

SONOMA SENIORS TODAY

Council on Aging Bids a Heartfelt Farewell to Marrianne McBride and Embarks on an Exciting New Chapter

By Jamie Escoubas, Council on Aging
CEO / President

After nearly two decades of exceptional leadership, we bid farewell to Marrianne McBride, who retired as our President and CEO. Marrianne's steadfast commitment has been the cornerstone of Council on Aging's growth, helping us become a vital resource for older adults in Sonoma County. During her 19 years of service, she expanded essential nutrition programs, developed health and wellness initiatives, and strengthened our outreach to diverse communities, establishing the organization as a trusted partner for seniors seeking support, connection, and care.

As Marrianne embarks on a well-deserved retirement, I am both excited and honored to step into the role of President and CEO. I bring more than 25 years of experience in senior care, alongside a deep passion for non-profit leadership.

Having previously served as Director of Social and Fiduciary Services at Council on Aging, I am committed to building on Marrianne's remarkable accomplishments. We will continue expanding Spanish-language programs, enhancing community partnerships, and strengthening the essential services that make a difference in the lives of seniors.

Amid political uncertainty and increasing pressure on public resources, we understand the challenges facing senior services today. As the senior population continues to grow at an unprecedented rate, the demand for these critical programs is more urgent than ever. Despite these challenges, we remain committed to our mission to support older adults and their caregivers. The road ahead may be complex, but we are ready to adapt, innovate, and collaborate with our community to ensure that every senior has access to the care, support, and resources they deserve.



Jamie Escoubas succeeds Marrianne McBride as President / CEO

Together, we will rise to meet these challenges and continue to empower older adults in our community. Here's to the next chapter of growth, innovation, and meaningful impact!

Intergenerational Program Receives Generations United Program of Merit Certificate

By Jennifer Kulpa, Tellegacy & Lunch
Companion Coordinator



Jennifer Kulpa

The Council on Aging is thrilled to announce that its innovative inter-generational program, encompassing Tellegacy and the Lunch Companion initiative, has been awarded the Generations United Program of Merit certificate. This national recognition highlights the program's significant impact in fostering

meaningful connections between older adults and younger generations in Sonoma County.

The Tellegacy program, which connects older adults with volunteers for regular visits, combats social isolation and promotes mutual learning. Older adults share their life stories with the volunteer to create a Legacy book of memories, accomplishments, and photos. Meanwhile, the Lunch Companion program pairs volunteers with seniors for shared meals and conversations, creating valuable companionship and support.

"We are incredibly proud to receive this recognition," said Jennifer Kulpa, Tellegacy and Lunch Companion Program Coordinator at Council on Aging. "This recognition validates the hard work of our volunteers, staff, and participants

who have embraced the power of intergenerational connection. These programs demonstrate how bringing generations together enriches lives and builds a stronger community."

Generations United, a national organization dedicated to improving the lives of youth and older adults through intergenerational strategies, selected Council on Aging's program for its demonstrated excellence in innovation, impact, and sustainability.

Council on Aging extends its gratitude to all those who have contributed to the success of Tellegacy and the Lunch Companion program. We remain committed to fostering intergenerational relationships and building a more connected community for all ages.



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Caregiver Corner

Recognizing and Responding to Caregiver Burnout

By Jamie Escoubas, Council on Aging CEO / President

Caregiving for a loved one with dementia can be immensely rewarding, but it's also highly demanding. Over time, caregivers may experience physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion—commonly known as caregiver burnout. When overwhelmed by the constant demands of caregiving, caregivers may unintentionally lose patience, become frustrated, or act in ways they normally wouldn't, which can escalate into neglect or harm. It's critical for caregivers to recognize the signs of burnout early to prevent a situation where they might inadvertently cause harm or neglect.

Signs of Caregiver Burnout

- **Physical Exhaustion:** Constant fatigue or feeling drained, even after rest or sleep.
- **Emotional Exhaustion:** Feelings of anger, frustration, or emotional numbness toward the care recipient.
- **Difficulty Sleeping:** Insomnia, trouble falling asleep, or waking up frequently during the night due to caregiving responsibilities.

- **Isolation:** Avoiding social interaction, feeling isolated, or withdrawing from others.
- **Declining Health:** Caregivers may neglect their own health, leading to weight loss, illness, or a general decline in their well-being.

No one should ever feel alone in their caregiving journey. Seeking help and accessing resources can protect both the caregiver's well-being and the care recipient's safety. Caregivers who feel supported, healthy, and equipped to manage their responsibilities are far less likely to cause harm, whether intentionally or unintentionally. By taking proactive steps to manage stress, caregivers can protect both themselves and the individuals they care for.

Where to Access Caregiver Help and Support

- **Seek Respite Care:** Taking breaks is essential. Respite care allows caregivers to step away temporarily while ensuring their loved one still receives proper care.
- **Connect with Support Groups:** Joining a caregiver support group can provide a sense of community, a place to share experiences, and an opportunity to learn from others in similar situations.

- **Reach Out to Professionals:** Consulting with a healthcare provider or counselor can help caregivers manage stress, address burnout, and ensure they have the emotional and mental support they need.

June is Elder Abuse Awareness Month and a time dedicated to raising awareness about the mistreatment of older adults and promoting actions to prevent abuse and support victims. It is important to recognize the signs of burnout and act to prevent both abuse and self-neglect. It is also a time to emphasize the significance of asking for help, which can ultimately safeguard both the caregiver and the individual with dementia.

If you or someone you know is experiencing elder abuse, or if you're feeling overwhelmed in your caregiving role, it's important to reach out for help. You don't have to do this alone.

Resources

- Council on Aging: 707-525-0143 (for mental health and respite programs)
- Redwood Caregiver Resource Center: 707-542-0282 (for caregiver support and respite grants)
- Alzheimer's Association: 1-800-272-3900 (for caregiver support)
- Adult Protective Services: 707-565-5940 (for reporting elder abuse or neglect)

PUZZLES & GAMES

Puzzle solutions are on page 8

WORD SCRAMBLE

"Baked Goods"

1. NUFFMIS	_ _ _ _ _ _ _
2. OOESCKI	_ _ _ _ _ _ _
3. NNLOAIC	_ _ _ _ _ _ _
4. RRODCEANB	_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _
5. ELCARI	_ _ _ _ _ _
6. SISNOCATR	_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _
7. SBRWOIEN	_ _ _ _ _ _ _
8. HUNOUTGD	_ _ _ _ _ _ _
9. NRAOMCA	_ _ _ _ _ _ _
10. OTIBTSIC	_ _ _ _ _ _ _
11. KPACUEC	_ _ _ _ _ _ _
12. MEAELEIDN	_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

SUDOKU - Medium

	8		7					4
			2		5		3	1
1	4	5	9	8			2	
7	3			1				
5		1	4			7		
	6			7				
	1	4				9		
				3	7		6	2
6		7	8			3		

SUDOKU - Hard

9	6		1			3		
	5				2		4	
				4		8		
			3		5		8	9
					4			5
		1		6			7	4
				3				
3			9	2				
		8				4	1	

WORD SEARCH

"Summer Vacation"

FIREWORKS	SUNGLASSES
LEMONADE	POOLSIDE
SUNSHINE	ICECREAM
PICNIC	HAMMOCK
SEASHELLS	OCEAN
BARBECUE	FAMILY

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

"Memorial Day"

ACROSS

- 1 Fifth month of the
Gregorian calendar year
4 Left over
9 Leaving
14 Expression of surprise
15 Freedom from war or
hostility
16 Shelter under branches
17 Prisoner of war
18 Constellation
19 River
20 In ___ (together)
22 Gives a grant
24 Morning moisture
25 Darken
27 Sky
29 Gasoline
32 Snappish
35 Craze
36 Observe secretly
38 Unhappiness
40 Tinted
42 Sing
44 Harness
45 Report
47 Letter part
49 Fasten
50 Public procession of
people
52 Ends
54 Yang's partner
55 Self-esteem
56 Whiz
59 Enlistee person who
serves in the Navy
63 Decorative needle case
67 ___ Gras
69 Having to do with the navy
71 Business abbr.
72 Constellation
73 Inscribed pillar
74 Tell a tall tale
75 Gushes out
76 Taut
77 Limited (abbr.)

DOWN

- 1 Charts
2 Sailors "hey"
3 Gape
4 Resort hotel
5 Rites performed in
order to give honor
6 Precipitation
7 Did well
8 Mexican money
9 Refueling, with "up"
10 Unrefined metal
11 As previously cited
12 Not any
13 Nourished
21 Central daylight time
23 Armed fighting
between nations
26 Tax agency
28 Depend
29 Remit (2 wds.)
30 Water retention
31 Baggy
32 Musical production
33 Bird perch
34 Harnesses
35 Former president of
U.S.
37 Poem
39 Kitten's cry
41 Rowboat
43 Left wing members
46 Dried grapes
48 Mist
51 Deoxyribonucleic acid
(abbr.)
53 Seafood
56 Famous cookies
57 Cavil
58 Canal
60 Institution (abbr.)
61 Opp. of early
62 Kiln
64 Dig up the soil
65 Part
66 Chilled
68 ___ Jones Industrial
average
70 Downwind

WORD SEARCH "Summer Vacation"

Y	X	B	A	R	B	E	C	U	E	P	V	U	D	G	J
S	E	A	S	H	E	L	L	S	W	M	I	S	R	B	H
L	E	M	O	N	A	D	E	H	G	C	T	C	R	M	O
U	O	O	V	U	K	K	U	G	R	O	H	S	N	Z	P
S	O	V	H	A	M	M	O	C	K	H	E	H	M	I	T
C	Z	F	P	Q	Q	B	W	L	H	S	D	A	C	M	C
M	T	I	U	D	I	T	C	G	S	A	E	M	T	P	B
Q	S	R	S	V	S	L	F	A	E	R	Y	X	N	O	E
E	U	E	L	I	P	F	L	I	C	H	D	H	Y	O	Z
B	N	W	W	H	O	G	A	E	C	Q	E	Q	Y	L	D
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B	N	S	F	P	Q	N	X	M	N	U	Y	R	P	E	B
E	E	Z	O	C	A	R	Q	U	C	J	E	C	B	Q	P
M	Y	C	W	Z	Z	K	A	F	B	I	I	G	W	V	F

The Importance and Benefits of Hospice Care



Designed by Freepik

By Garrett Gamboa, BSN Student SSU

With Sonoma County’s above-average proportion of seniors and the need for compassionate end-of-life care growing, hospice services have become an essential part of the healthcare system. Hospice services help to provide medical support, pain management, and emotional/psychological care for patients and their families during end-of-life.

Hospice services aim to enhance comfort while prioritizing the patient's quality of life. Rather than initiating aggressive treatments that focus on extending life but decrease the quality of life, hospice services seek a holistic approach focusing on pain and symptom



Garrett Gamboa

management. With this pivot in attention, studies have found that hospice patients report higher satisfaction levels due to improved pain control and better overall care. These services ensure patients receive compassionate care at home or in a facility in their final days.

One key benefit of hospice care is decreased medical costs due to reduced hospital admissions and emergency room visits. Research from the National Library of Medicine has found a significant correlation between increased hospice utilization and fewer ICU and hospital deaths. In Sonoma County, where hospital mortality rates for chronic illnesses are above the state average, strong integration and utilization of hospice services could make a significant impact in shifting end-of-life care from hospital settings to more comfortable environments. By making this shift, unnecessary hospital stays would be reduced, helping to alleviate financial strains on both the healthcare system and the patient's family due to

the significant difference in cost for hospitalization compared to hospice care.

Caring for a terminally ill loved one is both emotionally and physically taxing. With hospice care, support is provided to these families, offering counseling, respite care, and bereavement services. Hospice’s role in helping to relieve some of the families' emotional and physical stress is significant in the communities of Sonoma County, where many elderly residents rely on their families for support. Without hospice, families trying to care for their loved ones struggle with providing quality care while dealing with their own emotions of the impending death. Furthermore, it is also difficult for the families to address psychological and emotional distresses that the dying loved one may experience. Many patients with terminal illnesses experience anxiety, depression, and fear, which are controlled and mitigated by the interdisciplinary hospice team, including the social workers, chaplains, and counselors who provide the much-needed emotional support tailored to the patient's specific needs. Research has shown that patients in hospice care report an enhanced sense of peace with significantly reduced feelings of distress. These services provide emotional and spiritual comfort in Sonoma County, where the aging population frequently experiences isolation and a lack of social support.

As Sonoma County’s population ages, the role of hospice care becomes increasingly important. By improving patient comfort, reducing hospitalizations, supporting families, and addressing disparities in healthcare access, hospice services provide an effective yet compassionate alternative to end-of-life care. Expanding and strengthening these hospice care programs is vital in this community, where chronic illnesses have an above-average mortality rate, and it is essential to ensure that residents receive the dignity and support that they deserve. Integrating hospice care enhances the quality of life and creates a more sustainable, patient-centered healthcare system for Sonoma County’s aging community.

These Boots are Made for Walking - But Not Too Far

By Joleen D Bishop, MSN, WHNP-BC-MSCP

Movement and exercise are essential at every stage of life, becoming even more important for older adults. Regardless of your current abilities, it's never too late to start incorporating daily physical activity. Inactivity, not just aging, significantly affects daily living, leading to more doctor visits, falls, balance issues, and worsening of chronic conditions. Regular physical activity can boost emotional and mental health and reduce depression. It also remains the best option for managing stress.

Two common mobility issues are:

Osteoarthritis: The most common form of arthritis, osteoarthritis occurs when the cartilage protecting the bones wears down over time, often affecting the hands, knees, hips, and spine. While joint damage cannot be reversed, staying active, maintaining a healthy weight, and receiving proper treatment can help slow the disease’s progression and improve pain and function.

Osteoporosis: This condition weakens bones, making them brittle and prone to fractures from



Joleen Bishop

even mild stress. Osteoporosis is more common in white and Asian women, especially women past menopause. Prevention involves medication, a healthy diet, and weight-bearing exercises to strengthen bones.

Other conditions affecting mobility include Parkinson’s, obesity, joint injuries, cancer or treatments, dementia, and cardiac issues. People with arthritis, for example, may need to avoid certain activities during flare-ups, while individuals with diabetes might need to adjust their schedules, diet, or medications around their exercise plans. Always consult with your provider for guidance.

Strategies to Maintain and Improve Mobility:

- **Stay motivated:** Start small! Incorporate activities like walking with a friend, taking the stairs, or parking farther away to add more movement to your day. Every bit counts.
- **Increase aerobic activity:** Activities like brisk walking, swimming, dancing, or biking increase heart rate and stamina. Use the "Talk Test" to gauge intensity— if you can talk easily, it's moderate; if not, it's vigorous.
- **Strengthening muscles and practicing balance:** Strong muscles help with everyday tasks and reduce fall risk. Weightlifting, resistance bands, yoga, and Pilates are great for strength and balance.

- **Evaluate diet and nutrition:** A balanced diet is key for strength and endurance. Focus on vegetables over fruit, and limit red meat. Consult your provider on any dietary restrictions, especially if you have health concerns, are on specific medications, or have a chronic disease (i.e. diabetes).
- **Prioritize safety:** Start slowly with low-intensity exercises, gradually increasing repetitions. Warm up and cool down, stay hydrated, wear proper gear, and be mindful of your environment. If you have specific health conditions, discuss your plan with your provider.

How much activity do I need?

The official recommendation is 150 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise per week. Movement minutes can be spread throughout the day, broken into smaller segments or all at once. However, any movement is beneficial, so aim for what you can do each day—every little bit helps!

Conclusion

In conclusion, do your best to fight the inertia of aging and move a body part each day. A few resources you can check out are your local Senior Center, Jewish Community Center, and YMCA. These have movement and exercise coupled with possible community building.

AT HOME Caregivers

Wouldn't you rather be at home?

Wouldn't you rather be at home?

At Home Caregivers has served Sonoma County for more than 18 years with licensed employee caregivers.

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NUTRITION NEWS

Choosing Healthy Meals as You Age

Building health-focused and nourishing meals can become a daunting task as you age. With appetite or taste bud changes, decreasing calorie needs, and other physical or lifestyle changes can make meal planning difficult. Here are a few tips for choosing foods and creating meals to help you feel your best as you age.

First, prioritize protein and fiber with each meal. Protein is essential for muscle maintenance, proper physical function, and overall health and wellness. Fiber helps support digestion, reduces risk of heart disease, irregular blood sugar levels, and helps reduce inflammation in the body. Instead of thinking about fiber as simply fruits and vegetables, try thinking of it as “color.” Challenge yourself to see how many different “colors” you can eat in a day. Aim for 3-5 different colors with each meal. This helps make fruit and vegetable intake a bit more enjoyable and you might even surprise yourself with the variety of fruits and vegetables you actually eat in a day!

Next, utilize convenience items to create appetizing, balanced meals without all the hassle. Things like overnight oats, hard boiled eggs, individual cups of greek yogurt, granola, protein smoothies or shakes, rotisserie chicken, canned tuna or salmon, pre-made salad kits, pre-chopped, frozen, or canned veggies and fruits are all great ways to create meals that not only nourish your body, but also keep you full for longer.

Lastly, be a smart shopper. Try to avoid ultra processed foods which are typically higher in fat, sodium, and added sugars. Check the food labels to ensure you're picking foods that align with your health goals and promote a healthy lifestyle. If finances are a concern, try to shop seasonally as these foods are often on sale due to surplus. If getting to a grocery store is difficult, consider meal delivery services. Most grocery stores now provide this service either for free or a small fee. This could be an excellent way to ensure you are getting the proper nutrition you need without needing to risk going to the grocery store yourself.

For any further questions, please contact your primary care provider or reach out to your COA dietitian, Vanessa.

Written By: Vanessa Hasslinger, MS, RDN
Sources: Administration for Community Living, National Council on Aging



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sonomacleanpower.org

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— CLIP AND SAVE —



Financial and Utility Assistance

Some restrictions may apply. Call for complete requirements.
For additional resources, call the HUB 707-565-4636

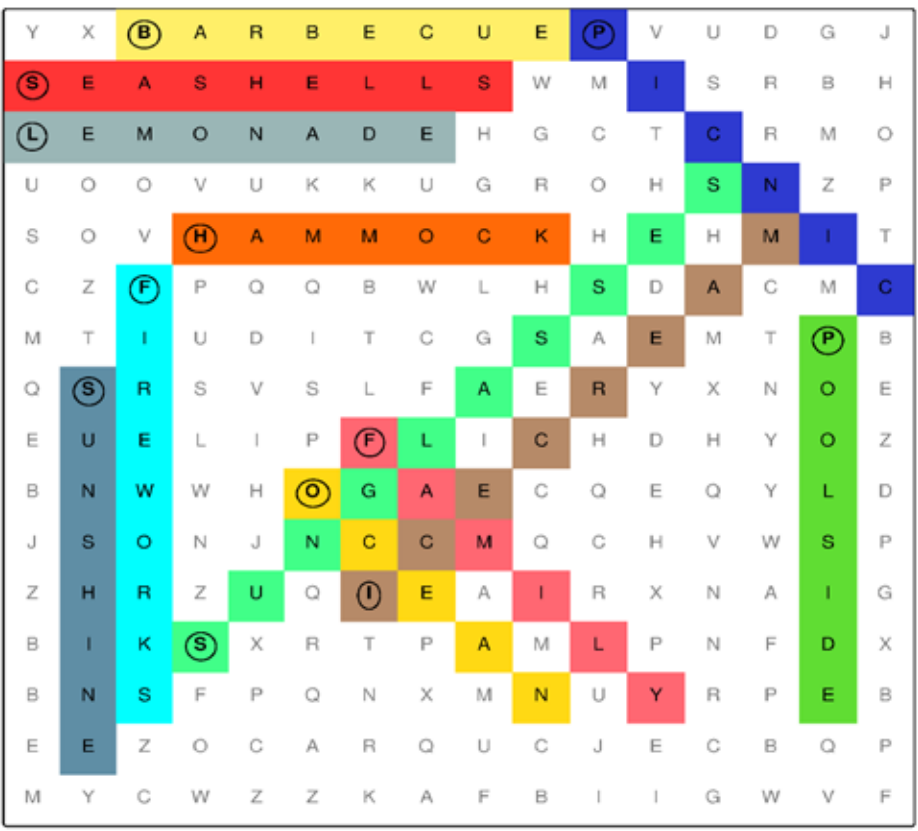
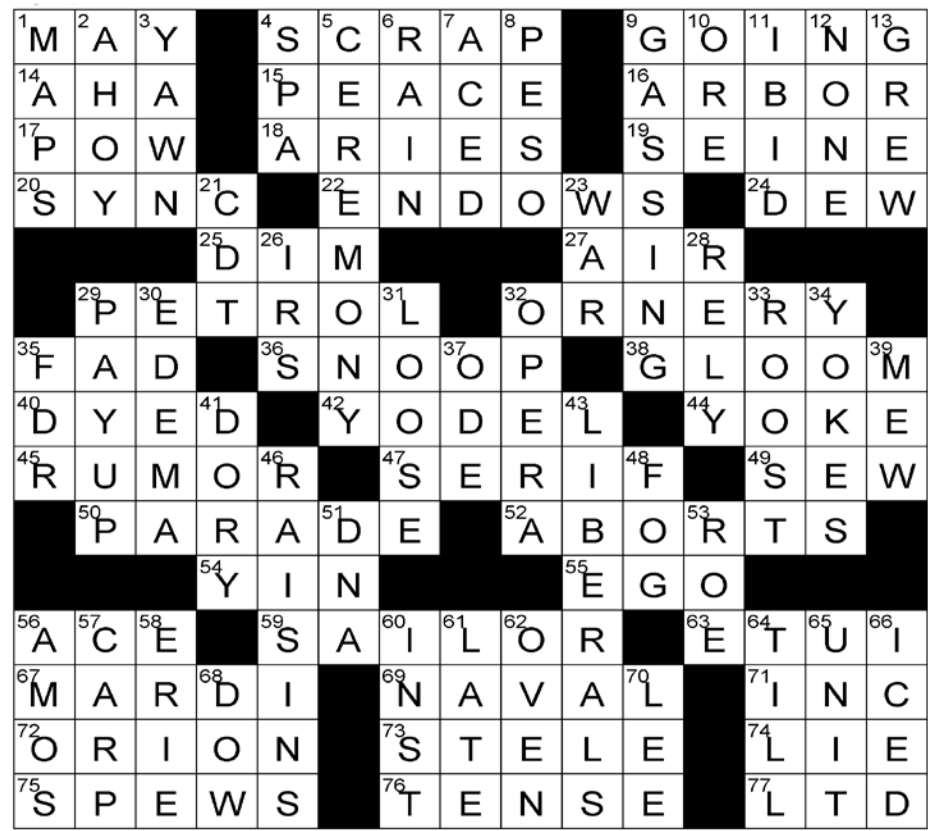


Agency Name	Program Name	Phone	Description
American Cancer Society	Lodging & Reimbursement	707-545-6720	Free or low cost lodging when traveling out-of-town for cancer treatments
American Elder Care	Financial Options for Long-Term Senior Care	641-715-3900	Helps families find financial resources for assisted living/long-term care for seniors
CA Human Dev. Corporation	Sonoma County Community Services	707-433-6652	Helps with payment of bills, electricity, gas, heating, water, and rent, plus more
CA Public Utilities Commission	CA Lifeline Telephone Program	866-272-0349	Offers discounted basic phone (landline/mobile) services to eligible households
CA State Parks & Rec. Dept.	Senior Discount Cards	916-324-7407	Offers discount cards to seniors for reduced admission into state parks
CA Telephone Access System	Telephone Access Program	800-806-1191	Free phone & services to deaf, hard of hearing, blind, and impaired individuals
Community Action Partnership	Rental or Deposit Assistance	707-765-6530	Emergency rental/security deposit/mortgage payment assistance
Community Dev. Commission	Mobile Home Program	707-565-7501	Rent increase arbitration for mobile home / park owners
Community Dev. Commission	Sonoma County Housing Authority	707-565-7501	Rental assistance for very low income families, seniors, veterans, or the disabled
Human Services Department	Benefits Cal/Win/CalFresh/Medi-Cal	877-699-6868	Enrollment benefits that provide food, cash aid, and health coverage programs
Disability Services & Legal Ctr.	Housing Program	707-528-2745	Affordable housing advocacy / rental deposit application & funding programs
Disability Services & Legal Ctr.	SOS* and HCA* Housing Program	707-528-2745	Assists w/application for HCA & SOS funding for critical family needs
Friends in Service (FISH)	Rent Utility and Transportation Assistance	707-996-0111	Emergency one-time assistance for rent, deposit, or utility, or bus tickets
North Coast Energy Services	Low Income Home Energy Assistance	707-463-0303	Assistance with utility bills for low income households
Pacific Gas & Electric	CARE/FERA Programs	877-660-6789	Provides monthly discounts for income-eligible customers
Reach for Home	Reach for Home	707-433-6161	Offers programs to find long-term housing, generate income and build life skills
Recology of Marin	Discounted Garbage Rates	800-243-0291	Discounted garbage rates available for those in the CARE Program thru PG&E

*SOS (Season of Sharing) HCA (Homeless Assistance Housing Program)

— CLIP AND SAVE —

PUZZLE SOLUTIONS



SCRAMBLE "Baked Goods"

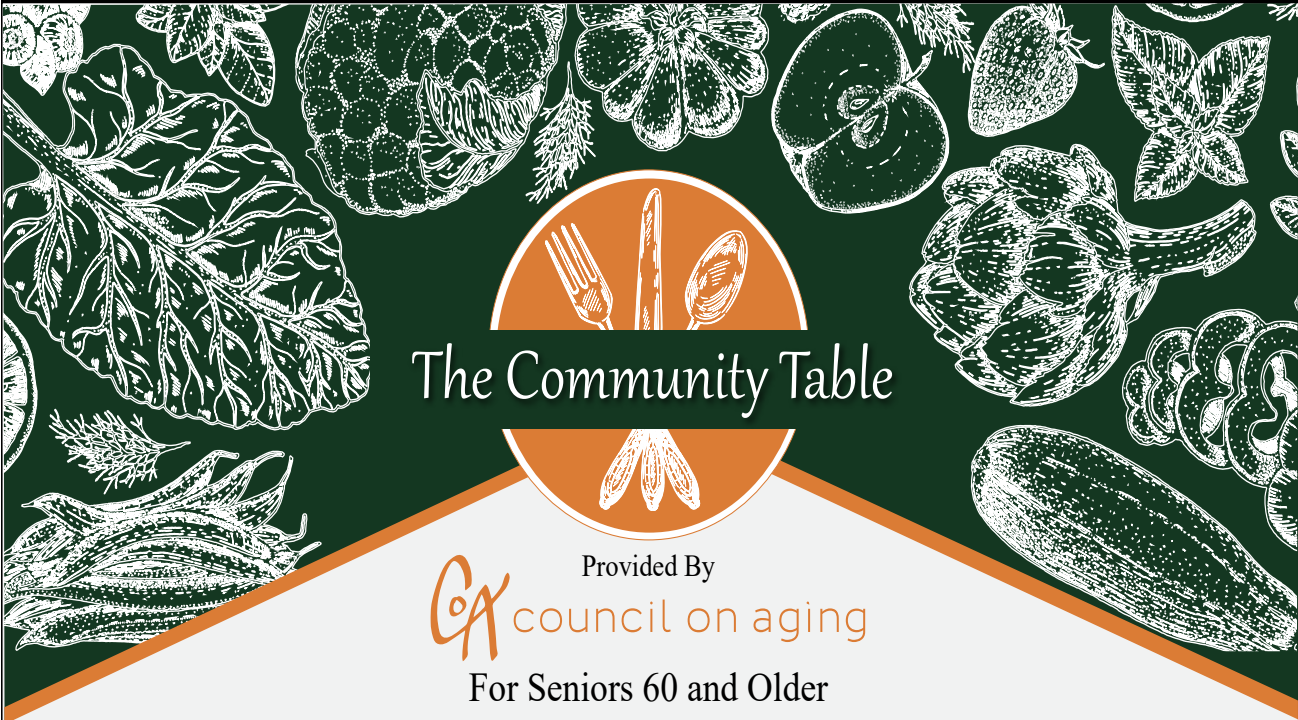
1. NUFFMIS	M U F F I N S
2. OOECKI	C O O K I E S
3. NNLOAIC	C A N N O L I
4. RRODCEANB	C O R N B R E A D
5. ELCARI	E C L A I R
6. SISNOCATR	C R O I S S A N T
7. SBRWOIEN	B R O W N I E S
8. HUNOUTGD	D O U G H N U T
9. NRAOMCA	M A C A R O N
10. OTIBTSIC	B I S C O T T I
11. KPACUEC	C U P C A K E
12. MEAELEIDN	M A D E L E I N E

SUDOKU - Medium

2	8	3	7	6	1	5	9	4
9	7	6	2	4	5	8	3	1
1	4	5	9	8	3	6	2	7
7	3	8	5	1	9	2	4	6
5	9	1	4	2	6	7	8	3
4	6	2	3	7	8	1	5	9
3	1	4	6	5	2	9	7	8
8	5	9	1	3	7	4	6	2
6	2	7	8	9	4	3	1	5

SUDOKU - Hard

9	6	4	1	8	7	3	5	2
8	5	3	6	9	2	7	4	1
1	7	2	5	4	3	8	9	6
4	2	6	3	7	5	1	8	9
7	8	9	2	1	4	6	3	5
5	3	1	8	6	9	2	7	4
6	1	5	4	3	8	9	2	7
3	4	7	9	2	1	5	6	8
2	9	8	7	5	6	4	1	3



2025 SITE CLOSURES: 5/26 • 6/19 • 7/4 • 9/1 • 11/11 • 11/27 • 11/28 • 12/24 • 12/25 • 12/31		
HEALDSBURG Fitch Mountain Senior Apartments 710 S. Fitch Mountain Road TUE 12:00 – 1:00 PM	SANTA ROSA Salvation Army Senior Activity Center 115 Pierce Street FRI 12:00 – 1:00 PM	SONOMA Oakridge Senior Apartments 18800 Beatrice Drive TUE 12:00 – 1:00 PM
ROHNERT PARK Rohnert Park Senior Center 6800 Hunter Drive, Suite A MON – FRI 12:00 – 1:00 PM	SEBASTOPOL Burbank Heights & Orchard 7777 Bodega Avenue WED 12:00 – 1:00 PM	SONOMA Vintage House 264 First Street East MON 12:00 – 1:00 PM
SANTA ROSA Finley Community Center 2060 W. College Ave. MON 12:45 – 1:15 PM	Pre-registration Required YOU MUST RESERVE ONE WEEK IN ADVANCE	WINDSOR Bell Manor Senior Apartments 8780 Bell Road WED 12:00 – 1:00 PM
To Register, Call 707-525-0143 x128		
Meals Funded in Part by County of Sonoma		
Contributions are voluntary and confidential. Eligible participants will not be denied service for an inability to contribute. A suggested \$4 per meal contribution can be deposited in the collection box. Eligible and ineligible individuals who do not complete a registration form must pay \$7 for meal costs. REV. 2/13/2025		



PEARLS Client, Susan Fiori: A Testament to Self-Compassion and Resiliency

Susan Fiori has lived through a rich tapestry of life experiences. Some of her favorite accomplishments have been raising her three children, building a career as a nurse, and running three marathons. Susan also shared that some of



Susan Fiori

her current favorite hobbies are yoga and hiking. In fact, she attributes never having a fall at 82 years old to her yoga practice. But her most recent journey has presented her with a unique set of challenges: caregiving for her husband, who was diagnosed with ALS, while also managing her own diagnosis of blood cancer. Despite these hardships, Susan has found strength and clarity through Council on Aging's evidence-based program PEARLS, which helps adults 50 years and older through problem solving and activity planning.

As a caregiver for her husband, Susan has navigated the emotional and physical demands of supporting someone with a degenerative illness. "George doesn't have children, though he has a lot of family and friends, but not hands-on support," Susan explains. "I have three children, four grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren, but they live in different towns and states. So I have some family support, but not the day-to-day help I need." In addition to caring for her husband, Susan had to come to terms with her own health issues. Diagnosed with blood cancer three years ago, Susan has faced both of these health battles with remarkable resilience. But it hasn't been easy, and there were times when Susan felt overwhelmed. It was during this challenging period that a social worker from her oncologist's office recommended she consider the PEARLS program. "I was going through an especially rough time," she recalls. "I didn't even know exactly what I needed—I just knew I needed support."

PEARLS, which stands for "Program to Encourage Active and Rewarding Lives for Seniors," provides coaching and practical problem-solving for older adults who are struggling with depression and social isolation. The program focuses on a 7-step approach to identify and solve problems while increasing social, physical, and pleasant activities to help participants take charge of their well-being. For Susan, the PEARLS program has been nothing short of transformative. "It's benefited me so much," she says. "My life has felt very scattered with everything that's going on with my husband and me, but PEARLS has been a grounding experience that helps me focus on how I can solve problems."

The program taught Susan to reframe her approach to challenges. "Instead of feeling hopeless, the program has led me to see for myself what I can do and how I can accomplish something," she says. Through structured coaching, Susan learned how to evaluate situations more realistically and practically. "I'm more of a black-and-white person, but PEARLS helped me look at my viable options and what is realistic. Some of the things I thought weren't realistic actually are. It's just a matter of tweaking the approach." Susan also learned the value of setting realistic goals and taking small steps toward them. "When I was facing a big hospital procedure and needing care afterward, PEARLS helped me just

be gentle with myself and start writing down or thinking about what is within my power and how do I go about doing that," she says. "I think it's helped me to not start from a position of feeling defeated. It starts with the position of 'Okay, how am I going to do this?' 'How am I going to reach that goal? Then the goal doesn't seem overwhelming.'"

What stands out most for Susan is the consistent support she received throughout the program. "Consistency has been one of the major things," she says. "My coach has been wonderful. She didn't just tell me what to do—she asked me what my goals were and helped me figure out my resources to do it, not just giving advice or referrals." This approach empowered Susan to take control of her own journey, providing a sense of agency even in difficult times. The flexibility of the program was also crucial. Susan appreciated that she was never forced to follow a rigid plan. "PEARLS has been a mix of structure and flexibility," she explains. "My coach allowed me to talk about what I needed to talk about and then at the same time address what's most important to me, then led me to see what I can do or how I can accomplish something. Even if I didn't follow through on everything, I felt supported and understood."

"Instead of feeling hopeless, the program has led me to see for myself what I can do and how I can accomplish something."

One area where PEARLS made a significant difference was in meal planning and preparation. As her husband's ALS progressed, he became unable to cook, and Susan found herself exhausted by the daily routine of meal prep. "My coach and I went over what my options were, and that was really helpful," she explains. "PEARLS kind of gave me permission to not adhere to what had been my old expectations for myself, but instead to identify different reasons that something like the meal time wasn't working. I was trying to do what I used to do and it was too overwhelming. It gave me permission to let loose a little bit." Beyond the practical support, the emotional benefits of PEARLS have been just as powerful. Susan has learned to be gentler with herself and more patient with the natural process of aging. "It's adjusting to the changes in life," she reflects. "We're not as strong at 80 as we were at 40 or at 40 as we were at 20. PEARLS helped me hold onto what I can do, even if it's in a different way."

Looking ahead, Susan remains hopeful and committed to making the most of her life, despite the challenges she faces. "I want to keep doing the things that are important to me. Even if I have to do them in a different way," she says. Whether it's taking a solo trip to her favorite lunch spot or dreaming of returning to Yosemite, Susan refuses to let her circumstances define her. For Susan, the PEARLS program has not only provided practical tools for problem-solving but it has also reinforced the importance of self-compassion and resilience. "It's given me validation and allowed the focus to finally be on me," she says. "I wish the program could go on forever."

Susan's experience is a testament to the power of support and a practical approach to problem-solving—no matter what stage of life you're in. If you or anyone you know may be interested in more information about the PEARLS program, please call (707) 525-0143 ext. 139 or visit councilonaging.com

Welcome Gloria Ramirez: Council on Aging's Care Navigator

I am excited to share that I am stepping into the role of Care Navigator at Council on Aging. In this new capacity, I will offer personalized, person-centered support to older adults by developing tailored care plans, providing essential referrals, coordinating services, and advocating for their unique needs.

I joined Council on Aging two years ago as the PEARLS Case Navigator, where I assisted with launching and adapting the PEARLS program to better serve our community. During that time, I had the privilege of introducing PEARLS to hundreds of community members, demonstrating its empowering tools designed to combat depression and isolation among seniors. Through this role, I connected with many seniors as they navigated complex challenges, often feeling overwhelmed by the obstacles in their path.

As Care Navigator, I will now have the opportunity to work even more closely with clients, providing hands-on support and focusing on their specific areas of need. My background in caregiving, applied behavior analysis, and case management—particularly with clients facing complex behavioral needs—has given me a deeper understanding of the challenges many people encounter. I find immense joy in hearing each person's unique story and helping them take meaningful steps toward a better quality of life.

I am excited to continue supporting our community, empowering clients to achieve their personal goals, and guiding them to improve their wellbeing. If you would like more information about care navigation, please call me, Gloria Ramirez at (707) 525-0143 ext. 139 or gramirez@councilonaging.com



Gloria Ramirez

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A Legend Drops the Pallino

By Coby LaFayette

We like to talk about active aging and how playing sports during the “golden years” can extend your life. There’s a lot of science around that. Yet it’s when you see it up close and personal that you begin to consider that those scientists might be telling the truth.



Roy Evans, circa 2023

Roy Evans was the truth. A lifelong athlete, his golden years’ sport of choice was bocce. As a representative of his assisted living facility, his first tournament with Sonoma Wine Country Games was in 2015. He played in every tournament until 2024.

Last year, Roy was too sick to compete. He had a larger-than-life personality, so the absence of his presence was noticed. If he wasn’t “coaching” his teammates, he was scanning the competition for weakness or laser-focusing his “baby blues” on someone of interest. That someone was usually a woman, to whom he’d inevitably dish the line: “Wanna go for a ride in my convertible?”

As the official Council on Aging Board Ambassadors to Bocce, Corrinne and Bonnie knew Roy. Like Roy, they’ve never missed a tournament. Over the years, they’ve handed out medals, scored games, served snacks, and dispensed goodwill to our bocce players. Their presence and Roy’s helped foster an atmosphere of fun and friendly competition for which our tournament became known.



Board members Corrinne & Bonnie

It was Corrinne who told me with tear-filled eyes that we’d lost Roy. I went back through our photo archives and looked at images of him over the years. I was gobsmacked by what I saw; he had not aged one bit! He looked as good in 2015 as he did in 2023. The photo above was taken in 2023 when Roy was 102. Yes: one-zero-two.

RIP, Roy. Thank you for adding panache to our Bocce Tournament over the years and for showing us how active aging works. You will be missed.

2025 Wine Country Games Open for Registration

It’s not too hard to understand why our Games are so popular and why so many people look forward to participating each year. The camaraderie. The venues. The snacks. The word is out, though — the Sonoma Wine Country Games are good fun. They also offer great competition!

Registration for this year’s Games opened on March 1st. It took off like a rocket off the pad. By Monday the 3rd, 22 teams had signed up for our two-day Women’s Soccer Tournament. As we go to press, the tournament is closed to registrations, with 26 teams signed up to compete. This tournament is a lot of fun to spectate, so we strongly urge you to grab a camp chair, pack a lunch, and join us June 7th and 8th at A Place to Play in Santa Rosa.

Registration for our Pickleball Tournament, a favorite among Sonoma County senior athletes, also got off to a great start. Athletes can compete in men’s, mixed, and/or women’s doubles. The three-day tournament takes place June 6th-8th at Sunrise Park in Rohnert Park. Although it is a great sport to spectate, there is limited parking for the hundreds of athletes that compete, so be prepared to walk a bit to get to the park.

Bocce is enjoying a surge in popularity county-wide. Consequently, this tournament has no trouble filling up. Like women’s soccer, it’s a tournament that we strongly encourage you to consider spectating. Hosted by Sonoma Bocce at their home courts in beautiful Juilliard Park, it’s got plenty of shade, blooming roses, and lots of room for the family to picnic. This year’s tournament is scheduled for May 31st and June 1st.

Our Table Tennis Tournament became a two-day event last year. Athletes loved the slower, saner pace of the two-day tournament, so we’re doing it again this year. We offer men’s, mixed, and women’s doubles and women’s and men’s singles competitions. Held at the Zones in Santa Rosa, the tournament occurs May 31st and June 1st. There are bleachers in the gym that offer limited space for spectating. If you don’t mind the close quarters, you’ll see some amazing table tennis.



A merry band of throwers

Speaking of a slower and saner pace, our Lawn Bowling Tournament, hosted by the Oakmont Lawn Bowling Club, provides the opportunity to play on a beautiful private rink in the heart of wine country. This tournament kicks off the Games, opening on May 30th. Like Table Tennis, it’s a two-day event that attracts teams from the south and east bays. Players spend long days in spirited competition but always break for lunch! It’s a fun sport to spectate. There is ample parking around the club, lots of places to set up an umbrella (it can be very hot & sunny) and a portable chair.

The last event of this year’s Games is the Throwing Meet & Pentathlon. Held this year on a Saturday, June 14th, the meet takes place at Santa Rosa High School. Athletes from all over the state spend a whole day competing in discus, hammer, javelin, shot put, and/or weight toss. Our throwers are a lively group with a dedicated following, and it’s as much fun listening to their banter as watching them throw various implements around the field. There is plenty of parking on-site and shade around the field, so bring the family and enjoy a pre-Father’s Day outing!

We sincerely hope you’ll support the Games this year as an athlete or a spectator. Regardless of your sport of choice, you’ll find inspiration on the fields, courts, gym, or rink. For additional information about the Games and/or to register, you can go to our website:

<https://www.councilonaging.com/wine-country-games>

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Part 1 - Thursday, July 17, 11am-1pm
Making a plan, fire and evacuation safety for seniors, **FREE** emergency go-bags, earthquake readiness

Part 2 - Thursday, July 31, 11am-1pm
Supplies to keep at home, car prep, pet safety in evacuation, 2-1-1 resources



Council on Aging

30 Kawana Springs Road, Santa Rosa, CA 95404

Register by July 9th

Contact djohnson@councilonaging.com
or call 707-525-0143 x 119
www.emergencyprephelp.org

Beware the Love Trap: How Seniors Can Avoid Romance Scams

By Emily Coria, Sonoma State University
Nursing Intern

In today’s digital world, finding love online has become increasingly common, but so have the dangers that come with it. Romance scams, also known as sweetheart scams or catfishing, are on the rise, and seniors are often the prime targets. Scammers prey on individuals they perceive as lonely, vulnerable, or trusting, using elaborate schemes to build relationships and, ultimately, steal money.

According to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), nearly 70,000 people reported romance scams in 2022, with reported losses totaling a staggering \$1.3 billion. The median reported loss per victim was \$4,400—but many cases go unreported.

How Romance Scams Work

Romance scams usually begin online, often on dating websites or social media platforms like Facebook or Instagram. The scammer presents themselves as a potential love interest and quickly works to gain the victim’s trust. Here’s how it often unfolds:

- **Love Bombing:** Scammers shower victims with attention and affection, messaging them frequently and making them feel special.
- **Moving Too Fast:** They push to move the conversation off the dating site to a private platform, such as WhatsApp or email, where their activity can’t be monitored.
- **Distant and Unavailable:** Scammers claim to be in the military, working overseas, or involved in a long-term business deal—anything that prevents an in-person meeting.



Emily Coria

- **False Promises and Future Plans:** They may talk about marriage, moving in together, or building a life with their victim, even though they have never met in person.
- **Financial Requests:** After establishing trust, they ask for money—starting small (such as gift cards or help with a minor bill) before escalating to larger sums due to supposed emergencies or business opportunities.

Red Flags to Watch For

- **Wrong Number Texts:** Scammers often initiate contact by pretending they texted the wrong person, then quickly transition into friendly conversation.
- **Too Good to Be True Stories:** They may claim to be wealthy, successful, or deeply in love very quickly.
- **Excuses to Avoid Meeting:** No matter how much time has passed, they always have an excuse to delay an in-person meeting.
- **Urgent Financial Needs:** Requests for money for sudden illnesses, accidents, legal troubles, or travel issues are a major warning sign.
- **Investment Scams:** Some scammers claim to have a lucrative business or investment opportunity to share with their victims.

Protect Yourself from Romance Scams

If you suspect that an online relationship is moving too quickly or doesn’t feel right, take the following precautions:

- **Talk to Trusted Friends or Family:** Scammers rely on secrecy. Discussing your online romance with a loved one may reveal red flags you hadn’t noticed.
- **Verify Their Identity:** Use Google to search for their name and or conduct a reverse image search by uploading their profile picture into Google Images. To perform a reverse image search, go to Google Images, click the camera icon in the search bar, then upload the image you want to search for.

- **Never Send Money:** No matter how convincing their story, never send money, gift cards, or cryptocurrency to someone you’ve never met in person.
- **Be Wary of Unsolicited Investment Advice:** If they try to convince you to invest in a cryptocurrency or business venture, stop communicating immediately.

What to Do If You’ve Been Targeted

If you realize you’ve fallen victim to a romance scam, take action immediately:

- **Cease Contact:** Stop all communication with the scammer.
- **Report the Scam:** Notify the dating site or social media platform where you met them.
- **File a Complaint:** Report the scam to the FTC (www.ftc.gov/complaint), the FBI’s Internet Crime Complaint Center (www.ic3.gov), and your state attorney general’s office.
- **Alert Your Bank:** If you have sent money, contact your bank or credit card company to see if any transactions can be reversed.

Stay Safe, Stay Informed

Romance scams can happen to anyone, but seniors are often targeted because scammers assume they are trusting and may have financial savings. By staying vigilant, asking questions, and verifying identities, you can protect yourself and your loved ones from these deceitful schemes. Remember, true love does not come with a price tag—if someone you’ve never met is asking for money, it’s a scam.

For more information on avoiding fraud, visit the FTC’s website at <https://www.ftc.gov/> and the FBI’s scam awareness page at <https://www.fbi.gov/>. Stay safe, stay informed, and don’t let scammers steal your heart—or your savings.

Health Science and Biotechnology Golden Years Health Fair

Deep Dive into Piner’s Experience

On Thursday, March 13th, 2025, students from Piner High School’s Health Science and Biotechnology (HSB) program collaborated with the Council on Aging to host a Senior Health Fair to educate and support the senior citizens of Sonoma County.



through the basics. The “30-Second Stand and Go” test helped seniors assess their leg strength and endurance, and a chair yoga station offered gentle seated exercises to improve flexibility and circulation. A blood pressure check station provided readings and heart health guidance, while a healthy eating booth offered tips for reducing salt and sugar intake. Health Jeopardy engaged seniors in testing their health knowledge, and a “Words of Wisdom” board encouraged them to share life advice, fostering community and intergenerational connections.

Input from senior member and HSB student

“Absolutely the best presentation on fraud that we have seen. There was an added component of seniors seeing young people in action for good—belying the media focus on rampant drug use—so reassuring. We all benefited mightily.” - Kathleen



The event featured three informative presentations covering essential health and safety topics: avoiding scams, combating loneliness with the help of service dogs, and making healthier food choices by reducing salt and sugar intake. In addition to these presentations, seniors had the opportunity to engage in various interactive stations led by students, each focusing on a crucial aspect of health and well-being.

One station highlighted the benefits of service dogs, offering resources, a dog-themed bingo game, and stickers, while another provided CPR training, with certified students guiding seniors



“It was refreshing seeing so much involvement in our senior community and hearing wisdom passed on to our generation.” - Karol

The Senior Health Fair successfully combined education with hands-on activities, empowering seniors with knowledge and resources to improve their quality of life. Through informative presentations and interactive stations, the event not only provided valuable health information but also encouraged engagement, connection, and lifelong learning for both the seniors and HSB students.

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Spinach-Feta Chicken Penne

A Salute to Spring

INGREDIENTS:

Makes 2 Servings

- 4 oz. Whole Grain Penne Pasta
- ½ lb of Bonless Skinless Chicken Breasts or Thighs
- 3 Tsp. Extra Virgin Olive Oil, Divided (2 tsp., 1 tsp.)
- ¼ Tsp. Kosher Salt
- A Good Pinch Black Pepper (1 Turn, Freshly Gound)
- 2 Cloves Garlic (Minced)
- 3 Tbs. Reduced Sodium Chicken Stock
- 3 Tbs. Dry White Wine (Or additional stock)
- 2 Plum Tomatoes Chopped
- 1 Cup Fresh Baby Spinach
- ¼ Cup Crumbled Feta Cheese
- More Pepper to Taste

METHOD:

- In a 2-3 quart pot, cook pasta according to package directions. Drain, and return to the pot.
- Meanwhile, toss chicken in 2 tsp. of oil, half of the salt and pepper in a medium sized skillet, cook and stir chicken over medium-high heat for 3-5 minutes or until no longer pink, remove from pan and set aside.
- In the same skillet heat the remaining oil over medium heat, add garlic. Cook while stirring for 1-2 minutes or until tender. Add stock and wine and stir to deglaze. Bring up to a boil and reduce for two minutes. Stir in the tomatoes and remaining salt; cook until the tomatoes have softenend. Stir in spinach until just wilted.
- Add chicken to the tomato mixture and mix, when mixed add pasta to heat through, toss to combine.
- Put in a bowl, top with the Feta and a touch more black pepper, toss and enjoy.

Additional Toppings (optional):

Pitted Olives, Toasted Nuts, Pita Croutons, Marinated Artichoke Hearts, Cucumber, Red Onion and Yellow Bell Pepper

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