

# Living with the aging

The family noted changes over time in my father-in-law, Ed, when we gathered together in Sheridan.

My mother-in-law, Becky, reported that Ed was becoming increasingly forgetful, and she found herself reminding him at all times what to do next. In 2002, at age 82, Ed was diagnosed with dementia.

Becky, at 79, found herself in a new role as caregiver for Ed. As adult children living out of town, we didn't know what could be done to help when we lived so far away; three of Ed's four children lived in other states.

In a phone conversation with Becky, she told my husband and me about a program at the Sheridan Senior Center called Day Break. We hadn't heard of such a program and were intrigued.

We were told that Day Break is a day facility for seniors who require a supervised environment during the day. We planned to visit this Day Break on our next trip to Sheridan.

Becky took Ed to Day Break a few days each week. While in Sheridan, we accompanied her to take Ed to Day Break.

We could immediately see that Ed was genuinely happy to be there; the staff greeted him with warmth and kindness. They showed us the facility and talked about the program.

Each client's needs are different, so activities and schedules are customized for each. Clients could come to Day Break daily or on select days.

At Day Break, Ed and other clients would have a nutritious breakfast, lunch and snacks, had the trained staff help them with taking their medications, and were invited to participate in a variety of activities. If needed, the staff would supervise or assist the clients with bathing.

Families are invited to drop in to visit. We were assured that Ed was in the right place and that Becky was getting



## Center Stage

Lois Bell



support when we couldn't be there with them. It was comforting to us to know that there was such a support facility in town for Ed and for Becky.

Ed continued to be the gentle spirit with the quick humor I had met years earlier. He enjoyed the many and varied activities at Day Break.

The staff tells us about Mexican Day at Day Break; Ed insisted on being called Eduardo all day in the spirit of the occasion. Ed encouraged the other folks at Day Break

to join in or showed them how to play a game.

We heard reports of days that Ed was the only guy at Day Break. Ed didn't appear to mind those days at all.

Day Break helped to keep Ed at home as long as possible while providing Becky, and the children living away, with assistance and support.

The Senior Center not only cared for Ed, but also for Becky as his caregiver. The center offers a caregiver support program and invites all caregivers — children, spouses, nieces, nephews, grandchildren — to participate.

During the years Ed was in Day Break, Becky attended the family caregiver support group meetings at the center. She continued attending this support group even after Ed was no longer at home.

The Family Caregiver Support group became a very important part of her life helping her in her caregiver role. Today, Becky periodically stops by the Support Group on Monday mornings just to say “hi” and to advise the attendees that they and their family members are in the right place.

*Lois Bell moved with her family to Sheridan in 2004. She serves as LINCS coordinator at the Senior Center. Her job is to connect seniors and families of seniors with resources at the Senior Center and within the community.*