

SENIOR COMPANIONS

"Sharing Friendship At Home"

Highlights

Fall 2021 • Issue 90

Circulation 3,100

Senior Companions Recognition!

Senior Companions Celebrated at Recognition Events with "Life is a Picnic" Theme

We honored the Senior Companions this August in Watertown, Sioux Falls, and Rapid City at Picnics, complete with ants, bees, and lady bugs. Several of our Senior Companions received the Lifetime Presidential Volunteer Service Award for serving over 4,000 hours. Proud recipients include Patricia Flittie (Sioux Falls), Nita Grover (Watertown), DeAnna Hass (Sioux Falls), Lorraine Kracke (Brookings), Markita McConnell (Rapid City), Lenis Pato (Rapid City), Connie Peters (Sioux Falls), Theresa Roberts (Dell Rapids), Wanda Sanftleben (Sioux Falls), Geraldine Schnabel (Sioux Falls), Linda Starks (Rapid City), and Arlette Stelter (Spearfish). They received a certificate, a commemorative pin, and a letter from President Biden. Our longest serving Companion in the state is Bernice Kjos (Sioux Falls), who has volunteered 13 years, giving over 13,000 hours to her many clients through the years.

Senior Companions and guests at the Elks Lodge in Watertown were entertained by A.J. Sherrill, who led a sing-along of old time favorites. In Sioux Falls, local musician Don McKenna sang several tunes accompanied by his guitar at Our Savior's Lutheran Church. David Greff played the keyboard while leading the group

in song at the Journey Museum in Rapid City.

Representatives from US Congressional offices read letters of appreciation and recognition at all three events. State legislators, city and county council members, advisory council members, and referral station representatives also attended.



Senior Companions serving the Black Hills



Senior Companions serving the Sioux Falls area



Senior Companions serving northeastern South Dakota

Making a difference...

Linda and Jo

On a beautiful August afternoon, Jo opened the front door and invited me into her home. After sitting down, Jo began with: "Linda is not only a Senior Companion to me, but she is also my friend."

Born and raised near Stephenville, Newfoundland, Canada, Jo (Josephine) spent some time in the civil service working as a communications operator at Ernest Harmon Air Force Base and later at Goose Bay, Labrador, AFB. In the mid-1950's her sister invited Jo to visit Mitchell, SD, where Jo met and married her husband while he was still in college. They raised four children in Mitchell and when Jo's husband retired after 27 years as a bank vice president, they moved to Rapid City to be closer to their now adult child.

Being a loving wife and grandmother occupied Jo for several years until her husband died. A few years later she learned that the Senior Companion Program could help her with the various errands, tasks, and paperwork needed in her everyday



Linda Starks and Jo Blocker

life. So when Linda was assigned to help Jo out five years ago, they began a lasting friendship.

Linda describes Jo as loveable, gracious, and kind. Whether in a grocery store, the Dollar Tree, or even Hardware Hanks, Jo is friendly with everyone, including little children. She greets everyone with a "hi sweetheart," or "hello darlin'" and strikes up a conversation as if they were old friends. Jo has even been known to play the spoons when her favorite

country singer, Alan Jackson, comes on the radio. Linda says that Jo enjoys talking and praying each night with her grandson, who attends the South Dakota School of Mines. And while she no longer attends Mass in person, she takes comfort in watching services on the television every Sunday.

All in all, Linda and Jo enjoy each other's company, talking frequently by phone when they aren't together, sharing the ups and downs of the day. But isn't that what the Senior Companion Program is about . . . friendship?

Wanda and Liz

The pain of depression can cause people to withdraw, but a supportive friendship can make a huge difference in a person's quality of life. The Senior Companion Program offers that supportive relationship when a Companion is matched with a client. Wanda was assigned as Liz's Senior Companion in 2016, and they became fast friends. "We immediately clicked," says Liz. Grocery shopping, lunch dates, and trips to thrift stores to see what treasures they can find are how they spend their weekly visits. A recent find is the Habitat for Humanity Restore.

The ladies shared a funny story about one of their treasure hunting trips to Goodwill. It was raining, so they had their umbrellas in tow and made their way into the store. Once inside, they put the umbrellas into their cart and began to hunt for treasures. It wasn't until later, after they left, that they realized they had forgotten their umbrellas in the cart.



Wanda Sanftleben and Liz Gogue

"We thought for sure they would mistake them for inventory," Wanda said. "So, the following week, we made our way back to Good Will to see if our umbrellas were in lost and found or if we had to buy them!" Liz laughed. They were happy to find the umbrellas in lost and found, and "no purchase was necessary;" the ladies laughed!

On a more serious note, Wanda and Liz talked about how their friendship has helped with their depression. Liz

says, "Wanda is the best anti-depressant for me, and when I start to withdraw, she reminds me that it's more interesting to be out in the world than hiding in my apartment." Friends aren't just for fun, they can be lifesaving too. The ladies share that they are each other's lifeline. When one is feeling down, the other will throw that lifeline, and things just seem a little brighter. Wanda remarks, "Everyone needs a friend who you can laugh with and cry and even get mad with."

Station Spotlight

Avera@Home



Kay Ferraro and Jennifer Finley

When you or a loved one need medical assistance, Avera@Home has multiple services to offer in Pierre and much of South Dakota. They provide professional health care services to patients and their families in the comfort of their own homes. They also provide end-of-life care in the hospital, a long-term care facility, or in the patient's own home.

If the need is for medical services, Avera@Home sends out an intake provider, such as Kay Ferraro, to assess what services are needed. She can help determine what is necessary for the client to return to regular activities of daily living. This might include physical therapy, medication management, wound care, post-operative care, and whatever might be needed to transition from hospital to home. She can also ascertain if there is need for personal care services normally provided by a home health aide, such as bathing, housekeeping, and shopping. Avera@Home also works with many other services

in the community to assist families with personal, family, and financial problems that may occur as a result of an illness, disability, or injury.

If the need is for end-of-life care, Avera@Home helps to make the person comfortable in the chosen setting. This can include communicating with the physician about medications and pain management and helping the family understand the patient's needs and wishes. Hospice care can also include the emotional and spiritual needs of the patient and the whole family to provide a peaceful and comfortable environment.

In Pierre, one of the things Avera proudly provides is a pinning ceremony for veterans. Working with Ft. Meade (Sturgis), they verify the veteran's service, obtain certification, and meet at the veteran's home for a solemn ceremony as a way to thank the veteran for his/her service.

One of the services that Avera offers in conjunction with Senior Companions is respite services for hospice patients. When the caregiver of a patient needs to leave the home to either buy groceries, get a haircut, or visit a friend, a Senior Companion can sit with the patient and talk with them, play a game, or just keep them company while watching television. Jennifer Finley, agency manager in Pierre, says that the Senior Companion program helps enormously with this service. "We don't know what we would do without the Companion to help us." And Kay points out that the therapy dog the Companion brings along with her is most helpful in comforting the patient when needed. "Pumpkin is very popular with the patients and their families alike," Kay says, and is always a welcome guest.

AmazonSmile - Support the Senior Companion Fund

When you shop at [AmazonSmile](#), they will donate a portion of your eligible purchases the Senior Companion Fund! We can receive .5% of all purchases made on AmazonSmile. To sign up--just visit the AmazonSmile page ([click here](#)) and follow these steps: Log in to your account, and search for "Senior Companion Fund" (look for the small orange "Supporting" banner under the Search bar. From there you can select Senior Companion Fund as your charity recipient). It's that easy! Remember that when you make purchases, you must always do so from the Amazon Smile page (not the Amazon general page) in order for us to receive the donation. Also note: AmazonSmile cans now be accessed on the Amazon app on most smart phones. Instructions can be found here: <https://www.amazon.com/b?ie=UTF8&node=15576745011>.

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Elaine Pye and Her Therapy Dog Pumpkin Pye

Del Bartels/Capitol Journal



Elaine Pye and Pumpkin Pye

In addition to serving as a Senior Companion in Pierre, Elaine is also known for her visits around town with her therapy dog Pumpkin.

As far as Elaine Pye is aware, her tiny dog — Pumpkin Pye — is the only trained, tested and certified therapy dog in Pierre. And both are keeping busy with visits to the Rawlins Municipal Library, Cultural Heritage Center, nursing homes and other facilities to help calm and ease youngsters and the not-so-young.

“Many people have companion dogs. Those are not therapy animals,” Pye said. “Pumpkin has a registration number for certification. He has a tag that reads ‘I am a therapy dog.’ He has the disposition of a cocker spaniel, but I think he is a spaniel and pomeranian mix. ‘Pound hounds’ are the best ones to be trained as therapy dogs.”

Cindy Bailey, director of the Sioux Falls Therapy Dog Chapter, said service and therapy dogs are not the same things. “Service dogs can go anywhere,” she said. “Therapy dogs go where there is an agreement with the facility, a kind of partnership or mutual agreement.” Bailey said that service dogs assist their owner or handler, while therapy dogs provide therapy to others. Their role is to go to hospitals, assisted living centers, libraries and schools and other places to provide emotional support to whomever they are working with.

There are approximately 75 such certified dogs in the greater Sioux Falls area. To the best of Bailey’s knowledge, their chapter is the only chapter of its national organization in South Dakota, though there could be other organizations that certify therapy dogs.

Pye got into therapy dogs by accident about five years ago, while living in Brunswick, Georgia. She said Pumpkin was the only dog in the pound not barking and screaming. Pye found she sometimes needed that same calmness herself.

A woman noted how traffic didn’t seem to bother Pumpkin when the two were walking in downtown Brunswick. The woman invited Pye and Pumpkin to a 12-week therapy dog class. “Technically, we (owners) are being trained also,” Pye said.

Therapy dogs visit various facilities. Pumpkin sits and listens to children striving to improve at reading at the Rawlins Municipal Library in Pierre. “Adults can sometimes be kind of hard on kids learning to read. Pumpkin just sits there and listens,” Pye said. She added that kids sometimes even thank Pumpkin after a reading session.

“Once a month, the library hosts reading with Pumpkin Pye, a little therapy dog that helps children build reading confidence,” library director Robin Schrupp said. “Young readers pick up a book and read it to the dog. The dog is patient and non-judgmental. The kids seem to like it. Elaine Pye is with Therapy Dogs International. She is a patron and we just got to talking about it one day and thought it would be fun.”

Pye compares therapy dogs to service dogs, though they are not... “You don’t touch them when they are working,” she said. “Until he sits down, you can’t pet him. After he checks you out and sits down, then he gets lovin’. And he really milks it at times.”

At the Cultural Heritage Center where Pye volunteers as a greeter, Pumpkin also says hello to the visitors. Pye estimated Pumpkin volunteered about 1,000 hours in a calendar year. “I want to make it clear that Pumpkin is here only because he is a certified therapy dog,” Dorinda Daniel, volunteer coordinator for the South Dakota State Historical Society, said. “When people see Pumpkin, their usual reaction is a great big smile on their faces. And Pumpkin only approaches if they indicate they want that.”

Pye said that her dog does not visit the Pierre hospital, mostly because it is too small compared to big-city hospitals that commonly allow therapy dogs. Pye and Pumpkin do visit the Mary House and other retirement facilities. Pye also volunteers as a Senior Companion, and Pumpkin often goes with.

“We are all over the place,” Pye said. “My rule, though, is I don’t think dogs should be where people eat, such as restaurants. Having a therapy dog visit is all free — that’s the whole idea. You don’t make money with a therapy dog. Anyone with a therapy dog is a volunteer. Sometimes at major hospitals, you might be offered lunch.”

Scams . . . BEWARE!

The following are scams that are prevalent in South Dakota currently:

You may have received an invitation for a free dinner to listen to a talk about how stem cells can cure almost any ailment. The price is huge – affecting your wallet and your health. You have no proof what they are injecting into your body. There are very few proven and approved applications of stem cells. Always check with your physician.

Text scams are on the rise and may read...

- Your credit card has been compromised.
- Your Medicare number has been compromised.
- Your utilities haven't been paid.
- Thank you for your enrollment.

They want you to respond and might ask you for personal identifiable information and/or try to get you to pay to get the problem cleared up by putting money on gift cards.

According to AARP, there's a robocall that's making its rounds across the country. It goes like this:

"Hi, this is Becky, your patient advocate working closely with Medicare. Currently, Medicare is offering precautionary genetic cancer screening nationwide and has recommended that anyone over the age of 50 be tested. These tests help to detect early signs of cancer and are covered by your insurance. If you do not act soon, Medicare may label you as ineligible for coverage. Please press 1 to speak to a specialist..."

How to fight back:

- Say no to genetic-testing services from someone who calls you on the phone. Get a genetic test only from your regular physician.
- Be highly cautious about giving out your Medicare number.
- Don't accept a test kit in the mail unless your own doctor ordered it.
- Always review your Medicare Summary Notice or explanation of benefits.

Contact your local Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP).
Call 877-808-2468 to find your nearest SMP.

WANTED . . .

Senior Companion Volunteers

Are you or someone you know want to give back to their community? We are looking for outgoing and friendly people 55 or older and are willing to serve 15 hours a week for the Senior Companion Program. Give us a call at the Senior Companions offices at 605-361-1133 in Sioux Falls, 605-721-8884 in Rapid City, or toll- free at 888-289-1210 and we will share the great benefits of becoming a Senior Companion. Senior Companions receive an hourly stipend if income eligible, mileage reimbursement and other benefits.

Our Senior Companions provide weekly, scheduled visits to older individuals who are living independently in their homes or apartments, who need assistance with transportation, meal planning and preparation, light housekeeping, playing cards, reminiscing or just enjoying the friendship of a peer. Companions do things that friends do.

Our staff is available to share information about the Program. If your church or special interest group would like to hear more, please call to schedule a time. We need your help to continue to make our Senior Companion Program the best it can be!

Don't forget to "like" our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/seniorcompanionsofsd so you can keep up with the latest goings on with the Program. Our web address is www.good-sam.com/scpsd.



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Thank you . . .

We wish to thank the physicians who donate wellness exams for our Senior Companions.

It takes many community partners to make our Program successful. We appreciate this in-kind donation from the medical community.

Welcome

to these new Senior Companions

Steve Ferley (Rapid City)

Ed Wilson (Watertown)

Dee Shroyer (Rapid City)

Senior Companions Highlights is published twice a year by the Senior Companion Program. Fall 2021; Issue 90

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