

SENIOR COMPANIONS

Highlights

"Sharing Friendship At Home"

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Senior Companions

Were Recognized and Celebrated at Events in August

We honored the Senior Companions this August in Watertown, Sioux Falls, and Rapid City at Hawaiian Luau. Several of our Senior Companions received the Lifetime Presidential Volunteer Service Award for serving over 4,000 hours. Proud recipients included Lois Chapin and Debra Knecht from Aberdeen and Elaine Pye from Pierre. They received a certificate, a commemorative pin, and a letter from President Biden. Our longest serving Companion in the state is Sharon Rose-Pearson in Spearfish, who has volunteered for over 11 years, giving over 14,596 hours to her many clients through the years.

Senior Companions and guests at the Elks Lodge in Watertown were entertained by Heather Andrie, a wonderful songstress from Brookings. In Sioux Falls, local band Surfin' Safari performed many old rock 'n roll tunes at Our Savior's Lutheran Church. Linda Carpenter and Rex Field played guitar and keyboard, while leading the group in song at the Journey Museum in Rapid City.



Senior Companions Serving the Sioux Falls Area

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 Northeastern SD



Stories of Making a Difference

Steve & John

Two lives so different, yet drawn together when one needed a friend. In the spring of 2021, Steve called the Senior Companion office in Rapid City and expressed interest in becoming a volunteer. The following week, JoAnn called and related that her husband was increasingly befuddled and she needed someone to stay with John while she participated in quilting at her church.

Steve's application was processed and he completed training in the fall. In John's mind, the fall was the beginning of this "year" as he is a retired school teacher. Someone to listen to his stories is just what he needed; he has a million stories! John was raised in an orphanage in Sioux Falls (along with his twin brother), moved to Boys Town to attend high school, did a short stint with the army reserves, and then completed college to become a teacher. In 1969, John began teaching and coaching at Stevens High School



in Rapid City where he met and married fellow teacher, JoAnn.

Meantime, Steve was born in Iowa and raised in Philip, SD. Destined to become a jeweler like his father, he earned a business degree at USD and then apprenticed with a watchmaker in St. Paul and a jeweler in Norfolk, NE. He worked at several jewelers in the Midwest before he was offered a position running a gem factory in Bangkok, Thailand. A few moves later he came back to South Dakota and opened an engraving shop called Scribbles in Rapid City while

simultaneously taking over his father's jewelry store in Philip, SD. After retiring he held a couple of fun jobs before inquiring about the Senior Companion Program.

Now, these two "retired geezers" sit on a deck above Rapid Creek in a home John and JoAnn built and reminisce about days gone by. Although dementia has tangled up John's memories of classes he taught or young men he coached, he shares the tales enthusiastically with his audience. Steve shares stories of spicy Asian food and people he met along his own life journey. John recognizes Steve as a friend who "brightens up his day", while JoAnn appreciates Steve's visits so she can get things done at home or quilt with the ladies at church. Steve understands that he is playing an important role in the sunset years of one couple's lives as he gains fulfillment of his own.

Jeanette & Karen



Karen has been a Senior Companion for three and a half years. She feels helping others, whether it be sharing memories, going out to lunch, folding laundry, or taking them

to various appointments, is very satisfying. Karen states, "It gives greater purpose to my day. I have grown very attached to my clients. I always learn something from them and they from me. One particular client, Jeanette, is an active and feisty 97-year-old who is an absolute delight," Karen shares. She is from rural Hamlin County and lived on the original farmstead where she raised her family. Her farm is very important to her, and she took great pride that she was able to live independently in her home. She loved the tranquility of country living, enjoying the wildlife, gardening, and tending to her flowers. She spoke of watching how the farm landscape changed over the years, specifically remembering how one single

planted tree turned into a grove of trees. Jeanette joined the Senior Companion Program last October. She and Karen originally met at her farmstead, where they shared memories of "old times," colored pictures, and put puzzles together. Due to Jeanette's declining health, she has moved to her daughter's lake home. Although she was very sad to leave her farm, she has remained positive. Jeanette now finds joy in the beautiful views of the lake and the different birds that visit her feeder. She enjoys time with her daughter and her sons who pop in regularly. She especially looks forward to her weekly visits from her Senior Companion.

STATION SPOTLIGHT

GSS Canton



Good Samaritan Society-Canton is committed to creating a home for its residents that is much like their own — a welcoming and loving place. They provide exceptional care and services, including short-term rehabilitation, long-term nursing home care, and hospice to seniors and others in need in the Canton community. They were the recipient of the prestigious Eli Pick Facility Leadership Award from the American College of Health Care Administrators. This award recognizes top performers in the healthcare industry. Only 11 percent of facilities nationwide qualify.

Senior living should provide more than a place to live. It should offer a sense of comfort and safety. Most importantly, it should provide a true feeling of community. The private and semi-private rooms at GSS-Canton feature services tailored to fit residents' needs. The facility is Medicare and Medicaid certified, and it offers 24-hour licensed nursing care, on-site physician visits, and individualized care plans, as well as a registered pharmacist and dietitian, physical, occupational, and speech therapy, hearing aid services, mental health, daily spiritual, recreational, and social activities.

As a Station Representative, Melissa Wallace visits the potential client and assesses their need for services and handles the paperwork associated with the Program. Melissa shares, "Hearing the excitement in a family member or senior's voice because they have a Companion for a couple of hours to play games, have transportation to get groceries, get to doctor appointments, or simply just to chat, means a lot to me."

Senior Companions **WELCOME ANNE LAND**

As the new Volunteer Recruiter arriving at the end of July, I have been spending my time learning more about the South Dakota Senior Companion Program.

So who am I? Throughout my life I have volunteered in many different capacities and with a variety of organizations, such as with the American Red Cross, public radio, gardening organizations, the South Dakota Youth Symphony Orchestra, the Sioux Falls Butterfly House & Aquarium, and the Siouxland Library, to name a few.

At an early age, I was inspired to volunteer by the words of wisdom and actions of my grandmother. She used to tell me to observe the people who are busy helping others. She wanted me to learn that service above self and helping others is what strengthens relationships and communities. She lived that throughout her own life and I hope to do the same.

My husband and I have three children, two are adults and one is an upperclassman in high school. To complete our family, we have a dog and four cats. We never have enough time in the day to get our list of things done.

I look forward to meeting you in the coming months.



“Free COVID-19 Tests” Scam Targets Medicare Recipients

Scammers have been targeting Medicare recipients with fake offers to get “free COVID-19 tests.” They’re calling recipients, developing fake websites, and creating online and television ads to convince people to give out their Medicare information. Once they receive your information, they bill fraudulent charges to Medicare.

Many Medicare recipients signed up for these “free COVID-19 tests” and never received them. Unfortunately, these scammers are using the Medicare information they collect to bill other products and services the insured person never receives.

If you or someone you know is covered by Medicare, here’s how to avoid these scams:

- Medicare does cover **eight free COVID-19 tests a month**, but Medicare will NOT call you to offer them to you. To order, go to www.medicare.gov.
- Medicare beneficiaries can get their free tests at **participating pharmacies**.
- Never give Medicare or other personal information over the phone to anyone who calls. Fraudulent charges may affect your Medicare coverage. Although the money doesn’t come directly out of your pocket, you may not be able to get the medical equipment you need. Check your Medicare Summary Notice to be sure you are only being charged for services actually received.
- Find out more at **Medicare.gov** or call 800-MEDICARE (800-633-4227).

Also, read the Federal Trade Commission’s article on <https://consumer.ftc.gov/articles/what-know-about-medical-identity-theft>.

Senior Companion Volunteers Urgently Needed!

What do we know about the benefits of volunteering to help others?

According to a new University of Pittsburgh study, retirees who have a daily routine and stay active are much happier than those who have unpredictable schedules. The respondents showed fewer depressive symptoms and performed better on cognitive tests as well. Also, the formerly named Corporation for National and Community Service “now known as AmeriCorps” found that in a 2015 study of the Senior Companions and Foster Grandparents volunteers, 70% of participants who reported five or more depressive symptoms at the start of their service, noted fewer debilitating symptoms by the end of their first year of service.

We know more

The famous psychologist, Abraham Maslow, proposed that to live a fulfilling life, we have six basic human needs. They are love and connection, variety, significance, certainty, growth, and contribution. When you choose to volunteer, you are making a difference in people’s lives. You become significant to those you serve as you are a relied upon and trusted source of help, connection, and camaraderie. Those same benefits of helping clients feel the lessening of depressive symptoms and social isolation reflect back to you.

Who do you know?

Do you know anyone who might enjoy volunteering as a Senior Companion? Please ask around. There is a sign-on bonus for new Senior Companions. Upon completion of the new volunteer’s first three months, they will receive \$100 bonus in appreciation of their continued service.

Senior Companion Benefits

The Mission of the AmeriCorps is to improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic engagement through service and volunteering. AmeriCorps Seniors Companion Program will reimburse you for the following:

- miles traveled in your car (75 cents per mile)
- a non-taxable stipend of \$3.15/hour of service
- training
- leave time
- accident insurance

To be eligible to volunteer, you must be 55 or older, meet an income guideline, and serve a minimum of 15 hours per week. Please call our office today at 605-361-1133 or 1-888-239-1210. More details are available at www.good-sam.com/scpsd.

Like us on Face Book at Senior Companions of South Dakota.



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