

Senior Center can help as you age

Aging. The concept seems to have many meanings depending on how it is being discussed.

There are many clichés: “Aging isn't for sissies!” and “Getting older may be difficult, but it sure beats the alternative.”

Well, let's look at it realistically. Having spent the past 20 years working with people who are older, I have learned that aging is extremely individualized. Some of the “youngest” people I know are in their 80s and 90s.

And I think we've all met very old, curmudgeonly types in their 50s, 40s, and even 30s. Attitude surely has a lot to do with it.

Many years ago I worked in a residential facility primarily for people who are elderly. I met a wonderful couple, probably in their late 70s, who were residents there.

The woman talked about her mother, who had also been a resident of the facility. When she spoke of her mother, I assumed her mother had passed away.

It was weeks before I discovered that her mother, after recuperating in the facility from injury and illness, had moved back into her home to live independently! She was at that time in her mid-90s.

My mother once introduced me to a friend of hers who had just

turned 100 years old. The day I met this woman, she was wearing a fashionable dress and high heels. (I remember thinking how I had given up high heels at about age 45.)

As this lovely centenarian drove away after the party, my mom told me that this friend was a caregiver for her 80-year-old son, who was in frail health.

The lesson in this is that the number that is our age does not define us. Each of us is a composite of experience, genetics, lifestyle and circumstances. We are so much more than just a number.

Now that we've adjusted the way we think of aging, let's talk prevention. It's true that as we age, our bones become more brittle; we lose some of our flexibility and balance.

Our chance of having vision problems (macular degeneration, glaucoma, cataracts) also increases. Since these conditions may lead to debilitating falls and injuries, we should get proactive!



**Center
Stage**

Diane
Feather



A simple fall that would only cause temporary pain and a bruise at age 40 may cause a fracture, hospitalization, surgery and physical therapy at

age 70. So, keeping those bones as strong as possible is a great way to decrease our chances of a disability.

How do we do that? Nutrition and exercise! Also, grab bars, shower chairs, adequate lighting, good handrails and other adaptive equipment should be a priority.

These things should be in place before they are needed. Please don't wait until you are returning home from a hospital stay to consider it.

The Sheridan Senior Center is a valuable place for anyone who is a senior citizen or is hoping to become one, someday.

The dietitians will offer nutritional advice. There are many exercise opportunities at the center, including yoga and classes taught by a physical therapist.

The line dancers are amazing, as is the table tennis group. There

is a loan closet where shower chairs, walkers and other equipment may be borrowed.

The experts tell us that staying socially active is an important component of healthy aging. The Senior Center provides classes, parties, billiards, games, and a variety of meaningful volunteer opportunities.

That's right. We'll put you to work!

And if you do need some assistance to remain as independent as possible, for as long as possible, there are the In-Home Services. If hauling laundry around, changing your linens or vacuuming proves to be too challenging or risky, maybe we can help. Give us a call.

The Sheridan Senior Center: Dedicated to Quality of Life, Later in Life.

Diane Feather is director of In-Home Services at the Sheridan Senior Center. This program serves approximately 170 people in the community each month.

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.