

Green House offers something different

We still hear lots of questions about the Green House Project, so we thought we would bring you up to date on how we are doing.

The official name is Green House Living of Sheridan, and it is the alternative to traditional nursing home care. It is not a garden or a place where we grow flowers, although that is a part of it.

It is not just referring to the energy-efficient way to build a building, although that is part of it too. The GHLS is a skilled-nursing facility that is able to take care of our elders in a way that we all want to be treated.

We are in the process of raising money to build four cottages on land that has been donated. We will have the space to build four additional cottages in the future.

Each cottage will house 12 elders with their own private bedroom and bath, room for personal items and a feeling of home. The building will have as a hub, the kitchen and eating area where elders

and their families and friends can gather.

We incorporate the outdoors into our plan with raised beds available on the patio for the elders to use for gardening and keeping their green thumbs active if they are so inclined.

We are behind on our proposed timeline due to the effects of the economy. We had hoped to be breaking ground by now, and this is not possible.

What has not happened is the loss of enthusiasm or determination to see this project completed. The entire board and task force will continue to move this project forward.

When we accomplish this goal, we will be the first Green House in the



Center Stage

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nation to have started this project from a grass-roots effort. The other 40-some green houses built have all been existing nursing homes or religiously affiliated organizations.

One example can be seen at St. John's nursing home in Billings, where our

board has actually seen the reality of our dream.

A friend and I visited St. John's in May, and the first impression made on Bob was "no blaring televisions." My immediate response was "no call lights begging to be answered."

What the Green House will offer is something different, and I'd like to explain.

The primary caregiver in GHLS is a shabazz, who has the training of a

Certified Nursing Assistant with an additional 200 hours of training in cooking classes and how to run a home and be a part of a self-directed team.

A shabazz knows the elders well and takes pride in his work. A nurse is always on duty, and a doctor will be the medical director. The GHLS will be under the jurisdiction of the Wyoming Department of Health.

It was 10 years ago that my mother needed skilled nursing care and all that follows with declining health. I am appreciative for all the care that she did receive from a slew of caring professionals, but the GHLS would have been even better.

Barbara Walter is co-chairman of donor development for GHLS and a retired registered nurse.

Center Stage is written by friends of the Senior Center for the Sheridan community. It is a collection of insights and stories related to living well at every age.