

Gothenburg Senior Center celebrates anniversary

Written by Elizabeth Barrett

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30 years young.

Stroll through the Gothenburg Senior Center any weekday, and often on weekends, and you'll see a hub of activity.

A handi-bus unloading folks for the noon meal, people playing pool, cards or other games or stitching crafts or quilts.

Bingo on Monday nights. Noodle and pretzel-making every two months.

Bible study, exercise groups and others meet at the center.

On weekends, the center hosts reunions, a church congregation, garage sales, receptions and more.

All day, each week day, the coffee pot stays on for people just wanting to socialize.

For 30 years, the center has opened its doors to senior citizens and others.

"The Senior Center is also a community center," said director Angie Barkmeier.

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There are no age limits on who walks in the door although those under age 60 pay full, instead of a reduced price, for a noon meal.

Ask the regulars why they show up most days and they'll tell you they don't know what they'd do without the Senior Center.



"It fills a big place in my life," said Ramona Ollendorf who was playing Scrabble with two friends last week. "We interact with each other and have conversations."

Velma Underwood said she's alone and doesn't have other places to go.

"I have a lot of friends here."

Barkmeier, the center director for the past 12 years, said highlights during her tenure have been a \$308,000 expansion of the building to the west and east that was completed in 2007.

Four years before, the center's parking lot was paved. In 1997, a storage area was added to the northwest part of the building that was originally constructed in 1983.

Barkmeier rattled off more activities and events.

She offers seniors Medicare and insurance assistance.

And programs are abundant such as Nebraska Humanities speakers, special music, safety

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talks, Senior Center fund raisers that have included a community dinner theatre and more.

The center also has medical equipment for the community to borrow for a free-will donation.

“We just received three hospital beds from Gothenburg Memorial Hospital,” Barkmeier said.

Meals-on-Wheels are served from the center each day and a Thursday meal is taken to Brady.

The center also serves as a city disaster shelter.

With a 2013-14 budget of \$184,000, Barkmeier said the center needs to raise \$30,000 which is done through fund raisers and community donations.

“I hope the community will keep funding us and I hope I’ll be there for another 30 years,” she said.

Lester Jobman was playing pinochle with friends in the pool room last week.

The space, on the west end of the building, has a sign that says the room is for “Grumpy Old Men” and that “Women OK.”

“It’s a good deal,” Jobman said about the center. “I’ve been here a long time.”

Besides being a good place to eat and have fun, Larry Lake said “there’s all sorts of stuff going on.”

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