

My Center News

Special Edition! January 2021



Although our Senior Centers and main office are closed due to the pandemic, Aging Partners Senior Center Managers continue to serve their participants by providing home delivered meals and emotional support.

Our first senior centers opened in the 1970s (at that time they were called Senior Diners). By the early 2000s, they were called ActivAge Centers of which there were 11 in Lincoln and five in Lancaster County. Now we use the name Senior Centers and currently there are five in Lincoln (the Asian Center, Belmont, Lake Street, Northeast and Downtown) and three in Lancaster County (Bennet, Hickman and Firth).

While the names and locations have changed over the years, our senior centers' purpose has always been clear: to make the lives of seniors better by giving them access to positive interactions with other seniors, providing entertainment, connecting them to vital resources and making sure they have access to a nutritious meal. We are striving to continue that mission during the pandemic by delivering meals to our participants and finding innovative ways to interact with them.

"A community should take care of their children and their elderly," said Beth Schuster, Senior Centers Coordinator. "The children are the future; and our elderly are the past. Both are important components to a successful society. In fact, there are huge benefits of seniors interacting with young children and children with seniors. Both groups are unabated in their resilience. I can only hope to learn from that."

Beth began working with seniors as the director of an assisted living in the spring of 1998. Then in 2017, she became a supervisor for the Aging Partners Medicaid Waiver Program. When former Senior Centers Coordinator, Bob Esquivel retired in 2018, Beth applied for the position because she believed the position aligned with her personal goals.

Beth is proud that the senior center managers and the kitchen crew have stepped into a role that many would find extremely taxing after a while. "They have battled extreme weather and witnessed seniors in despair, very rarely missing a day," she said. "It is a routine job that can become monotonous and actually rather risky. Yet, they carry on and see it as an opportunity to have their boots on the ground for those they care about. After that they spend hours working with documentation and making wellness calls to their participants. They have had to adapt to a new normal."



Beth Schuster is Aging Partners' Senior Centers Coordinator. She believes: "Tough times don't last. Tough teams do."

Aging Partners will be closed for the following holidays:

**Friday, January 1 – New Years Day and
Monday, January 18 – Martin Luther King Jr Day**



Pam Lander
Manager – Belmont Senior Center

Pam's first job was as a case manager on the Winnebago Reservation in Thurston County. She supervised state wards, did protective services and licensed foster homes. One of the other responsibilities she enjoyed was making home visits to older adults to certify them for

congregate meals at their senior center.

"When I moved to Lincoln and saw a job opening at the Indian Center for a senior center manager, I applied and have remained with Aging Partners for over 38 years, she said. Pam has been the manager at Belmont Senior Center for 17 years.

Pam deeply misses being with her senior center participants during the pandemic, but she is grateful having a purpose each day of delivering meals.

Fun facts about Pam are she's a big fan of Justin Bieber and is terrified of any rodent smaller than a guinea pig.



Paula Chamberlain
Manager – Rural Senior Centers (Bennet, Firth, Hickman)

Paula has been the manager for the rural centers for five years. She said, "As my own parents aged, I decided I would like to be a part of the senior industry. For several years, I worked in assisted living, prior to joining Aging Partners. It is one of

the most rewarding jobs of my career. It's always my goal, to be able to contribute to the quality of life, for our senior center participants." During the pandemic, Paula has been helping deliver meals and spending much more time on the telephone. "It's important to reach out to family and friends and stay connected," she said.

Two fun facts about Paula is she spent the majority of her career working in furniture retail management, and she was also a co-owner and instructor at a modeling/finishing school.



David Chapelle
Manager – Northeast Senior Center

"I became a senior center manager by accident," said David. "Because of my experience working in restaurants and in the theatre, I was asked to substitute when the manager of the Downtown Center left to be married. It didn't take very long for me to realize I really liked working with the people at the senior centers. A few weeks has now stretched into 25 years."

David started at the Downtown center in 1995 and transferred to Northeast in 2010. Currently, he's helping with meal deliveries.

Regarding the pandemic, David said, "In some ways the changes have been jarring. In other ways not so much. I'm pretty much a homebody who likes to hang out with my wife, daughter and dog."

When asked for fun facts about himself, David said, with a wink and sly smile, "There is a reason people don't know those things."



Denise Howe
Manager – Downtown Senior Center

Denise has been managing the Downtown center for nine years. Before that she worked at an assisted living facility as a marketing and activities director.

Denise is currently working from home, and not performing music

on weekends as usual—she's a popular singer and guitarist. To help keep her spirits up, she "over decorated" her house for Christmas and put up squirrel and bird feeders outside the window of her home office. "I still enjoy getting outside to drive my pony and cart around the park, and when the weather permits, I go fishing," she said.

A fun fact about Denise is that she hiked the Santa Fe Trail in 1984, walking 1,000 miles in three months.

Kelle Brandt
Manager – Lake Street Senior Center

Kelle has spent much of her life around older adults and has always had a love of being around them. "I feel that we can learn so much from them and they are to be respected," she said.

Kelle has been at Lake Street Senior Center for 28 years, and was previously at the old East Lincoln Center for 10 years, giving her a total of 38 years at Aging Partners.

Kelle helps deliver meals and she says, "The pandemic has affected us all in various ways, but it certainly has made me grateful for the many blessings that I do have in my life."

A fun fact about Kelle is she enjoys horseback riding and owned a horse at one time.

