

HEALTH & Wellness

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Wilber Care Center honors National Assisted Living Week amid Covid outbreak

BY HANNA CHRISTENSEN
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National Assisted Living Week, Sept. 8-14, at Wilber Care Center was full of treats, decor and heartfelt moments—despite COVID-19's effort to steal the spotlight.

"It just really makes you feel appreciated," assisted living technician Joselyn Mendez said. "It shows you that what you do there matters, your role, and makes you feel a little more important for that week."

The center treated staff and residents not in quarantine to donuts and an ice cream bar, decorated the facility with streamers and balloons for the occasion and gave staff shirts that said, "Assisted Living Appreciation Week."

"It's really cool to see the staff wearing their shirts and just to celebrate their job here and the work that they do and how important it is," Wilber Care Center Administrator Nicole Lane said. "They play a vital role in the success of this facility. People have worn them ever since they've got them, and they're really vibrant colors and pretty and it makes me think about the work that they do, and I think that is also something that residents can see".

An outbreak of COVID-19 began in the nursing home side of the facility and spread to the assisted living area at the beginning of the week. Lane said staff members went room to



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COURTESY PHOTO

room to give the people in quarantine treats and spend one-on-one time with them.

"It gets their mind off of other things," Mendez said. "I know [treats] are not always much, but it really does get them happy as residents, and they really appreciate all

the little details that we do for them."

Wilber Care Center had planned to host its Fall Family Festival on the 13th— which features fall food, families, raffles and photo opportunities— but postponed it to Sunday, Oct. 13 due to the outbreak.

The facility also postponed its Music Bingo activity that was set for that same day. Lane said the center is still determining when the new date will be.

Lane said Wilber Care Center is almost through the outbreak, and everyone is on track to recov-

er. Rescheduling these activities ensures the illness does not take away the positive impact these events have to offer.

"The reasons why it's super important is just that camaraderie between, not only the residents, but the staff," Lane

said. "It's to let them see that this is their home and that we're celebrating this time in their life and where they live and bringing them all together."

Prevention of tick bites reduces risk of sickness

Four Corners Health Department is hunting for ticks in its four-county region to send in for identification and disease testing.

The process is known as “Tick Flagging.” In partnership with the state of Nebraska, staff collect ticks May-July as part of the vector-borne surveillance program. In 2024, Four Corners flagged in Seward and Butler counties and sent in 383 ticks for identification and testing for diseases.

The results from the disease testing are yet to come.

Ticks are small arachnids that feed on blood and live on vegetation in grassy and woodland places. Tick bites can lead to disease spread in people and pets. In the Midwest, the spring and summer months are when people are more likely to come in contact with ticks since they go outside more during that time; although, it is still possible to see ticks on a warm winter day.

Ticks wait on leaves and grass until something they can attach to, called a host, brushes past. A host can be a person or an animal. Ticks grab onto the host and attach by putting their mouthparts into the skin. The longer a tick stays fixed on the body, the higher the risk of infection to the host.

Ticks can stay attached for several days if not removed.

There are many things you can do to prevent tick bites and still enjoy the outdoors. The more you do, the less likely you will have problems. If we prevent tick bites, we prevent the risk of getting sick. Not every tick will have a disease, so that’s also good news if you do get bit.

Insecticide on clothing: 0.5% permethrin kills ticks upon touch. It’s best to put it on clothing like shoes/pants. (Must let it dry fully, but it can last for several washes.) You can also buy pre-treated clothing designed to repel insects that can last through 70+ washes.

Effective repellents: DEET and picaridin are the only two that are useful against ticks. 30% DEET and 20% picaridin protect for 6-8 hours.

Light-colored clothing and socks tucked into pants help make it easier to see crawling ticks on clothing.

Tumble dry clothing on high to kill ticks in clothing. Put outdoor clothes in the dryer on high for 30 minutes to kill the ticks. Ticks will survive the wash cycle and can easily get out of the laundry hamper and seek out a host.

Check for ticks: Ticks climb up your body, seeking a good feeding site (warm/moist/protected spots). It can take 15 minutes to hours for them to select a spot (head, groin, navel, armpits, behind ears). Check your whole body after spending time outdoors.

Shower after being in tick habitats—within two hours—to help wash off crawling ticks.

Remove ticks promptly: Most diseases can only be passed if a tick feeds for a certain amount of time. Use clean tweezers to gently grab the base of the tick near the skin and pull upward with even pressure, do not twist or jerk. After removing the tick, disinfect the bite area with rubbing alcohol. Keep the tick for identification.

Protect pets by using a tick prevention program through a veterinarian.

You can be a part of tick surveillance, too. The University of Nebraska Lincoln’s Tick Tag Go is a community-powered effort to establish baseline data on tick distributions in Nebraska. Records of ticks are needed to understand where certain species of ticks are found.

This project relies on passive surveillance, meaning only collect the ticks that you come across in your daily routine and activities. Find out more at www.ticktaggo.unl.edu. Ticks can carry some serious diseases, so do not actively search for ticks. Leave that to the health departments and the state.

For questions or to learn more, call Four Corners at (402) 362-2621 or 877-337-3573 or email at info@fourcorners.ne.gov.

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I gave Factor meals a try, here's what you should know

BY KEATON BURGESS
reporter@sewardindependent.com

Recently, I was given the opportunity to try out one free box of Factor meals that was sent directly to my apartment.

If you aren't sure what Factor is, they are healthy meals that are made by chefs and sent to your doorstep. All you have to do to enjoy them is pop them in the microwave.

With the free box I received, I was able to order six different meals and choose the meals I wanted from a list of multiple different meal options.

Factor offered meals from steak and potatoes all the way to red sauce pasta and asparagus. They offer meals not only for lunch and dinner, but also have breakfast options, too.

Some of my favorite meals included the truffle butter filet mignon with potatoes and carrots, the cavatappi and Italian-style pork ragu and the chicken alfredo pasta.

After trying the meals, I would say that the meals are really good and are definitely a great and convenient option if you're looking for an easy and healthy meal.

The only downside I have with Factor is the price. Sure, my box was free, but I unfortunately will not be going forward with a subscription with them because the cheapest meal plan that I can seem to find is four meals for \$74. Although not a bad price, I'm just not in a financial situation to do that at this time.

Overall, if you want an easy way to eat healthy and good tasting meals and don't mind the price, I would highly recommend Factor.



Keaton's Corner
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Fears, phobias can be overcome

BY STEPHANIE CROSTON
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Claustrophobia: fear of enclosed spaces.

Arachnophobia: fear of spiders and other arachnids.

Aerophobia: fear of flying.

Cynophobia: fear of dogs and canines in general.

Agoraphobia: fear of leaving a known environment.

Phobias are extreme or irrational fears of something. Many start when a person is a child, Carrie Gottschalk said. Gottschalk has worked in the mental health field, providing therapy for over 30 years. She talked about phobias and ways they can be treated during a program Sept. 22 at the Seward Memorial Library.

The program was part of the All Seward Reads Together series for 2024. This summer's book was "The Reading List" by Sara Nisha Adams. One of its characters suffers from a phobia.

Fear is a rational reaction, the American Psychological Association said.

"Phobias, however, are irrational fears trig-



STEPHANIE CROSTON

Carrie Gottschalk has worked in the mental health field for over 30 years. She presented a program on phobias at the Seward Memorial Library Sept. 22.

gered by either specific or general events or items," the website said.

When a fear is activated, the body responds with a physical reaction. Muscles tighten. Nerves and senses heighten without conscious thought.

"It can narrow vision, tense muscles, cause butterflies in the stomach," Gottschalk said.

The body emits endorphins over about 90 seconds, and then the brain takes over.

The brain separates input into "either keep

me alive or think about it," she said. "Keep me alive is always first."

She said the nervous system is designed to keep us alive, not necessarily happy.

A phobia occurs when a person doesn't actively practice recovery. It's defined as "an uncontrollable, irrational, and persistent fear of a specific object, situation, or activity," according to www.hopkinsmedicine.org.

Gottschalk said recovery is done through a

language of "I'm safe."

Usually phobia treatments include exposure to whatever causes the fear, she said.

"It's paired in a way that's manageable," she said.

She talks to her clients about what the body does and teaches strategies to relax or soften the body, all while in a safe space.

"It can become uncomfortable to work through," she said. "You have to be willing to be uncomfortable."

Gottschalk uses incremental exposure in a safe, comfortable environment to help a person work through a phobia.

"It's not white-knuckle through it," she said.

The strategies include eye movement desensitization and reprocessing, which is teaching both sides of the brain to talk to each other. Hypnosis does the same thing.

"You get the brain out of the way long enough to get back on track," Gottschalk said.

The goal is to make therapy a temporary relationship, she said. The therapist teaches the client what to do, and the client graduates with the tools to use on their own.

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Be equipped to help save a life

During September, Suicide Prevention Month, workshops focused on preventing suicide will be hosted at churches and other locations.

According to a news release from Four Corners Health Dept., the workshop is called QPR – Question, Persuade, Refer and teaches people how to:

- Recognize the warning signs of suicide
- Know how to offer hope
- Know how to get help and save a life

This workshop is helpful for everyone, including parents, friends, youth, neighbors, teachers, faith leaders, doctors, nurses, coaches, and others. It's for anyone who may be the first one to recognize that the person with them is struggling with a mental health crisis and needs help.

Watch the Four Corners Health

Department website to find a location near you. QPR workshops are being added throughout the month. Go to: <https://fourcorners.ne.gov/community-ed-training/upcoming-events-workshops>.

One workshop is currently scheduled and open to the public on Wednesday, Sept. 25, at St. John Lutheran Church in Seward at 7 p.m.

Learn about LOSS Teams

Losing a friend or family member to death is painful and can be emotionally crippling. When that loss is a result of suicide, the grief of those left behind can be more intense and even more difficult.

A team called Local Outreach to Suicide Survivors (LOSS) can offer help and support to those grieving the loss of a loved one to suicide. The LOSS Team is made up of trained suicide loss survivors and

licensed mental health clinicians. These volunteers offer help to suicide loss survivors to help them heal from the trauma of their loss and link them to resources that can bring hope.

The LOSS Team provides compassion and support, not therapy, to the suicide loss survivors.

Contact Four Corners to learn about becoming a member of a Four Corners LOSS Team or a member of the Four Corners LOSS Team Advisory Council. Visit the Nebraska LOSS Team website to find LOSS Teams across the state: www.nebraskaloss.org.

For questions and to learn more, call Four Corners at (402) 362-2621 or 877-337-3573, email info@fourcorners.ne.gov or visit the Four Corners website at <https://fourcorners.ne.gov>.

Medicare D Enrollment is Oct. 15-Dec. 7

It is that time a year again for Medicare Part D prescription plan comparisons.

Important notices from Medicare or Social Security may soon be arriving in the mail. If you're on a Medicare Plan, you'll get an Annual Notice of Changes. It is important to compare plans, to see if you can get a better price on your prescriptions and premiums.

RSVP to Saline County Aging Services to compare your Medicare D Prescription Plans at the following locations:

Crete Tabitha Community Room – Monday, Oct. 21, Monday, Nov. 4, and Monday, Nov. 18, from 10 a.m. – 3 p.m.

DeWitt Library –

Thursday, Oct. 24, from 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Dorchester Community Center – Tuesday, Oct. 15, and Tuesday, Nov. 19 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Friend FCHS – Tuesday, Oct. 22, Tuesday, Nov. 5, and Thursday, Nov. 7 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Western SCAT – Friday, Oct. 18, Friday, Nov. 1, Friday, Nov. 15, and Thursday, Nov. 21 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Wilber SCAS – Thursday, Oct. 17, Tuesday, Oct. 29, and Thursday, Nov. 14 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Participants must RSVP to 821-821-3330 for all appointments. For additional times, call Saline County Aging Services.

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- Post-operative check-up

The above are intended to serve as guidelines to help you determine the most appropriate choice for your medical needs. If you think you are experiencing a life-threatening event, call 911 immediately.



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- Insect bites and stings
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- Bleeding or large open wound
- Poison or drug overdose
- Signs of a heart attack or stroke
- Severe bone breaks
- Unexplained seizures



Healthy aging: Stay safe behind the wheel and prevent falls

As we age, taking care of our health is key to staying active and independent, according to a news release from Four Corners Health Dept. Making smart food choices, managing chronic conditions, maintaining healthy blood pressure and weight, staying physically active, and getting regular check-ups— like vision, dental, hearing, and physical exams — are all essential.

It's also important to avoid alcohol and tobacco, especially when taking medications.

Two areas that are crucial for healthy aging and maintaining independence are safe driving and preventing falls. These simple tips can help older adults stay safe and healthy.

Driving safety for older adults

Driving helps older adults maintain independence, but changes in mobility, vision, hearing and reaction time can make driving more challenging.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, drivers age 65 and older are involved in 19% of all traffic fatalities.

However, older adults can continue to drive safely by:

- Staying active to maintain mobility. Make sure you can get in and out of the car safely, turn your head to check blind spots and reach to buckle your seatbelt.
- Following your doctor's advice on managing medications that could affect alertness. Avoid alcohol if you're driving, and be aware of how alcohol and medications interact.
- Limiting driving at night or in bad weather.
- Knowing how to use the tools and instruments in your car before driving.
- Having a plan to access services and stay social when you may no longer be able to drive. A useful resource is My Mobility Plan from the CDC, available in English and Spanish: www.cdc.gov/older-adult-drivers/mymobility/index.html.

Fall prevention

Falls are a leading cause of injury for older adults, but they don't have to be a part of aging. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that 3 million older adults are treated in emergency rooms each year because of falls. Simple changes can help reduce the risk, such as:

- Staying active with exercises that improve strength and balance.
- Installing grab bars in bathrooms and keeping walkways clear of clutter.
- Removing trip hazards like loose rugs and electrical cords.
- Ensuring stairways have sturdy handrails on both sides and are well-lit.
- Adding non-slip treads to stairs and ensuring all steps are in good condition.
- Wearing shoes with good support, both indoors and outdoors.

Staying independent and healthy

By staying active and taking steps to make their environment safer, older adults can continue to enjoy their independence. For more information on safe driving and fall prevention, visit www.fourcorners.ne.gov, or contact your local health provider.

Contact Four Corners Health Department at (402) 362-2621 or (877) 337-3573 or email at info@fourcorners.ne.gov.

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Council sets membership rates for Wellness Center

BY LORI SHRINER
For the Seward County Independent

Seward families will be able to purchase a monthly membership for the new wellness center for \$75 per month and occasional users will pay \$20 per day when the Seward Wellness Center opens next spring.

The Seward City Council on Sept. 17 approved a schedule of membership fees ranging from monthly fees of \$20 for youth ages 12 to 18, to \$75 for an immediate family group. Other rates will be offered for young adults (19-24), seniors (62+), single parent family, adult couple (married), and daily.

Daily rates in Seward will be \$5 for youth and seniors and \$10 for adults, slightly lower than all but Papillion and Hasting's daily rates in the comparison group.

An immediate family group coming in on a daily pass would be charged no more than \$20, Brase said.

Center Director Joel Brase said in his presentation to the Seward City Council that the rates were based on averages for the other facilities and deemed "reasonable."

The admission and membership rates are the same for those living in and outside Seward. Those holding memberships will be given discounted rates for extra classes offered.

Discounts will be offered for those who commit to one-year of monthly payments for \$780 for a family (monthly would total \$900) and for families who pay on an annual basis, \$715 (first month free). Corporate rates will also be offered, allowing those affiliated with member organizations discounts of 10 or 20 percent of the monthly rates.

With a projection of 495 adult memberships calculated at \$39 per month to reflect the range of categories, and 325 family memberships calculated at \$65, the anticipated revenue would be \$559,800 if paid monthly and \$513,150 on an annual basis.

The city's 2024-2025 budget documents include estimated revenue and operational expenses at \$415,000. Of that revenue, \$331,000 is projected to be from memberships with the remainder attributed to daily fees, classes and special programs, and rental fees.

Brase expects a membership drive before the end of the year.

Brase said the wellness center took its first draw on its construction loan to pay bills last month, but won't likely have to do so again in the near future because there is \$3 million in grant funds and \$280,000 in Nebraska Civic and Community Center Financing Fund (CCCCF) balances available for cash flow.

Overall, the project is on budget and ahead of schedule, Brase said. The concrete pool was being poured last week, the gymnasium was having ceiling structures like basketball hoops attached, and the multi-purpose room was being drywalled.

APPROVED AD RATES BY CATEGORY	MONTHLY	MONTHLY WITH 1-YEAR COMMITMENT	PAID ANNUALLY (1 PAYMENT)	CORPORATE 10% OFF	CORPORATE 20% OFF
YOUTH 12-18	\$20	\$250	\$220	\$18	\$16
YOUNG ADULT 19-24	\$35	\$420	\$385	\$31.50	\$20
SENIOR 62+	\$40	\$480	\$440	\$36	\$32
ADULT 25-61	\$45	\$540	\$495	\$40.50	\$36
SENIOR COUPLE	\$55	\$660	\$605	\$49.50	\$44
SINGLE PARENT FAMILY	\$60	\$720	\$660	\$54	\$48
ADULT COUPLE (MARRIED)	\$65	\$780	\$715	\$58.50	\$52
FAMILY	\$75	\$900	\$825	\$67.50	\$60



COURTESY OF JOEL BRASE

Workers make advances on the construction of the pool at the Seward Wellness Center.

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