

Dental history in the making at Sunrise Heights of Wauneta

Written by Wauneta Breeze

Thursday, 10 October 2013 16:07 -



Cheryl Springer, left, provides dental services to Sunrise Heights of Wauneta resident Marjorie Darrington at the nursing home last Thursday. Springer is one of the first dental hygienists in the State of Nebraska to provide dental services to nursing home residents under her own licence and as part of her own practice. Springer's private practice is possible thanks to a new law that went into effect on Sept. 6, 2013, allowing dental hygienists a private practice. (Sheri Hink-Wagner | The Wauneta Breeze)

By Sheri Hink-Wagner

The Wauneta Breeze

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Last Thursday was a big day in history for Sunrise Heights of Wauneta and registered dental hygienist Cheryl Springer. It marked the first time in the State of Nebraska that a registered dental hygienist was able to see patients in their nursing homes under a private practice.

The historical occasion was just a little sweeter at Sunrise Heights thanks to the long-term relationship one of the residents, Marjorie Darrington, had with the visiting dental hygienist.

Darrington said she has been a patient of registered dental hygienist Cheryl Springer for at least 10 years. However, recently it has been difficult for Darrington to make the trip to McCook to visit Springer at the dentist's office.

The Nebraska Unicameral recently passed LB 484, a bill allowing dental hygienists to see patients under their own licence and their own practices. The bill was signed by Gov. Dave Heineman on March 20, 2013, and the related law went into effect on Sept. 6, 2013.

Thanks to the new law, Springer was able to open a private practice based in Culbertson, Golden Touch Hygiene, as an independent registered dental hygienist.

With her private practice, Springer says she is able to bring dental cleanings, "right to" nursing home residents in the area.

"I will be going into nursing homes as they see fit to meet the needs of nursing home residents who find it difficult to go into the dentist," explained Springer.

Independent dental hygienists are able to provide dental cleanings, gum health evaluations and place fluoride.

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However, Springer said she is not able to provide X-rays or an annual dental examination, which she encourages her patients to have done with their regular family dentist.

Springer said she is able to provide these services right in the nursing home, even in resident's rooms if they desire.

"It is wonderful to be able to meet the dental needs of our residents in their home environment without having to add the stress of travel to another location," said Deb Andrew, Director of Nursing at Sunrise Heights of Wauneta.

Springer accepts Medicaid reimbursements, private insurance and private payment.