

Aging Well Sonoma County



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Helping seniors get around town with volunteer drivers

A 2005 Senior Needs Assessment Survey convened by the Area Agency on Aging (AAA) showed transportation issues to be of prime concern to seniors in Sonoma County.



Responding to a request for proposal from AAA, the Sebastopol Area Senior Center was awarded a contract to develop a senior transportation program in rural West County.

Beginning in 2008, the Sebastopol Area Senior Center began offering free rides to people 60 and over in West County to assist seniors in getting to medical appointments, shopping and to social events. Screened and trained volunteers from the community generously donate their time and gas so our seniors remain healthy, active and engaged in the community.



This program has since provided over 26,000 rides to West County seniors. Dean Brittingham is the Transportation Coordinator for the Sebastopol Area Senior Center. If you live in West County and are 60 and over and need a ride, or you are interested in volunteering or would like to learn more about this program you can reach her at 707-829-2440. Requests are accepted 5 business days in advance of the appointment day, and all rides are dependent on a driver being available.

In November 2014, iRIDE Petaluma provided their first ride, utilizing a network of volunteers and has now provided 53 seniors, 1,380 rides to the doctor, therapy, stores and to the Petaluma Senior Center. Modeled after the Sebastopol program, Petaluma People Services iRIDE program allows volunteers to tell us what day and time they are available to help a senior get to their appointments. Lauren Garibaldi is the iRIDE coordinator. To become a volunteer or a rider, you can reach Lauren at 707-765-8488.



Local Independent Mobility Options (LIMO) is the Sonoma Valley area senior transportation program. LIMO matches trained volunteer drivers and non-driving Sonoma Valley residents 60 and above, to provide them free local rides to shopping, banking and social activities (rides for medical purposes are provided by F.I.S.H. Since 2010, LIMO has recruited, screened, trained and scheduled over 100 volunteer drivers who have provided more than 12,500 rides. Michele Alba is the iRIDE coordinator. She can be reached at 707-996-0311.



The St. Rose Cares Rides is a transportation program in partnership with St. Rose Church, Catholic Charities, and the community network. The program provides transportation to medical and social appointments to people 60 and older in the Santa Rosa/101 Corridor of Sonoma County. Participants have no other viable transportation options and participants are a cross section of socio-economic levels and varied physical abilities, with the majority being seniors who have out-lived their ability to drive. The challenge is to strengthen our transportation system and care for seniors who fall between service lines. St. Rose Cares Rides has built a network of caring volunteers. Call Catholic Charities Senior Services 707-528-8712 ext. 185 with five business day notice to request a ride.



Ageism: Into the future

The extent to which we identify ageism as something “out there” indicates the extent to which we are unaware of its root causes. As with other problems of discrimination in our society, problems we would like to locate and defeat on some objective battlefield, we must instead heed Pogo’s insightful observation that “we have met the enemy and he is us.”

Ageism is not a conspiracy hatched by some bad guys in a dark basement, nor is it a carefully planned youth movement with negative intent toward old people; it is a part of us – all of us. Ageism is a naturally occurring historical reality that is so deeply embedded in our cultural subconscious we don’t even know it is there; which is why it can be so easily accessed.

Although I applaud any campaign against ageism, most seem only to deal with symptoms, as though symptoms are themselves causes. For example, the argument against replacing older workers. Although it is true that such workers are a treasure trove of experience and wisdom, and reasonable to assume that society would greatly benefit from their continued involvement; it is also true that such experienced and wise workers would pose a threat to the current economic system. The status quo mandates that older workers should retire as prescribed and make way for younger workers, who are more compliant and less expensive. Since we live in a world-wide, waste-based consumer culture, where yesterday’s products, like yesterday’s workers, are no longer viable; they must make way for the latest models. Our economy depends upon it! The gift of experience and wisdom will only be received by a severely modified economic system, one that is not addicted to unsustainable growth, but one that honor our children and grandchildren and is based on sustainability. Unfortunately, this glaring fact

seems to have little influence on a population distracted by its latest toys and government committed to serving the highly profitable, economic status quo.

We cannot change the historical foundations of ageism, because they are rooted in the truth of the human life course. Physical systems do get old, break down and die. And in a society ruled by a cult of adulthood, where children are hurried to grow up and become consumers and adults are frightened into trying to stay young forever, the positive gifts of old age are smothered by a commercially reinforced, pathological fear of even just the appearance of old age.

Our life script is culturally dictated from childhood on; through education, employment, career and family – through decades of challenge and learning. Then, at the age of so-called retirement, when we are in so many ways at our very best, our usefulness to the cult of adulthood is over. At the same time, we still know that the human brain continues to develop throughout middle age, probably reaching its peak of refinement at around age sixty.

Does it make any sense that we would reach this refined level of development unless it has some useful purpose for our species? Barring an infected attitude or outright dementia, we grow to become consciously mature human beings living in an adolescent society. Since most everyone has the potential of living long enough to reach old age, ageism is the only discrimination that can potentially affect every member of society. And most affected are those older citizens for whom the negative effects of internalized ageism turns them against themselves.

Nevertheless, it is this elder class, whom I prefer to call “genarians,” who are best equipped to model the fullness of human development and take the lead in modifying our society for the future benefit of all generations. © Rabon Delmore Saip 2016

AAA Events and Dates

April 19, 2016 – President Obama signed into law the Rauthorization of the Older Americans Act.

May 24, 2016 – Sonoma County Board of Supervisors approves the Area Agency on Aging 2016-2020 Area Plan, The Art of Aging.

May 24, 2016 – Sonoma County Board of Supervisors recognizes Older Americans Month. The national theme for 2016 is “Blaze a Trail.”

June 15, 2016 – Sonome County Board of Supervisors Resolution proclaiming World Elder Abuse Awareness Day in Sonoma County.

July 12, 2016 – Notice of the 2016 Area Agency on Aging Marge Ling Leadership Award.

July 28, 2016 – Area Agency on Aging provides resources for older adults at Senior Day at the Fair.

August 17, 2016 – Advisory Council Training Day.

September 22-28 – Sonoma County Board of Supervisor Resolution proclaiming “Falls Prevention Awareness Week” in Sonoma County.

October – Area Agency on Aging releases the Request for Proposal for the 2017-2020 funding cycle.

October-December – 19th Annual Area Agency on Aging Senior Art Show, Finley Center, Santa Rosa.



What Really Matters?

Whether you are now retired,
wondering how to use your time and talent...
or continuing at your present job,
finding ways to bring yourself to what you do...

Or starting on a new job, or relationship,
and you are setting your priorities
because you've severed prior-rites...

Or you're trying to teach today's youth
who will be shaping our tomorrows...

Wherever you are right now,
and whatever you're doing,
as we move into our future,
this core question can guide us:

"What Really Matters?"

By G. (one.verse@frontier.com)

Reaching LGBT Seniors

Sonoma County has long been home to a vital, growing, aging Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay, Transgender, Queer, Intersex (LGBTQI) population. In order to support this growing population, in June 2015, the Adult and Aging Division received a grant for \$13,500 from the Sonoma County Community Foundations, LGBTQI Giving Circle, to fund the project "Reaching Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Seniors in Sonoma County".

There are 2 components to this project. The first part includes training a group of service providers to be culturally knowledgeable and inclusive when serving the LGBT community. Adult and Aging has contracted with Nancy Flaxman, who has more than 20 years training service providers in LGBT cultural competency. Nancy is working with the three largest providers of senior services in Sonoma County: Council on Aging, Petaluma People Services Center Senior Services program and the Adult and Aging Division. Nancy has developed a panel of older adult LGBT speakers that will tell their personal stories to management, supervisors, and direct service staff at each of these agencies.

Combined with the panel, Nancy works with agencies to examine their accessibility to the LGBT senior population. Nancy also reviews agency materials such as brochures, posters, web-sites, intake forms, and many other practices to be welcoming to the LGBT community. A cross program workgroup has been developed to work on accessibility issues for LGBTQI older adults being served at Adult and Aging.

Reaching LGBT Seniors



The second part of this project includes Adult and Aging's partnership with Buz Hermes, another well-established LGBT group facilitator, to deliver four 8-week support groups to LGBT seniors around the County. The impact of these support groups are that isolated LGBTQI seniors will have an opportunity to connect with one another, develop a proactive and healthy approach to their aging, learn about resources for housing and services and become confident and comfortable accessing them as needed. The Santa Rosa support group held in the Fall was overwhelmingly successful and had more than 25 participants and this group has chosen to continue meeting after the 8 weeks were over.



The Gift of Advance Care Planning

By Barbara Beaudet, Supervising PHN and Jenay S. Cottrell, Program Planning & Evaluation Analyst

In January, 50 Adult & Aging Social Workers, Public Health Nurses and other staff attended an Advance Care Planning (ACP) training session conducted by Shirley Otis-Green, MSW, with the Coalition for Compassionate Care of California. My Care, My Plan: Speak Up Sonoma County, a local initiative, arranged for and received funding for the session from the Community Foundation of Sonoma County. Barbara Beaudet, PHN, Supervising Public Health Nurse helped to open the session by discussing how ACP gives all of us a voice and why it's so important for all adults 18 and older to take the time to do it right. She also encouraged everyone to begin to find ways we might integrate ACP discussion into our professional practice through developing familiarity with ACP and the resources and materials available. She encouraged all of us to become ACP champions! High-quality ACP is a process of contemplation and communication that leads to completing and distributing your Advance Health Care Directive (AHCD). This process considers difficult questions that are easier to answer in your living room than in a hospital room during a medical crisis.

Despite growing awareness of the need for ACP, studies show that most Americans have not made or discussed decisions about their health care wishes. And, although 82 percent of Californians think ACP is important, less than 30 percent have completed an advance health care directive (California Healthcare Foundation).

ACP this is delayed until near the end of life is more aptly termed Last Minute Care Planning – and it happens all too often, according to Gary Johanson, MD, head of Palliative Care for St. Joseph Health in Sonoma County and a volunteer for MCMP.

The fact is 50 percent of us will become unable to speak for ourselves because of an accident, illness or dementia. So we all need to think about, communicate about and document our wishes ahead of time and to select someone who could speak for us if we end up in a situation where we can't.

When it's done well, ACP lifts a burden off of us and provides our loved ones one of the most valuable gifts we can give. Communicating our wishes before any highly stressful or emotional health care crisis occurs helps our loved ones when faced with making difficult decisions on our behalf. Knowing our wishes in advance is a proactive way to inform and guide those who may need to speak for us when we are unable to speak for ourselves.

Do your loved ones know if you would want aggressive medical interventions no matter what the benefits and burdens would be? Do they know what quality of life you would want following a serious injury or advance progression of a disease? Do they know how and where you want to pass away? Have you considered your wishes? Are you interested in having a conversation with your loved ones? Do you know the materials available to you if you are interested in completing an AHCD?

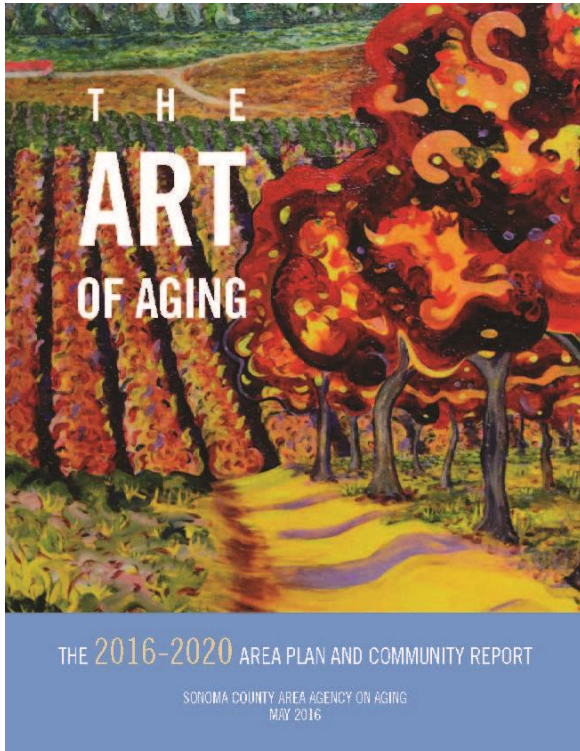
My Care, My Plan: Speak Up Sonoma County's vision is for every person in the county to become educated and empowered to express his/her wishes about end-of-life care, to have the opportunity to do so and to have his/her wishes honored.

For more information, resources and materials about ACP or Advance Health Care Directives, please visit www.mycaremyplansonoma.org or contact Barbara Beaudet (707)565-5713 or Jenay Cottrell (707)565-5738 in the Sonoma County Human Services Department, Adult & Aging Division.

2016-2020 Area Plan

The Board of Supervisors has been designated as the governing body of the Sonoma County Area Agency on Aging (AAA) by the California Department of Aging (CDA) since 1980. The AAA is responsible for planning and developing policy and advocating for the needs of seniors, adults with disabilities, and their caregivers as well as administering Older Americans Act funding.

These federal funds help seniors 60 years of age and older and people with disabilities remain as independent as possible. In addition, the Older Americans Act requires the local AAA to conduct a needs assessment and prepare a plan every four years which



establishes goals and objectives for the local AAA. The needs assessment process includes conducting a county-wide survey and facilitating focus group discussions with seniors, community members, service providers and both public and private agencies to inform the AAA of the changing needs of the senior and disabled community.

For the AAA 2016-2020 Area Plan, AAA has identified the following goals:

1. Expand awareness of and access to available service and supports for seniors, their families and caregivers
2. Enhance the safety, mental and physical health, and wellbeing of seniors of all ages, emphasizing preparing for healthy aging throughout the lifespan
3. Strengthen our community's capacity to assess, plan for, and respond to the increasing needs of Sonoma County's senior population, and
4. Involve and engage seniors as a valuable resource in the community

These goals represent the AAA's strategic priorities for achieving its vision of providing leadership, services, and advocacy to promote the dignity, independence and quality of life for seniors, adults with disabilities, and their caregivers.



Blue Zones. Live longer, Better

Healthier living and medical advances have pushed life expectancy in the U.S. to 81 for women, 76 for men, but many of us are living even longer. How can more of us live both longer and healthier? According to The Blue Zones Project®, part of the answer is Vino and Veggies.

National Geographic Fellow Dan Buettner's worldwide study of communities where people live measurably longer, with lower incidences of chronic disease and a higher quality of life, became a 2008 New York Times bestseller, *The Blue Zones Lessons for*



Living Longer from the People Who have Lived the Longest. Since then, his initiative The Blue Zone Project® has evolved into a global movement.

On May 20, Aging Together Sonoma County hosted Blue Zones Project Community and Corporate Program Director Nick Buettner to discuss the research from the second edition of the book, *The Blue Zones – 9 Lessons for Living Longer from the People Who've Lived the Longest*. The free public seminar, *Blue Zones: Secrets of a Long Life*, was held at Findley Community Center, Person Center Senior Wing.

Buettner shared secrets from Blue Zones communities, such as Ikaria, Greece; Loma Linda, California; Sardinia, Italy; Okinawa, Japan; and Nicoya, Costa Rica. Small changes by individuals and organizations in these communities – including worksites, schools, restaurants and grocery stores – have contributed to huge benefits, such as lowered healthcare costs, improved productivity and ultimately, a higher quality of life.

He discussed nine diet and lifestyle habits that help increase health and longevity, and debunk common myths about healthy aging, including:

1. **Move Naturally:** We can get more physical activity naturally if we live in walkable communities, de-convenience our homes, and grow gardens;
2. **Know Your Purpose:** People who know why they wake up in the morning live up to seven years longer than those who don't;
3. **Down Shift:** To reverse inflammation related to every major age-related disease, find time every day to meditate, nap, pray, or enjoy a happy hour with friends;
4. **80% Rule:** It takes your stomach 20 minutes to tell your brain it's full, causing most people to accidentally overeat – so stop eating when you're 80% full;
5. **Plant Slant:** Eat mostly a plant-based diet that is heavy on beans, nuts, and green plants. This is consistent with the USDA's MyPlate recommendations to make fruits, vegetables, and grains the majority of your intake. The focus should be on more veggies, less meat, and less processed food;
6. **Wine @ Five:** If you have a healthy relationship with alcohol, one glass of wine daily could help add years to your life, especially when consumed with a healthy diet;
7. **Family First:** Living in a thriving family is worth half a dozen extra years of life expectancy. Invest time in your kids, nurture a monogamous relationship, and keep your aging parents near;
8. **Belong:** Recommit, reconnect, or explore a new faith-based community. No matter which faith, studies found that people who show up to their faith-based community four times a month, live an extra 4 to 14 years, and;

9. Right Tribe: Your friends have a long-term impact on your well-being. Expanding your social circle to include healthy-minded, supportive people might be the most powerful thing you can do to add happy, quality years to your life.

Aging Together Sonoma County connects all sectors of the community to improve the health and quality of life for people across the lifespan as we age together in Sonoma County. The initiative works to assure that everyone, no matter their age, is respected, valued and has the opportunity for an improved quality of life. The overarching goal is that all ages have the opportunity to be connected to community life and access to the resources and support they need to thrive and achieve their life potential.

Providers in Action

Petaluma People Services Center Senior Adult Day Program

Ruth was 86, and experiencing the early stages of dementia. Because she had decided that the world was a rotten place, her daughter had a hard time finding any activities to please her. No surprise that she came to Petaluma People Services Center's Senior Adult Day & Respite quite reluctantly.

Shortly after arriving we discovered that Ruth enjoyed music. Initially, during any performance by our volunteer musicians, she began tapping her toes which soon led to singing along and dancing to familiar tunes. It didn't take long for her to make friends, and she began saving a seat for her favorites to chat with them about her dogs and growing up in New York. She became an important member of the writing group, and joined in the bowling fun. Every time she made a strike, she happily claimed, "I've never done this before!"

It turned out that Ruth could also read Hebrew, and she took great pride in reading aloud during Hanukkah before turning on the candle lights.

When Ruth and her family moved to another city, she expressed that she was looking forward to meeting new people – something she feared before coming to Senior Day.

We miss her with and her warm smile, and are happy to know her experience with us was so very enriching, for her and her family.

Redwood Caregiver Resource Center

Redwood Caregiver Resource Center (RCRC) serves unpaid family caregivers of adults living with a neurocognitive disorder such as: Alzheimer's disease, stroke, Huntington's disease, Parkinson's disease, Multiple Sclerosis, brain tumors or brain injury, mild cognitive impairment, and any family member over 60 years old that needs help with activities of daily living. Program Director Nancy Powers-Stone explains, "Chronic

illness and disability affects the whole family system. Long-term caregiving is challenging and can cause great turmoil and sadness within even the most resilient of families. RCRC offers services and support for caregivers throughout their entire caregiving journey.” This is Mary’s caregiving story.

Mary is a frail 87-year-old woman with chronic lung disease caring for her 90-year-old husband with Alzheimer’s disease. Mary provides assistance to her husband in all activities of daily living, including personal care. Due to his inability to understand his need for help, Mary’s husband often becomes combative and resists necessary assistance. Mary describes feeling both physically and emotionally exhausted by her husband’s challenging dementia-related behaviors.

When she called RCRC for the first time, she explained that her adult children live out of town, and visit when they can, but are unable to provide regular assistance with caregiving. Mary said she would love to get some help with her husband’s care, but their limited finances prevented her from accessing in-home caregiving services. Mary had to take her confused husband with her everywhere she went, including the grocery store, the pharmacy, and her own medical appointments. Mary reported skipping her own appointments or going without food in the house on occasion, if her husband was resistant to going out. Additionally, because she could not safely leave her husband unattended, Mary was unable to take advantage of services, such as support groups or classes for herself.

A RCRC Family Consultant completed an intake and assessment with Mary to identify her caregiving challenges. They worked together to formulate an action plan designed to target these challenges. RCRC provided Mary with a grant to purchase respite care, which enabled Mary to have some time away from caregiving, and focus on self-care. Mary now takes advantage of the local RCRC caregiver support group and classes, where she states she not only learns helpful information about self-care and dementia-related behavior management, but where she also makes friends and confidants. “I am no longer alone in this,” she says. Mary still faces ongoing caregiving challenges, but reports that she feels much better equipped to manage them, because of the skills and support she gains through Redwood Caregiver Resource Center.



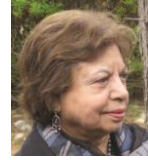
Sonoma County Area Agency on Aging Advisory Council

Ruth Robeson – Chairperson: Elder law attorney and Executive Director of Elder Financial Protection Network. Passions include rescuing senior Basset Hounds, playing competitive women’s tennis and singing barbershop a cappella harmony with the Sweet Adelines.



Judith Eisen – Vice Chairperson: Painting has been my passion since childhood. I have been fortunate to pursue this in many beautiful parts of the world, including Sonoma County! I am currently in my 9th year of service on the AAA Advisory Council.

Sumedha Mona Khanna, MD – Secretary: Specialist in women’s health and integral health practices. She is an OB/Gyn and Public Health Physician. Sumedha has provided consultation services on public health to sixty countries with the World Health Organization.



Jen Arent: Born and raised in Sonoma County and Senior Resources Director for Episcopal Senior Communities. A graduate of the Leading Age Emerge Leadership program, and a founding member of the SCIA.

Lea Black: Has lived in Sonoma County 30+ years and loves working with older adults. Currently is the Healdsburg Senior Center Coordinator. She enjoys family gatherings, gardening, cooking, crafting and event planning.



Dorothy Fried: A Licensed Clinical Social Worker and Certified Care Manager. Since 1977, she’s specialized in working with seniors and their families. Her Santa Rosa practice includes assessments, long term care management and education.

Brian Gillespie, PH.D.: Assistant Professor of Sociology at Sonoma State University. Brian teaches courses in gerontology, demography, and statistics. Recent research projects have explored close adult friendships and sexual/relationship satisfaction over the life course.



Colleen Hale: Executive Director of Cloverdale Senior Center. Joined the AAA Advisory Council in 2016. She is honored to represent Cloverdale’s aging population and to share pertinent, important information to our community.

Peter Holewinski: Raised in Monterey and Sonoma Counties, BA and MA from The Johns Hopkins University. Lifelong career in banking and finance. Married 36 years, raised three kids, and started a home care agency in Sonoma County.



Terry Kelley: Executive Director of the Sebastopol Area Senior Center. Has nearly 40 years working in the non-profit industry. BA in Recreation Administration from Chico State. Married almost 40 years. Two grown kids, Sean is a chef at The Underwood in Graton, and Kyle is finishing up a Waste Water Treatment program at SRCC. Sticky & Wicket, mixed breed terriers fill it out.





Bob Picker: Teaches English for the Adult Literacy Leavue. Served as professor and college administrator, holds three degrees through a PHD in Geography and Soviet/Russian Studies. Is widowed, has three children and 9 grandkids.

Jim Redding: New Jersey native raised in Novato, CA. Attended Novato Elementary, San Rafael High, UC Berkeley and Sonoma State University. Retired real estate broker-developer. Partnered with Jef Turnbull for thirty-seven years.



Rabon Saip: Is a student of the history of aging and the current longevity revolution. He has a graduate degree in psychology and has worked as a psychotherapist.

Alain Serkissian: Married to Judy and father of three wonderful kids. Owner of Mirabel Lodge in Forestville and Oak Meadow in Santa Rosa where quality of life and socialization is a priority.



Diane Spain: Born and raised in San Francisco, moved to Sonoma County in 1975. Director of Senior Services (25 years) for West County Community Services, retired in 2013. Collects dolls, cherishes friends, loves dogs.

Hav Staggs: Retired from business in 1999; moved here last year with wife, Susan. Past President of TACC and Chair of the California Commission on Aging. Love to travel, bridge, fishing, wine.



Don Streeper: Employed by the City of Petaluma Parks and Recreation department as a Senior Recreation coordinator. 40+ years' experience in recreation. Enjoys traveling with wife, family time with daughter, gardening and reading.

Laurie White, MSW: Earned a Master of Social Work (MSW) degree. During her 30 year career as a dementia specialist, she's worked with families, trained professionals, and co-authored 3 nationally acclaimed dementia books.



AAA Programs: Linkages

The Linkages Program is a care coordination program offered by the Sonoma County Area Agency on Aging, Human Services Department, Adult and Aging Division.

Linkages is available to frail seniors and adults with disabilities aged 60 and older who are at risk of being placed in a skilled nursing facility or other institutional setting. Linkages care managers provide case management services as well as information and

assistance services that connect clients with available community resources to assist them to remain safely at home and independent in the community. Here's one of their stories...

Albert is a 75 year old military veteran who was referred to Linkages by a social worker at the local Veterans Medical Clinic. Albert needed help finding resources in the community to support him so he could continue to live independently. He was having problems getting around after back surgery and the social worker was concerned he was getting depressed, although he avoided talking about his mood. Albert was receiving Home Delivered Meals and was on a waiting list for VA home care services, but needed more immediate help.

I was assigned as his Linkages social worker and Albert agreed to meet with me. At my first home visit, I discovered a very amiable Southern gentleman who prided himself on his strength and independence. He used a crutch to get around his very small apartment, which was crammed full of books, paperwork and mementos. A pile of laundry lay on the floor. I quickly saw that Albert simply could not keep up with these chores any longer and things had gotten out of hand since he had his surgery. Together we reviewed all his needs, including what was going well and what needed improvement. Albert and I determined the first priority was to get him help in his home. I learned Albert had once applied for In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS), but had never completed the process.

Within six weeks of meeting him, I coached Albert through the IHSS enrollment process, connected him with the Public Authority, and he found an IHSS provider. Over the next several months, I made many more home visits to Albert. We found several other services to support his independence. For example, Linkages funded some limited services from a professional organizer who helped him set up his home in a way that supported his independence and safety. Once organized and with a little bit of help, he was able to keep up with it. Linkages also installed a grab-bar in the shower, to reduce his fall risk while bathing. Linkages helped Albert with his wellbeing and mood as well, using an evidenced based model called Healthy Ideas. We talked about things he enjoyed and looked forward to. With encouragement, Albert eventually returned to his church, where he enjoyed spiritual and social support. As we wrapped up his enrollment to this short term case management program, we talked about his future needs, and I helped him plan ahead. In total, Linkages worked with Albert for nine months. Albert's life improved greatly with some small encouragement and services.



Falls: Inevitable or Preventable?

On average, more than one million Californians over age 65 fall each year. Does this mean that as we age falls are inevitable? No! We can be active participants in fall prevention by addressing risk factors that may cause a fall.

Across the county, and in Sonoma County, falls are the leading cause of fractures, hospital admissions, and deaths among older adults. A serious fall may have a significant effect on your health and independence. The substantial impact that falls have on wellbeing has motivated research on how to prevent falls.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, a key factor in preventing falls is participating in exercises that focus on balance, strength, and endurance. Couple that with making your home environment safer by eliminating tripping hazards and adding grab bars, and you are well on your way to reducing your fall risk. Older adults are also encouraged to have your vision tested and to discuss medications that may affect balance with your medical professional.



Where do you start?

Sonoma County's Area Agency on Aging offers a fall prevention program that has proven effectiveness in preventing falls. The program, A Matter of Balance: Managing Concerns about Falling, is for those who are concerned about falls; interested in improving balance, flexibility and strength; who have fallen in the past; or who may have restricted activities because of fears of falling. Trained volunteer coaches lead 8-12 participants through group discussions where participants learn to view falls as controllable, set goals for increasing activity, make changes to reduce fall risks at home, and exercise to increase strength and balance. The program is offered at various locations throughout Sonoma County.

Falls aren't something that just happen when you age, there are proven ways to reduce falls. Help to prevent a fall in your future by following these recommendations from the CDC:

- Talk to your doctor
- Do strength and balance exercises
- Have your eyes checked
- Make your home safe from fall risks

For more information on A Matter of Balance please contact Program Coordinator Dana Jacoby at djacoby@schsd.org or 707-565-5936.

AAA Program Providers

The Sonoma County Area Agency on Aging works with 13 local agencies who deliver critical services to Sonoma County senior citizens. The Area Plan determines the scope of programs provided.

Alzheimer's Association, Catholic Charities, Coastal Seniors, Council on Aging, Legal Aid of Sonoma County, North Coast Opportunities, Redwood Caregiver Resource Center, Petaluma People Services Center, Russian River Senior Resource Center, Santa Rosa Memorial Hospital, Sebastopol Area Senior Center, Senior Advocacy Services and Vintage House Sonoma.

Senior Social Club is Bright Spot for Client and Her Daughter

Council on Aging's Senior Social Club at Vintage House in Sonoma is a bright spot for both Margaret Gilbaugh and her daughter, Robin Nicola. For Gilbaugh, 88, it's a chance to get out of the house she shares with Nicola and her family, and to socialize, listen to music, and enjoy a communal meal with friends. "She loves the singing more than anything else," said Nicola. "She comes home and she's singing '*It's a Small World After All*.'"

Gilbaugh's world became a bit smaller years ago when short term memory loss caused by a previous stroke caused her to start withdrawing from family life.

"We noticed she was not doing well," said Nicola. "So when I heard about the program, she started going. She turned around mentally and physically because she has her own special time, place and activities now."

In fact, Gilbaugh has rarely missed a session in the past six years- "only when she's very sick," said Nicola. "A couple of times, when she's needed to get ready to go by herself because I continue to work, she's so eager that she waits in the garage or outside of the garage for her ride (the Vintage House Senior Transportation Program provides free door-to-door rides for seniors in the area for non-medical purposes).



Having her mother visit the Senior Social Club on Tuesdays and Thursdays is also a boon for Nicola, who is a full-time caregiver for her mother. When Gilbaugh leaves, Nicola can clean her room and take care of other housekeeping chores.

But the value goes well beyond having a little time for housekeeping chores. “Our whole family – including nieces and nephews – knows she goes to the Social Club. I get emotional about it because we are all so grateful she gets out of here and does something fun – she deserves it.”

The Sonoma County Area Agency on Aging

The Sonoma County Area Agency on Aging (AAA), established by the Board of Supervisors in 1979, is part of the national aging network of Area Agencies on Aging, created by the 1965 Older Americans Act. The AAA mandate is that visible and effective leaders and advocates at the local level accomplish state and federal program goals to serve seniors. The broad goals of the Act are the following: Secure and maintain maximum independence and dignity in a home environment for seniors capable of self-care with appropriate supportive services; Remove individual and social barriers to economic and personal independence for seniors; and, Eliminate barriers and support the development of coordinated and accessible home and community-based systems of care.

The Older Americans Act funds local, cost-effective programs that support seniors. These services include health promotion, senior nutrition programs, caregiver support, Adult Day programs, Alzheimer’s Day programs, senior legal services, elder protection, transportation, and case management.

The Sonoma County Area Agency on Aging is a program of the Sonoma County Human Services Department, Adult & Aging Services Division, under the leadership of the Human Services Director and the Board of Supervisors.

AAA is also guided by the California Department of Aging’s mission, which is to promote the independence and well-being of seniors, adults with disabilities, and families through: Access to information and services to improve the quality of their lives; Opportunities for community involvement; and, Support for family members providing care.

The Advisory Council is comprised of 21 volunteer members. Each of the five County Supervisors appoints two members from their districts, for a total of ten members. The remaining 11 members are elected by the Advisory Council itself – one for each supervisorial district – and six at-large members. Members serve two-year terms and are eligible for reappointment. A majority of Advisory Council members must be over 60 years old. The Advisory Council advises the Board of Supervisors on planning and

funding decisions, as well as participates in advocacy activities on behalf of Sonoma County seniors and people with disabilities. In addition, the Advisory Council has four standing committees – Executive, Planning and Funding, Legislative, and Transportation and Mobility. Additional ad hoc committees are added as necessary. The Advisory Council and standing committees meet monthly and are open to the public.

Senior Resource Guide

To provide information to seniors, caregivers, and families and friends of seniors, AAA provides assistance and resource listings through the Senior Resource Guide. AAA publishes and distributes the annual Senior Resource Guide, a comprehensive directory of local, state and federal services and organizations that assist seniors and their families. Annually, 25,000 guides are distributed throughout the county.

The guide is published in both English and Spanish. In addition to its printed form, the Senior Resource Guide is available on the AAA website, www.socoaaa.org, and through Sonoma County Network of Care for Seniors website www.sonoma.networkofcare.org/aging. The Network of Care website is provided in collaboration with the Sonoma County Department of Health Services.

Senior Resource Guide information is also available through 2-1-1, the Sonoma County Volunteer Center-sponsored phone and Internet resource www.211wc.org for health, human services, and social services information and referral.

Aging Well Sonoma County

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