

CUSTER CO. COUNCIL ON AGING

Descend with me to the Sheriff's Office Basement in the Miles City Court House. Rebecca Lynam, Coordinator of the Custer County Council on Aging (CCCOA), is seated behind a desk in a small office. Rebecca, a mother of four and a part-time waitress, has been in this community role of leadership for 1.5 years. Her philosophy and demeanor are kind, loving, and helpful. She exemplifies the very purpose and mission of the Custer County Council on Aging.

Council members are 7, and at least 40% are seniors 60 years or older. The term of appointment is three years. Ex-Officio Members and Advisory Members can attend the council; however, they cannot vote or be officers. The purpose/mission of the council is to act on behalf of the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) to determine the needs and interests (social and economic) of all senior citizens and develop long and short-range plans to alleviate the needs and address senior citizen interests. It is also concerned about senior citizen happiness, health, and the seniors' desire to remain in their own homes for as long as they choose. Priority is for those with the greatest economic and social needs.

The latest 2020 Custer County Census Data indicated 2310 senior citizens over age 65—25% being over the age of 65. Senior Citizens received one or more of the following services without charge: 1,465 hours of skilled nursing services, 1701 hours of homemaker service, 262 hours of personal care, 16,064 home-delivered meals (value \$7 with donations as able), 9,921 congregate meals, an average of 100 2-month supply food boxes of commodities, 7,348 transit rides, and 63 hours of foot clinic services. Funding is provided through state and local funds.

A senior community member meeting place for seniors has previously occurred in the Custer County Senior Center just east of the Miles City and County Building in downtown Miles City. Grant funding has been requested for purchasing and upgrading a new Senior Center in Miles City for senior socialization activities and varied health and supportive services. Meeting the need for a place for seniors as a place to gather is in the early stages of a long-term plan. This meeting place is recognized as a priority need of community seniors.

The Custer County Alzheimer/Dementia Caregiver Support Group meets every second Tuesday of each month at 1:30 p.m. in the Miles City Public Library at 1 So. and 10th Street.

The Custer County Advisory Council on Aging meets the second Wednesday of each month from 12:00 to 1:00 p.m. in the Sheriff's Office Basement Conference Room. The public is welcome. There is a newsletter available. To start or stop getting the newsletter or to get it via email, call 874-3482. Thanks to the Miles City Area Chamber of Commerce for using their Bulk Mailing Permit.

Let us all remember that all things have a time, place, and purpose. If we live long enough, each of us will walk the path of being a senior citizen. The learned "gifts" of a long-lived life have their rewards, and many elders share them! It is often wise for a community to recognize their elders' gifts to meet today's needs better.

Thank you to Rebecca for her leadership and the council for the services they provide. A great community recognizes and cares for its elderly in sensitive, kind, and loving ways. Your continued

efforts are appreciated. Organized community service is a reminder to all that they, too, should give their service to others.

Carolyn Taylor, Ed.D. M.N. R.N.