

# Gratitude, laughter and love when thinking of mom

Gratitude, laughter and love are all words I'd use to describe the relationship I have with my mom.

At 67 years young-at-heart (if not in body), the emphasis is always on the love and laughter, but the gratitude for her unending support isn't far behind. Those same three words just begin to describe Sheridan's Senior Center and its impact on our lives.

Before I moved my mom away from her friends and family in Peoria, Ill., I hadn't had any involvement with the Senior Center. I knew it to be a vibrant, growing and well-supported organization but really had had no personal experience.

No more! My mom and I both separately and sometimes together have availed ourselves of nearly every service possible at the Senior Center over last two years.

The Mini Bus ferried her around; Day Break kept her when she couldn't stay alone and I had an out-of-town meeting; delicious lunches have been enjoyed in the beautiful Center dining room; Home Delivered Meals came calling when she got out of the hospi-

tal and needed some nutritious food; volunteers have patiently answered tax return and Medicare questions; my little boys and I whooped it up with my mom at social events like the Harvest Ball; at-home services brought physical therapists and nurses to our home when she broke her shoulder; even the rental closet was raided for a wheelchair and walker.

The Senior Center will forever have my deep and everlasting gratitude for all the services it's provided when we were in need.

Since I was little, my mom has been an enthusiastic volunteer for everything from the hospital auxiliary to Junior League to Meals on Wheels and so many more. I learned giving of your time and talents from her during those Meals on Wheels days as we drove from house to house with our



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box of warm meals and brown bags.

Even at a young age, I understood how grateful the housebound are when you arrive with a smile and a meal — possibly the only face they'll see all

day. It made me feel special.

I'd forgotten how gratifying it is to be a Home Delivered Wheels delivery person until I volunteered a couple of months ago and was met with smiles, thanks and even a spontaneous "love you!" from a total stranger.

I am certain I had a perma-smile on my face the rest of the day. More love and gratitude — on both sides of the door.

Now that my mom has overcome so many serious health issues, she's ready to give back to the place and people who helped her. She volunteers as often as she can by joining the Day

Break crew at lunch and afterward to play games, do trivia and entertain the day's visitors there.

I've walked in a couple of times and you can hear the hoots and howls of laughter from down the hall. My mom always says she's only going to stay an hour, and two to three later, she's finally making her way to her car.

This time at Day Break allows my mom to escape the bonds her body imposes on her and frees her to laugh, love and share her gratitude for her life, regardless of its challenges. That's one of the intangible services the Senior Center provides.

And for all of them, we are grateful.

*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.*

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