

HAPPENINGS

What did you do over your summer vacation?

This summer the Sheridan Senior Center has a few new volunteer faces. “Volunteers” are now helping with the Senior Meals program and at the Green Boomerang Thrift Store.



TERRI HAYDEN

Junior high school students fall into an age conundrum over summer break; much too old for child care and too young to work, so why not volunteer? I have had great success with “volunteer” programs in the past in similar communities. Many of the students

have remained volunteers throughout high school and college and have returned to the organization as employees after receiving their degrees.

It is very important to instill a spirit of volunteerism early on in life. Volunteering can help the students learn new skills and gain confidence, experience meaningful work resulting in a sense of accomplishment, make new friends from a diverse age group while sharing their talents and gifts along the way, and have fun while meeting new people.

Volunteers were required to fill out a detailed application, call for an interview and set up a volunteer schedule. Parents were also required to sign a parental commitment letter supporting their teen and their volunteer work.

To say I was impressed with the Sheridan kids is an understatement! They came on time to interview, were poised and confident, and now show up early to volunteer. When asked, “Why do you want to volunteer at the Senior Center?” I had a variety of answers, Kailie wants to “be able to help others while hav-

ing fun and meeting new people”; Ashley needs to complete 10 hours of service for her junior honors society requirement; Jadyne wants “to help others in need”; Jaylin enjoys helping people; Phoenix wants to “have fun”; and Shannon is looking for a way to be more sociable, help her community and meet new people.

The volunteers have each committed to a set schedule each week, with time off for family activities, camps and vacations. Monday through Friday you will find one of our hard working kids at the senior meal site at Sheridan Junior High School and Heritage Towers. Duties may include holding the door as folks arrive, filling glasses with water and ice tea, playing card and word games with early arrivals, busing trays and visiting. One of the goals of this program is inter-generational, having the students enjoy and “break bread” with their new senior friends.

Our Green Boomerang volunteers are having way too much fun! They are learning how to “look over” donations and prep them for sale, assisting with window displays, and general store appearance. A big thanks to volunteers Deb Rice and Elaine Burke for taking them under their wings. We have even had Ashley and Katie increase their schedules because they were having so much fun.

Staff has been very impressed with the work ethic of all the volunteers, and love having them interact with the patrons.

Summer 2017 volunteers include Shannon Crump, Jadyne DeTavernier, Kailie Green, Jaylin Hollen, Ashley Reilly and Phoenix Stewart.

GUEST COLUMNIST TERRI HAYDEN is the director of volunteer services 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.

- The Sheridan Senior Center will be closed on Tuesday, July 4, in observance of Independence Day. The administrative offices, Day Break, Caregiver Support, Loan Closet and Help at Home will be open on July 3 and reopen on July 5.

- The Senior Center’s lunch will be served on July 4 at the Sheridan Junior High School, 500 Lewis St., 11:30 a.m. to 12:45 p.m.

- The phone number for the Senior Center’s home-delivered meals is 672-6079.

- Need a ride on July 4? Goose Creek Transit will be operating on limited hours by advance ride appointment on July 4. Call 675-RIDE (7433) as soon as you know your transportation needs. The cost is \$2.50 one-way for those 60 and older and \$4 one-way for those younger than 60.

- The AARP Safe Driver Course has been rescheduled from July 15 to July 22. The location has moved from the Sheridan Senior Center and will meet at Sheridan County Fulmer Public Library at 9:30 a.m.

- Are you new to the Sheridan community? You are invited to hear about the Sheridan Senior Center with Executive Director Carmen Rideout and Assistant Director Linda Gostas, on July 17 for Senior Center 101. Meet us at our location at 211 Smith St. No advance call-in is required but is appreciated by calling 672-2240.

- If you are 60 years and older, a Tongue River Valley resident, and have a small repair job that needs to be done, call Robin Ruff at 655-9419 with inquiries about the Senior Center’s TRV Handyman services.

- Welcome to the following new Senior Center volunteers in June! Rose Marie Buckley, Alice Warnke, Jane Kelley, Peggy and Jim Blaha, First Presbyterian Church of Sheridan, Ashley Reilly, Kailie Green, Jadyne DeTavernier, Phoenix Stewart, Jaylin Hollen, Shannon Crump and Paul Quinn.

Caregiver shares how support group helped her

FROM THE SHERIDAN SENIOR CENTER

SHERIDAN — It was a concerned friend that made the suggestion to Judy Knode. Family friend Mike Rathbun was checking in on Judy’s husband, Ralph, who was battling cancer. Judy Knode had joined the millions of Americans who were caring for a loved one with a long-term illness: she was a caregiver.

Rathbun had made that journey of care with his own mother and sister. He suggested Knode check out the Senior Center’s caregiver support group. Knode had read something about the support group in the paper but had put it aside.

“Mike said I think that would be a good place for you to go, otherwise, I probably wouldn’t have gone if someone hadn’t told me to go,” Knode said.

None of Knode’s friends had gone through the experience of caring for someone at home. Ralph Knode, a Korean Air Force veteran, qualified for support from the Department of Veterans Affairs. The couple utilized the VA medical services for qualifying veterans and the VA’s Mountain View hospice care.

Judy Knode needed more. A few weeks later, she called the Senior Center for information on the caregiver support group. She decided to follow her friend’s advice and attend. Knode was surprised what she discovered.

“There were several people in the group that I know but I didn’t know they were going,” she said. “One was a widow and another was caring for someone.”

Cancer was not unknown to the Knodes. Knode’s husband was diagnosed with



COURTESY PHOTO |

Judy Knode discovered valuable support resources for her as a caregiver through Stella Montano, director of family caregiver support services at the Sheridan Senior Center.

prostate cancer 32 years ago and successfully battled other cancers through the years. Now it was different. He wasn’t feeling or eating well and was dropping three pounds a week. He weighed over 200 pounds and Knode couldn’t lift her husband when he fell at home. The ambulance was called several times to help get Ralph Knode off the floor. His wife realized she needed more help. The caregiver support group was not the only surprise for Knode; she was connected to other resources within the Senior Center and from the Senior Center elsewhere.

“I thought all the Senior Center did was home-delivered meals,” Knode said.

One resource was the Senior Center’s loan closet that provides assistive equipment to people of

all ages. Stella Montano, director of family caregiver services, got the Knodes a hospital bed for Ralph to use at home until a new bed arrived through the VA. Knode was also connected to a walker and a floor brace to help her husband up and down.

“I didn’t know what (Ralph) needed. I didn’t even know where to start,” Knode said. “That (loan) closet is a godsend to a lot of people.”

Another surprise for Knode was finding out about the Elkhorn Valley Rehabilitation Center in Casper.

“That was the most surprising thing when Stella suggested that it was maybe a good place for us,” Knode said. “Ralph had lost his ability to walk and I thought, maybe they could help him walk again. Ralph

did pretty well when he got back from there.”

Elkhorn is a partner with several Sheridan agencies including the Senior Center. The agencies meet monthly to share their resources with each other through two groups, Agency Networking and Council of Social Agencies.

Knode has shared her and her husband’s story through the center’s 2017 Operation Independence fundraising campaign that was launched this month. She shares the benefits they gained from the Senior Center through the caregiver support program and wants to help get the word out to the community about the group.

“I thought it would be only help for me, but it’s a group helping each other,” Knode said. “There is a lot of help if you know where to go.”

Trump backs repeal-only health bill as ‘option’

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Donald Trump is pressuring wavering sen-

ators to back a Republican bill to repeal and replace former President Barack Obama’s health care law but is holding open a repeal-only option if Republicans can’t reach agreement over the July 4 recess, Trump’s top legislative aide says.

Marc Short, the White House’s legislative director, said Trump was making weekend calls and believed senators were “getting close” on passing a bill. But Short maintained that Trump continues to believe that repeal-only legislation should also be considered. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., has dismissed the suggestion.

McConnell says he intends to proceed with GOP legislation being negotiated during the week-long recess.

He has previously said if Republicans don’t reach

agreement, he will have to turn to Democrats, who want to fix Obama’s health care law without repealing it. “Our preference is to pass the bill the Senate has right now,” Short said. But he added: “If the replacement part is too difficult for Republicans to get together, then let’s go back and take care of the first step of repeal.” “That’s an option,” Short emphasized.

Trump on Friday tweeted the suggestion to repeal the Obama-era law right away and then replace it later, an approach that GOP leaders and the president himself considered but dismissed months ago as impractical and politically unwise. The tweet came amid continuing signs of GOP disagreement among moderates and conservatives over the bill. Republicans hold a 52-48

majority in the Senate. Just three GOP defections would doom the legislation, because Democrats are united in opposition.

Trump’s suggestion had the potential to harden divisions within the GOP as conservatives complain that McConnell’s bill does not go far enough in repealing Obama’s health care law while moderates criticize it as overly harsh in kicking people off insurance rolls, shrinking the Medicaid safety net and increasing premiums for older Americans.

“It’s not easy making America great again, is it?” McConnell said late Friday.

Short said the White House remained hopeful after Senate Republicans submitted two versions of the bill to the Congressional Budget Office for scoring over the recess.

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