

Your Senior Center is a happening place

Do you remember being a kid and wanting to be older so you could enjoy certain freedoms?

I do, and whether it was being old enough to wear makeup, go on a first date, or learn to drive, the usual response of "wait 'til you're older" from my parents seemed an eternity.

I think the last time I wished to be older was before I turned 21, the official age of adulthood. Although I no longer desire to be older, I don't dread birthdays either (so far anyway) and really can't think of a younger age that I'd want to revisit.

This is probably due to the fact that aging is inevitable and I want to see my children and grandchild grow older, but more importantly, the hope that I can age gracefully and in a healthy manner is paramount.

It is true that we fear most what we do not know. I think it has been through my involvement with the Senior Center and through casual observations that aging has taken on a more positive aspect for me.

Stepping through the doors of the Senior Center at lunchtime and into the dining room, one notices lots of people smiling, conversing and, of course, eat-

ing. On Tuesdays and Fridays, letters and numbers for bingo are being called out over the microphone — it is not a quiet place!

The kitchen is bustling and the parking lot is busy as volunteers are coming and going with their food carriers from the Home Delivered Meals area. After lunch there is card playing, dancing or Ping-Pong.

Of course, the mornings also offer lots of various activities. If you look at the monthly schedule, there is something going on five days a week from morning until evening with some activities scheduled for Saturday and Sunday.

Your Senior Center is a happening place. Although teens might have valid reason to complain about having nothing to do, seniors in Sheridan County certainly do not.

For those unable to take part in the goings-on of the center, many services are available that improve quality of life — for example, the Senior Companion



**Center
Stage**

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program or In-Home Services, just to name two.

I wish my parents, both deceased, had lived in Sheridan. Dad would have loved the opportunity to socialize during a game of pool or a card game, while Mom was being well

cared for in the Day Break program.

If you're not quite ready to participate in the classes or activities at the Senior Center, maybe volunteering is a possibility. With the first wave of baby boomers turning 60, the impact on services and programs is going to be huge.

According to, Deborah Fleming, Ph.D., clinical professor and director, Wyoming Geriatric Education Center, University of Wyoming College of Health Sciences, over the next two decades (by 2030), the United States will jump from having about 35 million persons over the age of 65 to 78 million.

The staff and board are keenly aware of this fact and are dedicated to maintaining the stability and financial viabil-

ity of the Senior Center today and in the future.

The Senior Center has allowed me contact with its clients through the Home Delivered Meals program. This weekly routine has been good for me; I feel great after my route, and it's fun seeing "my" people.

I am always greeted with a smile and thanked abundantly. I am glad to be able to do this small act, because I know that it is highly probable that I will be a recipient of some of these services down the road.

We all will grow older and challenges are guaranteed; however, instead of being reluctant to pass through the center's doors or ask for services, I can look forward to having a different relationship with these folks who care so much.

I invite you to come join in — you might just like it.

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.

Renetta Mischke is the Sheridan Senior Center board president. She is also a dedicated volunteer for the center's Home Delivered Meals Program.