

LETTER TO THE EDITOR: Believe in this community as it tries to save nursing home

Written by Wauneta Breeze
Friday, 22 July 2011 15:43 -

Dear Editor:

Its times like these I am so proud to live in rural southwest Nebraska! When our facility got the news that our corporate office, Vetter Health Services, intended to close our nursing home in Wauneta – staff, residents and families were heart broken to say the least! I know everyone went home that day with crushed spirits!

Fortunately, the gloom and despair didn't last long. By that evening the news had raced across the entire town and many folks had already rallied with the kind of positive attitude that immediately warms your heart. That's what small towns are all about. We reach out and support one another when the going gets tough...and believe me, it's obvious the tough really know how to get going, too!!

A number of people have already put in hours and hours researching license information, grants, attending meetings, and contacting elected officials and state offices! Many thanks to Terry Engell who has been burning the midnight oil doing a lot of the research! And thanks to everyone else who have been working towards a solution! What a terrific group of "go-getters" we have here in Wauneta. Heritage staff and residents appreciate the kindness and support shown in these first few days! It gives us hope!

My husband and I have worked here for a combined 26 years. My dad was a resident and passed away here. My grandmother, too...and my mother has lived here a little over two years! So needless to say, Heritage is familiar...it's comfortable...it's loving...it's HOME!

Just for giggles, I thought I'd share some 'fun facts' about Heritage: The 2010 gross payroll was a bit under \$942,000.00! We just hired our 564th employee (since VHS purchase) and admitted our 869th resident (from building opening). We admitted 24 Medicare (skilled) residents in 2010. So far this year – we've admitted 17!! Two of our present staff members were here when VHS purchased the building: Deb Andrew and Jan Huser. Deb's employee number is 2...Do you know who #1 was?? Well – it was Deb's mother, Lorean Anderson who worked here 18 years! Jan (#18) worked at the old Barnes home, and Deb's mom and grandmother did, too.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR: Believe in this community as it tries to save nursing home

Written by Wauneta Breeze
Friday, 22 July 2011 15:43 -

According to a September 7, 1972, Breeze Special Edition, the Grand Opening of “Kinder Kare” (as it was previously called) was on Sept. 10 of that same year, although the home had been open for some time before then. That same edition of the Breeze shows pictures of the facility as it was when it was new. Compared to today, it was rather stark and institutional looking! But certainly state of the art in 1970! The chronological register of residents is a bit askew from those early days and probably includes some residents of the old Barnes nursing home, but it appears that the first resident admitted to the new facility was Lillian Kittle on Jan. 15, 1971.

Although some people could find it easy to place blame on VHS for choosing to close rather than spending the money on a fire sprinkler system, when it comes right down to it, VHS is a business. And when necessary, they must make changes when it is beneficial to the financial strength of the company. I know it was a hard decision for the owners, Jack and Eldora Vetter. They have invested a lifetime in the business of caring for people, and have had to endure state and federal regulations for years... some that made sense and some that didn't. A fire sprinkler system certainly makes sense for safety reasons, but just proved too costly – even for someone as generous as Jack Vetter. Not only are they closing Wauneta, but also their Spalding facility, “Friendship Villa.” Also not sprinkled are their homes in Bridgeport and St. Paul. A decision has yet to be made on those two facilities.

VHS has dedicated 29 years and large sums of money into modernizing the facility, landscaping and beautifying the grounds, helping us recruit great staff, paying competitive wages, affording benefits to hundreds of employees, kept us updated and educated, and welcomed hundreds of loving residents into a beautiful “home” over those years! They have purchased new computers, a new parking lot, A/C chiller, carpeting, a beautiful Clavinova piano, new furniture, bedding, windows, drapes, commercial kitchen, nursing, housekeeping and laundry equipment, rooms remodeled, etc. The list could go on and on! Anytime we truly need something or a resident's health or safety is in jeopardy – all we need to do is ask and we receive. VHS has done much to sustain life in Wauneta for the past 29 years, so as we move forward into this next chapter, I do hope you will take the time to remember all the good that has come from being a member of the Vetter family. They were and still remain a true blessing to Wauneta!

We have gained so much strength from our precious residents who are taking this all in stride. Some comments are, “God knows where every bird on earth is – He surely knows where I am and will take care of me.” “God will provide.” “God will see us through this difficulty.” “I prayed about it and I know everything will be fine.” It's wonderful to have their steadfast faith to see us through difficult days!

I return my thoughts to the above mentioned article from the September, 1972, Breeze paper

LETTER TO THE EDITOR: Believe in this community as it tries to save nursing home

Written by Wauneta Breeze
Friday, 22 July 2011 15:43 -

(which was written by the late G.B. "Jiggs" Crapson). This is how it began: "In 1968, the then owners of Barnes Rest Home, Luther and Emily Barnes, met with the Wauneta Commercial Club and informed the group they were contemplating closing their home in east Wauneta. This, naturally, brought disapproval from all segments of Wauneta's business society." The article then goes on to explain how some young, enterprising Wauneta businessmen raised money, applied for grants, etc. for the present day facility! So I guess it's true what they say... history does sometimes repeat itself!

Wauneta has the pride, passion and the drive to save their nursing home once again! I believe that with all my soul! From the very bottom of my heart...Thank you all for believing in and supporting us!

Lisa Kisinger,

Administrator

Heritage of Wauneta