

MY LOVE AFFAIR WITH SHEBOYGAN

by Jeanne Bogardus, Senior Activity Center Commission member

I saw Sheboygan for the first time in 2007, although I had known about it for many years. I was working in the arts in California and while back in Wisconsin for a family reunion I decided to take a side trip to visit the John Michael Kohler Arts Center. That visit changed my life. I decided to come back for a conference that Fall. At that time I was beginning to think about retirement and moving back to the Midwest to be nearer family. But I had also lived in the San Francisco Bay Area for almost 30 years, and I had some “quality of life” requirements for wherever I might end up. I needed to be in a place where the arts are a vital part of the community, I needed affordable rent, I needed to be near a major city but not in it, and I needed to be by a major body of water. I wanted to live where I could walk to most of the things that were important to me: art and music, a good library, good restaurants, places to hike and bike. I wanted a place where people and businesses volunteered and pitched in to care for those less fortunate, and a place that was user-friendly to all generations and households; and finally, a place where I would feel comfortable as a newcomer. Even though I did my research, I never imagined how much Sheboygan would fulfill those requirements and more.

Now I have lived here almost five years and I never regret my decision. But perhaps my biggest reason for no regrets is the people. Since my first day as a resident I have met welcoming, friendly, and generous people, many of whom are now friends and colleagues.

So yes, the weather is a little different from California! But I have even grown to love the sound of those snow plows out there in the early hours of the morning because I know they are making it easier for me. And in the Spring, the moment the boats begin to fill the harbor again I feel like I am being visited by old friends.

As I watch new construction and new vitality in the downtown and harbor area where I live, I pat myself on the back for having the foresight to move here. Now, if we can just continue to plan thoughtfully and inclusively, I look forward to more people enjoying the same things I chose to move here for. And I hope I am as welcoming to them as those who greeted me.