30 a.m.	Dining Room
Thu - Writers Group	2:00 p.m.	Art Studio
Fri - Dominoes/Chicken Foot	9:30 a.m.	Dining Room
Sat - Texas Hold 'em	1:00 to 3:00 p.m.	Dining Room

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

### SENIOR CENTER HAPPENINGS

- The Senior Center’s Green Boomerang Thrift Store is currently looking for volunteers to help clean, repair and display donated jewelry to be placed in the store for purchase. If you are interested in helping out, please contact the director of volunteer services, Haley Rougeau at 672-2240, or stop in at 211 Smith St. and fill out an application today.

This position will begin Tuesday, Dec. 6 at 9:30 a.m. We are also always looking for cashiers to work Wednesday through Saturday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

- The Senior Center is holding a Craft Room Sale in the Art Studio at 211 Smith St., Wednesday, Dec. 13 from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. The public is invited to come in. For details, call Jean Harm at 672-2240.

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