

Lending a helping hand



The Sheridan Press/Blaine McCartney

Gwen Burgess, a case manager for the Sheridan Senior Center, talks with Toby Boozer about his apartment complex as she inspects it Wednesday afternoon in Sheridan. Currently 35, formerly homeless veterans, including Boozer, have secured housing through the efforts of Burgess.



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Toby Boozer signs paperwork for Gwen Burgess, a case manager for the Sheridan Senior Center, after she inspected his apartment complex Wednesday afternoon in Sheridan.

• Local woman provides housing help for low-income residents

By Michael Pearlman

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For Gwen Burgess, helping someone find a home is second nature.

From a small office located in a corner of the Sheridan Senior Center lobby, Burgess has quietly spent the past 10 years providing housing assistance and other services to low-income Sheridan residents.

Yet when she began administering a new program two years ago focused on helping homeless veterans secure housing, her willingness to go the extra mile drew notice from both her co-workers and the veterans she was helping.

Whether it's coordinating a social event for veterans she's assisted or locating an extra set of linens or dishes for a veteran to use in his home, Burgess is a shining example of selfless giving, says Diane Feather, Sheridan Senior Center services director.

"When Gwen got involved with veterans, she got personally involved," Feather added. "She's gone above and beyond, and I believe the veterans truly appreciate her."

Burgess' title at the Senior Center is case manager, but that barely does justice to the vital role she plays for low-income Sheridan residents struggling to make ends meet. Burgess administers the Section 8 Housing Choice voucher program, a government-subsidized housing assistance program for a low-income individuals and families that's currently helping about 170 Sheridan County residents afford housing.

She also conducts outreach for senior citizens in the community, administers the Low Income Energy Assistance Program, and helps seniors on Medicare.

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Gwen Burgess, a case manager for the Sheridan Senior Center, takes notes as she inspects the apartment of Sheridan resident Toby Boozer on Wednesday afternoon in Sheridan.