

Of a certain age...

Living the best years of your life in Sisters **9.18.19**



Finding your next adventure pg. 18

Aging gracefully in an anti-aging world.. pg. 19

Seeking guidance to navigate aging pg. 21

Navigating the Medicare maze.... pg. 23

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Paw Prints

Jodi Schneider McNamee
Columnist

Companion pets for older adults

Anyone who has ever stroked a dog's soft ears or felt the gentle rumble of a cat's purr knows the calming feeling an animal can offer.

Animals offer companionship and unconditional love; they can improve

health and general well-being, especially in the older adult population.

The most serious problem for older adults is not disease; it's loneliness. Elderly people, especially those living in residential care facilities, are at a higher risk for developing depression. When they are without a spouse or children around to keep them company, many seniors begin to feel isolated.

Studies have shown that companion animals have the ability to lift the spirits of people who live alone and provide unconditional friendship and enrichment.

Research studies have found that having a pet has significant benefits for seniors' mental, physical, and emotional health — in other words, pets are good for your body and soul. Dogs are great for providing physical exercise, socialization, and overall day-to-day

companionship. Getting out for a daily walk, or even just playing with a dog indoors, is an enjoyable form of activity, and seniors can choose a dog whose exercise demands are equal with their own needs and physical limitations.

With the increasing numbers of pet-friendly assisted living communities, more seniors than ever are able to keep their longtime companions with them in the next stage of their lives.

Alea Schliep, life enrichment coordinator from The Lodge in Sisters, told *The Nugget* a special story of how a lonely resident's life turned around after adopting a small dog.

"A few years ago, when I was working at an assisted-living facility, I had a resident who became withdrawn. His wife had passed away and he was lonely. I had set up a field trip for the residents to visit a humane society



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and I was hoping this resident might connect with an animal. He really liked this one dog and adopted her that day. His life turned around. His behavior changed and he was happy again."

She added, "Residents in a facility need that special animal waiting for them when they go back to their rooms after lunch, activities, or an outing. They become

attached to a companion animal that brings them so much joy."

Choosing the right dog for a senior can be a fun and enriching process. It starts with assessing the needs and wants of a prospective pet parent.

Some breeds require more exercise than others. If

See **PETS** on page 17

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Community Education—Bend

Alzheimer's & Dementia:
Practical Tools for the Caregiver

You're invited to learn more, including: A disease overview and warning signs; Connecting and engaging; Practicing self-care and preventing burnout. *Presented by Kaitlyn Bertholet, Central Oregon Regional Coordinator, Alzheimer's Association, and Gloria Rockwell Community Relations Coordinator, Home Instead Senior Care.*

September 20
Friday, Noon-2pm

No cost. RSVP required.
Light lunch provided.

Call (541) 382-5882 to reserve your space.

Community Education meets at Partners In Care, 2075 NE Wyatt Court Bend, OR 97701

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