

Farmers' Market this year a wonderful scene

The Farmers' Market this year was such a wonderful scene!

From my vantage point at the Senior Center lemonade stand and as a vendor, sponsor and nutrition educator, the Farmers' Market at Whitney Commons was a dream come true.

Looking out over the colorful array of vegetable stands, flowers, baked goods, crafts and happy patrons, I witnessed a very positive connection between local vendors and the Sheridan community.

I am an advocate for local food systems, which in my work means connecting people to where their food comes from as well as supporting gardeners, farmers and ranchers in hopes of keeping our local food supply alive and growing.

In my years of working with people of all ages, I have recognized that there is a multitude of benefits when people garden and eat locally grown food.

I've even seen teenagers eat beets and spinach just because they grew them!

One of the reasons the Senior Center had a table at the Farmers'

Market, besides the delightful exchanges over lemonade, was to recruit people interested in planning and implementing the new Senior Center Community Garden.

This garden will be located adjacent to the Sheridan Senior Center and is intended to cultivate food, flowers and friendships to be shared at the Senior Center, at volunteers' tables, and beyond!

Fortunately, we had many folks express interest in the new garden, and we are now joining together Oct. 4 for a planning event we call "Eat Chili: Think Garden."

I'd like to invite anyone who might be interested in this project to join us on Thursday, Oct. 4, at the Senior Center Dining Room from 5:30-7 p.m.

We are hosting a chili supper followed by a fun discussion to see what community members would like the

Silver Threads

Carolyn Benepe



garden to look like, how we can begin to implement the necessary guidelines for an organic operation, and what level of participation would fit into various people's lives.

Considering the site and the desire to have an enabling garden, we envision raised beds that will be user-

friendly to people of all ages while making it easier to divide growing tasks among interested gardeners.

I know in our treasured older population there are many gardeners who have had to give up their garden plots over the years. We want to welcome any veteran (and beginner!) gardeners to join in this project.

One thing we heard from community members is that they would enjoy being mentored in gardening by those with experience. What a great skill to pass along to younger generations!

I'm excited about the prospect of creating an intergenerational opportunity that promotes such healthy nourishment (and I'm not just referring to vegetables here) and community connections.

We hope this project will bring together good people of all ages in the task of growing food, flowers and community. Gardening can be a marvelous, therapeutic undertaking.

So whether you like to plan, plant, water or hoe, weed, seed, harvest or sow, we are looking for one, we are looking for all, mostly we are looking to get started this fall.

If you are an expert or perhaps a beginner, there's so much to be done, come join us for dinner!

For more information, comments or questions, please contact Carolyn Benepe, community nutrition director, Sheridan Senior Center, 672-2240.

Let's join together to cultivate a healthy future for all of Sheridan.

Carolyn Benepe is community nutrition director at the Sheridan Senior Center.