

FIFTYFIVE forward



Winter, 2016/2017

Annual Meeting Welcomes New Board, Honors Staff And Volunteers

A large crowd was on hand for the 48th annual meeting of Senior Services, Inc. of Wichita, held Sept. 20 at the Downtown Senior Center.

The event bid farewell to outgoing board members Sarah Feiertag, Steve Green, Dr. Bruce McMullen and Carla Shepherd.

Three new board members, Lila Halibi, Westar Energy, Janet Schwindaman, community volunteer and Greg Victors, Haysville School District, were welcomed and introduced. David Alexander, Bob Bundy, Mike Bukaty, Nancy Lawrence and Phil May were approved for a second term on the board.

New officers of the board were announced as follows: Hank Blase, chair, Michael Steinberg, vice chair, Mike Bukaty, treasurer, and Eric Calvert, secretary.

Outstanding volunteers from different programs and senior centers were honored. The volunteers of the year and their programs are:

Meals on Wheels - Hugh Moxley, Love, Inc., and Wichita Transformation, LLC;
Northeast Senior Center - Frances Williams;



Board officers Hank Blase, Eric Calvert, Michael Steinberg and Mike Bukaty with Laurel Alkire and Dawson Grimsley.

Linwood Senior Center - Starla Criser;
Orchard Park Senior Center - Connie Zech;
Roving Pantry - Ali VanDoren;
Senior Employment - Helen Rowe.

Six employees were honored for a cumulative 60 years of service to Senior Services. Honorees are:

5 years - Jenevieve Clark, Meals on Wheels, Diane Nutt, Orchard Park, Carolyn Rutherford and Roberta Willis, both of Respite Care;

20 years - Monalisa Lewis, Meals on Wheels kitchen, Pat Shoemaker, Respite Care.

Dawson Grimsley was the guest speaker. Following his presentation, refreshments were served.



Cherie Wenderott-Shields, director of the Senior Employment Program (SEP), with Helen Rowe, the Volunteer of the Year for SEP.



Homebound Seniors Rely On Roving Pantry

For people who are homebound, programs like Meals on Wheels and Roving Pantry provide their lifeline for survival.

“I can’t live without either one of them,” says Bill Brewer.

A retired computer technician, Brewer says he doesn’t own a car, can’t afford to take taxis, and is no longer able to walk the several blocks from his house to the bus stop. The hot meal at noon and the individuals from Roving Pantry who do his weekly grocery shopping give him the freedom to stay in his own home.

Elva Hall was a strong, self-reliant individual who took pride in her ability to stay independent, but a serious surgery and subsequent treatment robbed her of her ability to get out and about. Now homebound, she relies on Roving Pantry to shop for and deliver her groceries.

For more than 40 years, Roving Pantry has been shopping for those 60+ on a daily basis. And for 38 of those years, Opal Smith has been at the helm, directing her employees, taking orders by phone or email, sorting purchases, tallying costs and ensuring that deliveries are made on time and accurately.

“I love it!” she exclaims, eyes twinkling. “I love to shop anyway, but it is a unique and much-needed service.”

The team starts their day early, arriving at Dillons at 5 a.m. On any given day, they shop for up to 20 clients, following the order sheets prepared two days earlier by phone. They divide the city into sections and shop for one section each day. After lining up their grocery



carts and checking out, they deliver the week’s groceries to each recipient and collect a check for the amount due. Once a month, they remit the month’s tally to Dillons.

Opal takes great pride in their accuracy and reliability.

“In 38 years, we have only missed one day, and that is because a snowstorm knocked out Dillon’s electricity,” she says. “Only one day, and it wasn’t our fault.”

They also try to stretch their clients’ dollars, using coupons that clients and staff clip and donate. The coupons are all organized in categories by Bonnie Kessler, a volunteer who comes in once a week, and staff members. The shoppers check each order and attach related discounts.

“I have no family here,” Elva explains, noting she would not be able to remain in her home without the help. She also enjoys the contact with the people. “They are so friendly and courteous when they bring in my groceries.”

Chuckling, she says even though she was accustomed to caring for herself, she feels a sense of relief when it is raining or snowing. “I’m glad to have the help.”

“Their service allows me to live in my own house,” Brewer says.

“I feel that God was in the making of this program,” Elva says. “It is 200 percent good for me!”

(If you or someone you know could use the Roving Pantry service, please call 267-4378. The program is always taking new clients.)



Senior Employment Program Connects Clients To New Jobs

When she was 43, Mary Hargis gave up her job teaching government and economics to care for her mother.

She had tried professional caregivers but was unhappy with the quality of the assistance her mother was receiving, so she resolved to do it herself. She moved her mother into her home and devoted herself full-time to nursing her.

After her mother's death in 2005, Mary found intermittent employment selling antiques, doing internet sales and working as a personal caregiver. It was enough to live on, but failed to generate sufficient money for her to hold on to her home. She ended up homeless, relying on friends for a place to stay.

Her brother died in February of 2015 and left his property in Wichita to Mary, so she moved back to her home town and began to look for full-time employment.

"I tried for quite a long time, but most were things I couldn't do, like standing on my feet all day, which just leads to long-term health issues," she says. She also discovered a number of employers were not interested in hiring someone now in her 60's.

"A friend at the Y told me about the Senior Employment Program and how good it was," Mary adds. "I went to a job fair and they gave me a list of available jobs."

A short time later, she landed a new position doing document preparation at CPRF, and now happily devotes her days to earning a living. She enthusiastically gives the Senior Employment Program full credit.

For over 30 years, the Senior Employment Program (SEP) has been helping older Kansans find employment. Throughout those three decades, they have literally placed thousands of people 55 years of age and older with jobs.

"We find that many people can't afford to retire or don't want to sit home," says Cherie Wenderott-Shields, SEP director. Each Monday she creates a list of available jobs and posts them prior to the Tuesday morning job club. She also posts them on two large job boards in the Downtown Senior Center. She says she identifies around 100 open positions a week.



Mary Hargis at work at CPRF.

Many come from the employers, who contact her directly. Others she seeks out from the Internet or job placement centers.

Those wishing to enter the program go through a two-hour mandatory orientation. Wenderott-Shields helps to counsel them on jobs that would be a good fit for their individual skills and desires.

The program receives up to 900 requests for employment a year, and the Senior Employment Program successfully places at least 500 of those. The program has received awards from the State Department of Commerce for its high placement rate, and has consistently been recognized by the Wichita Business Journal as the most successful job placement program in the city.

The Senior Employment Program had humble beginnings as an informal help wanted board. In September of 1982, it was officially launched as a joint venture between Senior Services and KETCH after a federal grant was received to create a jobs placement program. For 20 years, KETCH officially handled business placements while Senior Services handled in-home and respite care placements. Since 2003, it has been solely operated by Senior Services.

"It's a win-win situation," says Laurel Alkire, executive director of Senior Services. "Seniors are able to remain active, contributing members of society."

“For what you put in, you get a lot of blessings back.”

Carnesha Tucker breathes a prayer of thanksgiving for the day when Frances Williams joined Northeast Senior Center.

“Ms. Frances is a God-sent volunteer,” Carnesha says. “She has always made herself available to help in whatever form or fashion that is needed around the center. Frances is also a part of our Special Events Committee. This committee is responsible for planning the menu for parties and any special events. This also includes setting up, serving and cleaning up.”

As if all that isn’t enough, Carnesha also discovered Frances was the one responsible for planting flowers and trimming bushes outside. As the director of the center, Carnesha is grateful for all the extra volunteer help.

Frances spent her professional career serving as a medical assistant in hospitals, then a doctor’s office, before retiring in 2000. She then took care of her husband for 11 years. They shared 55 years together prior to his death in 2011, raising four children and adding



multiple grandchildren and great-grandchildren later on.

In 2012, Frances suffered a massive heart attack. She is grateful to have survived.

“I thank God for a second chance,” Frances says. “I decided to make life more enjoyable, so I looked to see what I could do to help.”

That year is when she joined the membership at Northeast, where she enjoys educational presentations, exercise classes, the computer room, eating lunch, making jewelry and as a member of TOPS.

“I enjoy what I do,” she says. “I suggest all members volunteer. For what you put in, you get a lot of blessings back.”



Respite Program Provides A Breath Of Relief For Caregivers

Pat Curry devotes her days to caring for her husband, Jim. As a 24-hour caregiver, she looks forward to her once-a-week break from duty with the arrival of her respite worker from Senior Services of Wichita.

"This has given me a shot in the arm," Pat says. "I have the freedom to know he is being taken care of while I have three hours to do whatever I want."

Jim has Alzheimer's, which forces Pat to not leave him alone. Even though caregiving every day is exhausting, Pat says she will be with her husband at home for as long as possible.

"He was there for me," she says. "We've been married 33 years and I won't forget him. I was so glad to learn about the respite program."

Their respite worker, Pat Shoemaker, was an immediate hit. "She is perfect," Pat says. "She is like a friend and loves my dogs."

Pat Shoemaker says the feeling is mutual. "I think they are wonderful," she says. "We just really hit it off and I love their two dogs. I enjoy going there."

Recognizing the need 24-hour caregivers have for an occasional time away, Senior Services, Inc., of Wichita started its respite program in 1987 with a grant and a request that the program serve as many people as possible.

"That is how we developed the three-hour blocks of time once a week," says Laurel Alkire, executive director of Senior Services and the creator of the program. "We started by recruiting workers from our Senior Employment Program. We wanted older people as they share many of the same interests and backgrounds as those they serve."

In the years since it was founded, respite care has provided relief for thousands of caregivers.

Pat has been a respite worker since 1996. She currently provides respite for six people a week. "I have met a lot of good people," she says.

For 27 years, Dolores Cooper has served as



Pat Shoemaker with James and Pat Curry.

Photo by Gerald McCoy.

the coordinator for respite care. She takes great pride in the quality of their workers. "We are dependable, and the families know they can count on us," she says.

Each employee is carefully screened, then receives two days of training on dealing with chronic conditions and spiritual issues. Two inservice sessions are held twice a year for additional education. Employees can provide light housekeeping, meal preparation and help with transfers, but primarily they serve as a companion.

There was no fee until 2012 when a \$4.00 and hour charge was instituted. It increased to \$10.00 an hour in 2016..

"For \$30 a week, the caregivers can go to church, buy groceries or take a nap without worrying," Laurel says. "They all say it is well worth it and wish they could have more."

"I can't say enough about the program," Pat says. "It gives me something to look forward to each week."

Meals On Wheels A Lifeline For Homebound Seniors

To Drew Brenner, Meals on Wheels is much more than a nutritious meal delivered each day.

Drew works four jobs to support his mother, Barbara, and himself, and says it is a “huge relief” to him to know someone is checking on her every day.

“I don’t have to worry about rushing home, because I know someone is knocking on her door between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. each day,” he explains. “It takes the stress off me.”

He praises the quality of the volunteers who deliver the meals. “They become friends,” he says.

“All of the volunteers are heroes,” he stresses, noting they all have “a special place” in his mother’s heart. “She gets up early to make sure she looks her best and then waits for them to arrive. It gives her something to look forward to each day, and provides a contact to the outside world.”

His mother spent more than 40 years working at Wesley Medical Center, but due to unexpected circumstances, lost her retirement savings and needed extra help.

“She got really sick and we almost lost her,” he recalls. “She almost lost her home as well. I couldn’t let that happen. I work all these jobs because she was always there for me. If I didn’t take care of her, she would be in a nursing home.”



Barbara with her coloring book.
Photos by Gerald McCoy.



When his mother first came home after her serious illness, they signed her up for Meals on Wheels. Volunteer Kathy Wood was the first person to bring her a meal.

“She just came in and hugged me,” Drew remembers. “I knew then everything was going to be great. The following Christmas, she brought mom a scarf. They have become really good friends.”

Just a few weeks ago, Kathy brought Barbara an adult coloring book.

“It meant more to my mom than anything,” he says. “Kathy is an angel.”

Meals on Wheels serves 900 seniors each day, and has been doing so since 1969.

“We couldn’t do what we do without our volunteers,” says Sherri Flipppo, director of Meals on Wheels. “For the number of years we have been doing this and the number of volunteers we have, it is just amazing what an impact they continue to have on the people they serve. Every survey we do, every card and letter we receive, just praises our volunteers to the skies. We are blessed.”

One recent letter from a client summarizes the feelings expressed by many:

“I thank you all for my meals and I appreciate these delivery people. God bless you all.”

“What you do touches a lot of people,” Drew says.

“You Make A Life By What You Give”

As a teenager, Susan frequently found herself in trouble and eventually ended up pregnant and alone. The arrival of her new child, however, provided a wake-up call that she heeded, learning how to put the needs of someone else before her own. Now, as an adult, she is giving back by serving as a mentor to teenage mothers, sharing her life experience from a perspective that empathizes with many of them.

Many mentors work in caregiving professions, as nurses, social workers and teachers, and have observed the need for positive role models for young people.

After retiring, former kindergarten teacher Janice Cribbs wanted to volunteer doing something meaningful. She read about the mentor program and decided that was exactly what she was looking for.

Her first mentee was a young girl with a year-old baby, living in a two-bedroom house with her mother and eight siblings. From the start, her mentor became a lifeline for her and her child. When her mother kicked her out, she called her mentor. Contacts were made with the Wichita Children’s Home to provide temporary housing.

“I enjoy children and young adults,” Janice says. “I am a mom and a good listener.”

After teaching young children for 30 years, Janice stresses she learned how to interact with and care for children. She and her mentee have built a strong bond, enjoying dining out, window shopping in the mall, visiting the library and book store and going to the park.

When the last of her seven children reached the status of teenager, Flossie Alexander wanted to reach out to more children. She learned of the mentor program from her husband, David, and immediately knew that would be a great fit for her.

“I was a young mother, so I know first-hand what issues they face,” Flossie explains. “Family is not always supportive and not always the best option. Sometimes they just need a sympathetic ear to offer advice without judging.”

After retiring from Koch Companies



Stacey Gladfelter with her mentee, Alexis, and her baby.

Services, LLC, Marsha Helmer wanted to find opportunities to positively impact the lives of others. She volunteered in her neighborhood elementary school providing tutoring and then read about the mentor program. She immediately volunteered for that as well, and is currently starting her third match. She says the rewards are immense.

“It is gratifying to be able to play a part in the life of a young mom and her child, whether it is sharing life experiences, being a good friend, acting as a sounding board or providing an alternative point of view,” she expresses. “It is also heartwarming to see a young mother’s confidence in her parenting skills increase over time, as well as to observe the developmental progress of her child.”

The mentor program at Senior Services has expanded twice this year, and recently decided to expand again to include teenage boys looking for male role models. Efforts are underway to recruit additional women and now men willing to give eight hours a month to building a better future for young parents.

Liz Buggs says her decision to become a mentor was based on her own life.

“I’m tired of too many young people being left alone to become depressing statistics,” she stresses. “I could have been one, too, but I was blessed to have someone help me. Now I have a chance to show some young person they don’t have to be one of those statistics. That they can take an active part in changing their lives and people will help. I want to be one of those helpers. It’s what God made me to do and I am happy about it.”



Senior Services

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Senior Services, Inc. of Wichita
is pleased to announce the formation
of an exciting new group,
Women On The Move.

Join The Groove And Get Your Move On!

Enjoy dinner out on the town or pick a play or a movie to attend in the company of new friends! Each month will feature four activities and events you can select from.

- Must be a woman 55 plus
- Paid member of Senior Services of Wichita (\$25 annually)
 - \$10 per year Women On the Move membership
 - Sign up now at any of the Senior Centers
- Facebook page for members only to post pictures, etc.
- Email address is: wearewomenonthemove@gmail.com
- Newsletter each month with activities - choose the ones that interest you