

Time flies when you're having fun...

Written by Wauneta Breeze
Thursday, 04 October 2012 16:39 -

By Deb Andrew

Sunrise Heights of Wauneta

Director of Nursing

Never in my wildest dreams would I have thought that I would still be having the adventure of my lifetime, a career working in the facility that I was anxious to follow in my mom and grandmother's footsteps when I was a kid!

My mom, Lorean Anderson, found fulfillment caring for our residents. My grandma, Mabel Stephenson, had lived with elderly people in the community so they could remain in their homes.

Shortly after mom started working at the Barnes' Nursing Home, grandma and mom's sister, Leatha Bischoff, joined the workforce. They were a few of the original employees of Kinder Kare when it opened.

Kenny Lucas nicknamed mom, "Big Momma," a name that stuck with her the rest of her life! She was the mother figure for the residents and staff for a number of years.

I remember when Bob Kamala called mom "Big Momma" in front of Dr. Rick Jackson. Dr. Jackson told him that it wasn't polite for Bob to call her that!

Time flies when you're having fun...

Written by Wauneta Breeze

Thursday, 04 October 2012 16:39 -

Bob questioned Dr. Jackson, "Why not, that is her name?"

Dr. Jackson felt that Bob calling her by her nickname was a slam, due to her size, but mom reassured him that was who she was and proudly accepted her nickname.

She was loyal and determined to never miss work; she drove the tractor to work several times so she could get to work in bad weather.

Mom cried when she had to retire due to her health.

I was anxious to be involved at the facility in one way or another. Before I was of age to work as a nurses aide you could find me scrubbing, waxing and buffing the floors, at that time we had only a few carpeted areas.

I looked for anything that I could do at the facility. I was no stranger to helping in the kitchen or laundry.

I could see and appreciate the love of our elders, that mom and grandma taught me. I was anxious to follow in their footsteps. I have worked my way through a number of nursing positions, presently the director of nurses.

Pete, our chihuahua, loves to come to work with me, he races to the door when we get here and pouts on the days that I leave him home. He has his favorite laps to sit on and get snacks from.

Our children saw our fulfillment in helping the elderly and joined the workforce. Stacy as a nurse's aide, the day after her 16th birthday, she continues to be employed as a LPN at our facility.

Time flies when you're having fun...

Written by Wauneta Breeze

Thursday, 04 October 2012 16:39 -

Believe it or not, in 1994 Sherry Terry convinced my son Michael to be a housekeeper at the time of needed staff.

I asked her, "Why would he want to clean at the facility, he wasn't crazy about cleaning his own room?"

Her response was, "You don't pay him to clean his room, but we will pay him."

He took great pride in his sparkling clean waxed floors. He worked at the facility through his high school and college years. Sidewalk and parking lot snow removal was his calling for several years to follow. He continues to get called and lends a helping hand at times.

Charley, my husband, has not been an official employee, but he's done more than his share of helping people get to work due to mud or snow, getting them unstuck or actually going to get them and bring them to work.

My sister, Judy Morris, stepped up to the plate when we needed a transport driver 10-plus years ago, to help our residents get to their appointments. My cousin, Linda Fanning, cooked for a period of time. Our son, William Bartlett, and our granddaughter, Secily Troutman, joined the workforce last September as dietary aides.

Secily is the fifth generation of our family to work at the present Sunrise Heights!

We are a small facility that knows each and every resident and staff member as a big, happy family. Truly, when it is said that our facility is "Family Serving Family," yes we are, my family for a total of 100-plus years combined!

We have cared for multiple staff members' loved ones over the years. A large portion of our staff are family members: Lisa and Ray; Karla, Judy D., Patsy W. and Teresa; Sherlynn, Charity and Chaz; Robin and Ila; Karen G. and Renae; Adriane and Karen B.; Heather, Dawnica,

Time flies when you're having fun...

Written by Wauneta Breeze

Thursday, 04 October 2012 16:39 -

Darien and Tori; Heidi and Stacey W.; Machell and Holly G.; and Tammi M. and Susie!

Last summer when VHS announced that they planned to cease operation June 30, 2012, my heart was broken.

Could this really be happening? We had census above budget! We had a high skilled resident ratio! We took pride in being the "Preferred Provider in the area."

It was a wonderful feeling when visitors would comment about how clean and home-like our facility was and continues to be!

Last August, when we had our State survey, the surveyors wished us the best and that our facility would continue. They commented that we are a unique facility and they can think of other facilities that met all the state required regulations (especially the sprinkler system), but should not be operating!

We take pride in being a Family Serving Family facility and Providing Dignity in Life for our residents! We have residents who don't have a lot of visitors and we become their family.

What was going to happen to our residents and the employees that loved them dearly?

Last July I told Patrick and Glen from VHS that they would realize within the hour how important this facility is to our community! Which I believe they realized as the public asked questions of what could be done to keep the facility in operation.

I feel very fortunate to live in a very supportive community. It was people from the community who joined together to build a new nursing home in Wauneta in the late '60s.

Time flies when you're having fun...

Written by Wauneta Breeze

Thursday, 04 October 2012 16:39 -

I've seen our community set out to do projects, equal to moving mountains, so why wouldn't our facility somehow continue? If Vetter's opted not to be here, it should be back into the hands of the Village that has supported it.

I'm sure it was a challenge for those that worked diligently to get all the pieces of the puzzle put together for the purchase and transition all into place.

I thank you for the numerous phone calls made, countless hours of work and generous donations given that you've done to make our small community thrive.

I want you to know that your hard work was an answer to my prayers that our facility would continue to operate, providing a home for our residents and jobs for our staff.

Thank you.

Editor's Note: This column was originally written as a speech for the Grand Re-Opening Celebration at Sunrise Heights held Saturday, Sept. 29.