

SONOMA SENIORS TODAY

Redefining Aging: Celebrating New Life Chapters

Marianne McBride, Former President and CEO of Council on Aging

There it is — that letter from AARP in your mailbox, addressed directly to you. How did they know your birthday is just two days away? How did they find you?



It's a moment that catches us off guard. We dye our hair, buy products promising to make us look younger, and sometimes, avoid disclosing our age altogether. It's not surprising when you think about it. For years, we've been conditioned to view aging as something to fear, something to escape. Our society places a premium on youth and productivity, and when we no longer fit into that mold, it can feel like we've lost our place.

At a certain age—let's say 50—the usual labels no longer seem to fit. "Senior" feels distant, "elder" feels unfamiliar, and "mature" doesn't quite capture the essence of who we are. We may have retired from careers that once defined us, leaving us searching for new meaning, without the comfort of a clear identity. Despite the number of candles on the cake or the reflection in the mirror, we still feel like that 25-year-old inside. But we don't want to go back. We're proud of the years we've lived—the experiences, the successes, the challenges and the wisdom we've gained along the way.

What we really want is for society to embrace the aging process and celebrate life after fifty, sixty, seventy, and beyond. It's time to ask: where do we go from here? How can we redefine aging and the perceptions that come with it? When we consider the factors that contribute to positive aging, key elements come to mind: perception, purpose,

connection, health and financial security. As more of us retire with decades of life ahead, shifting the negative perception of aging is crucial. Redefining aging isn't just a personal journey; it's a collective effort to ensure that our later years are seen as an opportunity, not a decline.

Serving as President and CEO of the Council on Aging for the past 15 years has been an incredible privilege. As I retire and close this chapter, I am more committed than ever to helping define what lies ahead—not just for myself, but for all of us. The question now is: How will we build a future where aging is celebrated? It's time for us to disrupt the narrative around aging and, together, redefine what it means to grow older.

By investing in personal growth, nurturing relationships, prioritizing self-care and embracing a sense of purpose, we can reshape our future. I, for one, am embracing this journey with excitement. Let's celebrate the wisdom and joy that come with every stage of life.

Pets & Seniors

by Coby LaFayette

It is universally agreed that pet therapy can:

- Reduce stress & anxiety
- Combat loneliness
- Boost our mood
- Stimulate cognitive function
- Improve physical health

Pet therapy works because as we interact with an animal, a hormone called oxytocin is released into our bloodstream. This is a feel-good hormone that tends to make us feel all warm and fuzzy inside. Petting an animal also satisfies our deep need to connect with another creature—to get and give attention and affection.

According to a recent report from the Mather Institute, one-quarter of our senior population comprises a group called "solo agers"—childless older adults who live without a life partner. Of this group, a whopping 42% are apparently dissatisfied with their lives, either because they are lonely, depressed and/or isolated from community. Pets, it seems, could easily fill the loneliness gap for these people while creating purpose and a feeling of "family."

But, before you hop off the couch determined to find your perfect furry life partner, read on. These days, owning a pet can be a costly undertaking. From veterinary visits to food and supportive care (leashes & licensing, litter boxes

and toys, grooming and pet sitters), pet owners on a budget sometimes have hard choices to make. It is not uncommon for us to hear stories of clients who put their pet's care and feeding above their own.

In answer to that reality, Council on Aging (COA) started "Kibbles of Kindness" in 2012. This program provides bags of kibble for the dogs and cats owned by our Meals on Wheels clients. By providing pet food to these clients, we can be sure that the meals we deliver are being eaten by them, not fed to their beloved pets. We're currently looking for a sponsor for this wonderful support program. Information about it is listed below.

Other ways to offset pet ownership costs for seniors are available through programs like Pets for the Elderly (PFE). Their organizing mission was twofold—to provide companionship for seniors 60+ through pet ownership and to save the lives of shelter animals. Over the years, their mission has evolved to include retention support programs (such as veterinary care and food pantries) through their partner shelters. PFE currently has 53 partners in 31 states. Our closest PFE partner is the Marin Humane Society in Novato, which is just south of us.

Here in Sonoma County, The Humane Society on Highway 12 in Santa Rosa offers many of the same kinds of programs that PFE does. Their owner support programs include low-cost spay/neuter clinics, free vaccine clinics, community veterinary services and food assistance.



In addition, they offer an online directory of other agency financial, medical, and food programs that support the care and feeding of your companion animal(s).

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Don't have the time or want the responsibility of pet ownership? You can still get that oxytocin boost by volunteering at an animal shelter or rescue organization in your community. Whether you want to cuddle cats or walk dogs, these organizations always need dedicated volunteers.

Another way to activate those feel-good hormones is by loving pet therapy animals who visit. Pet therapy visits from local agencies, such as Pets as Loving Support, bring trained dogs into hospitals, assisted or memory care facilities, and skilled nursing facilities for some TLC by residents. The visits bring comfort and joy and boost the energy and morale of staff.

Regardless of how you get a furry fix, the benefits are worth considering. Think about what you are realistically capable of and do a little research.

Here are some links to resources for pet care support, volunteering, and pet therapy programs.

Resources for Senior Pet Owners

- <https://humanesocietysoco.org/owner-support/>
- <https://www.petsfortheelderly.org/our-work/mission.php/>

Volunteer Programs

- <https://dogwoodanimalrescue.org/>
- <https://www.forgottenfelines.com/>
- <https://sonomacounty.ca.gov/health-and-human-services/health-services/divisions/public-health/animal-services/>

Pet Therapy

- <https://lovinganimalsprovidingsmiles.org/>
- <https://www.pawsaslovingssupport.org/>



Kibbles of Kindness
No Pet Should Go Hungry

In 2012, when we heard that our Meals on Wheels clients were sharing their meals with their pets because they couldn't afford to buy pet food, **Kibbles of Kindness** was born. At the Council on Aging, we work tirelessly to make sure no senior goes hungry and neither should their beloved pets.

Will you help support these vulnerable and loving animals by donating to our Kibbles of Kindness program today?

Yes! I would like to donate to *Kibbles of Kindness*!

Name _____ Amount \$ _____
Phone _____
Address/City/State/Zip _____
Credit Card Number _____ Exp: _____

You can send a check payable to COA with *Kibbles of Kindness* in the memo. Our mailing address is 30 Kawana Springs Rd. Santa Rosa, CA 95404.
You may also donate online at: www.councilonaging.com/donate or call us at: 707-525-0143 ext. 146

Sonoma Seniors Today
A bi-monthly publication by



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Editor's note: Publication of all material is at the discretion of the editor; originals become the property of SST and cannot be returned. Mail all submissions to *Sonoma Seniors Today* c/o Council on Aging, 30 Kawana Springs Road, Santa Rosa, CA 95404, or email to SonomaSeniorsToday@councilonaging.com.

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Mission Statement

To enhance the quality of life for our aging community by providing services that promote well-being and maintain independence.

Make SST part of your plan to age successfully!

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PUZZLES & GAMES

Puzzle solutions are on page 8

WORD SCRAMBLE
"Flowers of Spring"

1. LFFDIAOD	- - - - -
2. EBEUBLLL	- - - - -
3. ISIR	- - - -
4. ROIHYTAFS	- - - - -
5. RMSERPIO	- - - - -
6. SCRUCO	- - - - -
7. PPPOY	- - - - -
8. EYPON	- - - - -
9. AILCL	- - - - -
10. LFDCEDNKEI	- - - - -
11. NEIPLU	- - - - -
12. LYIL	- - - -

SUDOKU - Medium

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

SUDOKU - Hard

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

WORD SEARCH
"Birds of Spring"

ROBIN	HUMMINGBIRD
BARN SWALLOW	WARBLER
GROSBEAK	KILLDEER
BLUEBIRD	GOLDFINCH
ORIOLE	SPARROW
WOOD THRUSH	CARDINAL

CROSSWORD PUZZLE
"Springtime"

ACROSS

- 1 Time periods
5 Balmy-
9 Shellfish
13 Set down
14 City
15 Employ
16 Italian currency
17 Boredom
18 A cozy room (2 wds.)
19 Hide
21 Capital of the Bahamas
23 Toy flown in the air
24 Wading bird
25 Ailing
28 Revere
31 Origination
32 Furnish with an income
34 Deliver by post
36 Female sheep
37 Moray
38 ___ Lanka
39 Remake
41 Crick
43 Speck
44 Musical
46 Chronicles
48 Not warm
49 Breeze
50 Hindu god
53 Airfoils on airplane wings
57 Negative (prefix)
58 Shekel
60 Fencing sword
61 Type of tea
62 Selfish desire
63 Buckle
64 Dozes
65 Aborts
66 Gap

DOWN

- 1 Women's magazine
2 Shower
3 Ventilates
4 Ate
5 Yard surrounder
6 Green Gables dweller
7 Promissory note
8 Colored arch in sky
9 Bod
10 Caps
11 Region
12 Restaurant dinner listing
14 Docile
20 Lubricate
22 Cause of sickness
24 Heathen gods
25 Drug doer
26 Stairway post
27 Overgrown
28 Perfect
29 Saltine cracker brand
30 Register
33 Asian nation
35 Fades
40 Showy flowers
41 Flog
42 Sent
43 Actress Julie
45 Charged particle
47 Compass point
49 Misleads
50 Conceited
51 S.A. Indian
52 Tier
53 Bedroom furniture (2 wds.)
54 Opaque gem
55 Roman emperor
56 September (abbr.)
59 Vase

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8		9	10	11	12
13					14					15			
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64						65					66		

By Jimmy and Evelyn Johnson - www.qets.com

WORD SEARCH "Birds of Spring"

W	A	R	B	L	E	R	M	Y	F	T	T	Z	N	M	P
L	S	P	D	X	L	O	N	Y	J	U	U	Y	O	I	M
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V	P	U	V	E	A	P	T	A	P	Z	N	Z	Y	G	X
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U	L	R	I	T	O	D	S	Z	D	W	F	Z	V	E	O
S	W	D	R	E	W	O	A	L	H	I	Z	A	K	Q	R
H	J	R	D	J	R	X	O	J	Z	G	G	C	C	Y	J
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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

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NUTRITION NEWS
Smart Food Choices for
Healthy Aging



As you age, there are certain foods that can help slow the aging process by protecting against physical and cognitive decline. These foods are often referred to as “superfoods.” A superfood is not an entire food group but simply a food that has minimal processing and is considered nutrient dense. This means that these foods not only are a great source of vitamins and minerals, but they also have antioxidant properties, contain healthy fats, and different compounds that help reduce illness and aging complications. So what are these superfoods and how can we include them in our daily diet?

First, let’s dive into the top superfoods a person can include in their day to day eating pattern. This first food is often underestimated but it packs a powerful punch: blueberries! Blueberries are packed with antioxidants which help fight against aging. Raspberries, blackberries, and strawberries function very similarly in our body and are excellent foods to consume daily. Next, dark leafy greens, like spinach and kale, and foods known as cruciferous vegetables (broccoli, cabbage, and brussels sprouts) are rich in carotenoids and phytochemicals which help protect our cells from damage. These foods are also high in fiber which significantly benefit our GI health and blood sugar management.

While fruits and vegetables are well known for benefitting our health in many ways, there are also many protein options that are also considered superfoods. Fatty fish, like salmon, are packed with protein and healthy fats like omega 3 and 6 which help reduce heart disease. Plain Greek yogurt is another example of a protein option that is known as a superfood. Not only is it high in protein and calcium, it is a great source of probiotics which help create a healthy, happy GI system. Lastly, eggs (both the yolk and the white) are essential for healthy aging. They are an excellent source of B12, Vitamin D, Selenium, and Choline, all of which are responsible for supporting brain health.

Nuts and seeds are also considered superfoods. They are packed with antioxidants, fiber, and healthy fats. They also provide what is called plant protein. Plant protein is found in foods that are not animal source. Things like beans, legumes, vegetables, soy, and nuts/seeds are all examples of plant protein options. Eating a handful or two of nuts and seeds a day are a great way to not only provide your body with the many benefits they provide but to also increase your protein intake.

When trying to determine if a food is a superfood or not, look at its color. Foods that are red, purple, or green often are superfoods! While these individual foods alone do not create a balanced diet, they certainly are very important to include on a regular basis! For any further questions, contact your doctor or Vanessa, your COA dietitian.

Sources: National Council on Aging and Harvard Health

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living better, together.

GENERATIONS IN MOTION

SPRING LAKE
SANTA ROSA

SATURDAY
MAY 17

EVENT OPENS AT 10AM, WALK STARTS AT 11:30AM

WALK&PICNIC

FUNDRAISER TO SUPPORT
THE COUNCIL ON AGING

FAMILY FRIENDLY!
BUBBLE STATION
RESOURCE FAIR
JUMPY HOUSE
SHAVED ICE





GENERATIONS IN MOTION is a fun, inclusive event that brings **all ages** together to support Sonoma County's aging population. Enjoy **walking routes** for all fitness levels and abilities, plus **family-friendly activities** and a resource fair promoting **health, wellness, and connection**. **REGISTER TODAY!**



REGISTER





FOR PRICING & MORE INFO:

Alegra Grace
707-525-0143 ext 107
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FREE PARKING





TREASURE HOUSE
FINE HOME CONSIGNMENT SHOP

Treasure House Sip & Shop

Supporting Council on Aging

Thursday, 3/20/25
Wine & Bites 12pm ~ 6pm

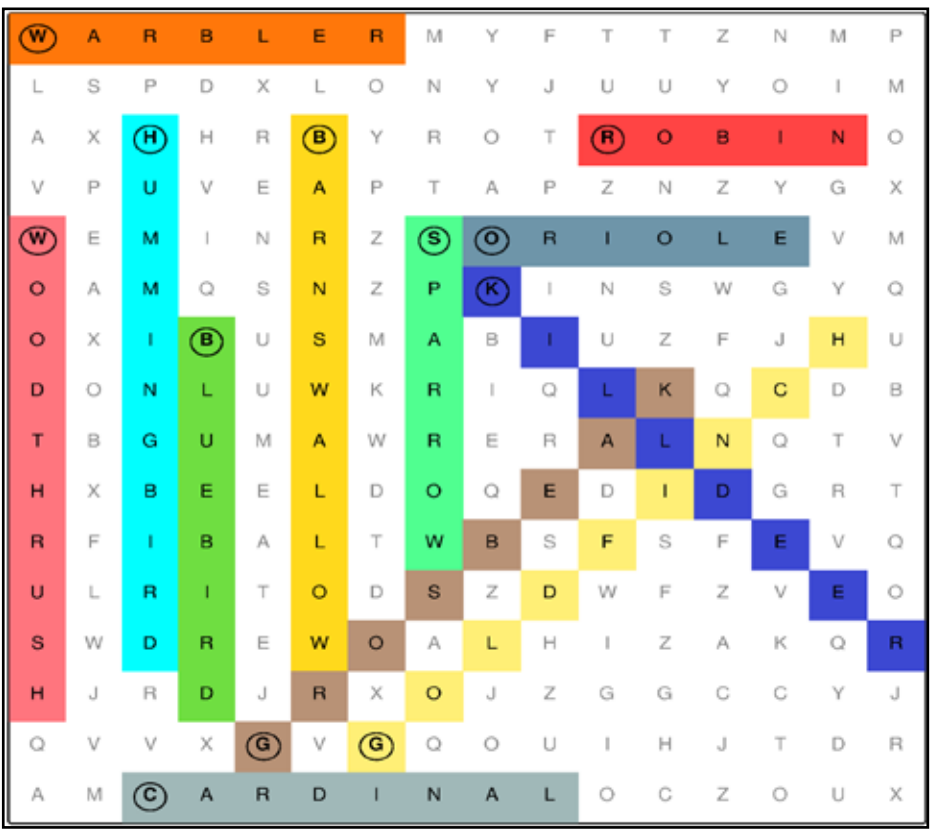
20% OF SALES ALL DAY WILL GO TO
COUNCIL ON AGING

Join us for a lovely afternoon of wine, tasty bites, and great company as you explore Treasure House’s curated collection of jewelry, art, home décor, and antiques. Discover the perfect springtime treasure or Easter gift—all while supporting Sonoma County seniors!



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living better, together.

PUZZLE SOLUTIONS



SCRAMBLE "Flowers of Spring"											
1. LFFDIAOD	D A F F O D I L										
2. EBEUBLLL	B L U E B E L L										
3. ISIR	I R I S										
4. ROIHYTAFS	F O R S Y T H I A										
5. RMSEPIO	P R I M R O S E										
6. SCRUCO	C R O C U S										
7. PPPOY	P O P P Y										
8. EYPON	P E O N Y										
9. AILCL	L I L A C										
10. LFDCEDNKEI	F I D D L E N E C K										
11. NEIPLU	L U P I N E										
12. LYIL	L I L Y										

SUDOKU - Medium									
3	5	1	8	4	7	2	9	6	
7	4	9	2	6	5	3	8	1	
2	6	8	9	1	3	4	5	7	
6	2	7	3	9	1	5	4	8	
9	3	4	5	8	6	1	7	2	
8	1	5	7	2	4	9	6	3	
4	9	6	1	3	8	7	2	5	
5	8	3	4	7	2	6	1	9	
1	7	2	6	5	9	8	3	4	

SUDOKU - Hard									
1	3	9	2	7	5	6	8	4	
2	7	6	8	4	9	3	1	5	
5	8	4	1	6	3	9	7	2	
6	1	8	5	3	7	4	2	9	
9	2	3	4	1	6	7	5	8	
7	4	5	9	2	8	1	6	3	
8	9	7	6	5	4	2	3	1	
3	5	2	7	9	1	8	4	6	
4	6	1	3	8	2	5	9	7	

The Importance of Food Safety

Vanessa Hasslinger, MS, RDN

As you age, priorities tend to shift. Instead of chasing the dreams of youth, time with your loved ones becomes invaluable. Despite this shift in priorities, one thing remains extremely important—continued food safety in the kitchen. This is essential for your continued health and wellbeing. Let’s dive into the best practices to ensure you and your loved ones avoid foodborne illnesses.

You might think, “I’ve never gotten sick from food before. Why do I need to worry about it now?” Despite avoiding food poisoning during your younger years, you are more susceptible as you age, because your immune system (which fights off bacteria and other organisms) isn’t as strong as it once was. Your digestive tract slows down, giving bacteria more time to develop. The two main detoxifiers in the body, the liver and kidneys, cannot process and get rid of bacteria as easily. So, what can you do to avoid food poisoning? Lots!

First, always wash your hands (with soap and water) before cooking and eating. Scrub between your fingers, under your fingernails, and the backs of your hands for at least 20 seconds. (Tip—sing Happy Birthday or the ABCs twice to ensure you scrubbed for 20 seconds!)

Keep your produce separate from the uncooked meats in the fridge. Fruit, lettuce, and other foods that generally are not heated up prior to eating should be kept away from items that are. Heat kills the bacteria that can be found in meat, seafood or eggs, which is why it is important to keep their uncooked juices away from produce items.

Lastly, cook foods to the correct temperatures and chill them properly after eating. When cooking meat or seafood, ensure the product has reached the proper internal temperature. This will help eliminate any bacteria that might have been present before cooking. To check the temperature, use a cooking thermometer, probe the thickest part and wait 15 seconds for the most accurate temperature display. If the proper internal temperature hasn't been reached, continue cooking until the correct temperature appears. Once properly cooked, enjoy your meal! Be sure to put any leftovers in an airtight container and store them in the refrigerator within 2 hours of cooking.

For further questions, contact your doctor or visit <https://www.foodsafety.gov/>
Source: [foodsafety.gov/](https://www.foodsafety.gov/)

2025 Games are OPEN for Registration!

The 2025 Sonoma Wine Country Games are open for registration! Whether you are a seasoned 50+ athlete or someone new to Bocce, Lawn Bowling, Pickleball, Table Tennis, Throwing Events or Women’s Soccer, we invite you to join us for some friendly competition in June. All the information you need to register for the Games is available on our website:

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

This year marks the 13th year we’ve convened the Games. Athletes come from all over to compete in our games—Sonoma and adjacent counties,



throughout the state and the nation, and last year, as far away as Auckland, New Zealand! Competition is a great way to meet new people, test your skills, learn new techniques and have a good time.

Games venues are scattered throughout Santa Rosa, except for Pickleball, which is held at Sunrise Courts in Rohnert Park, CA. The Games will take place over 3 weekends:

- The first weekend, May 30th through Sunday, June 1st, features Lawn Bowling, Bocce and Table Tennis competitions.
- Weekend 2, June 6th-8th, are Pickleball and Women’s Soccer dates.
- The third and final weekend day, Saturday the 14th, is set aside for Throwing Events.

Be sure to go online, check out the information about the Games, sign up and keep practicing!

Caring for Someone with Parkinson's

By Monte Cimino, Senior Helpers Homecare

Parkinson's disease is a disorder of the brain that affects the transmission of messages to the muscles. It is characterized by tremor, stiffness of the muscles and difficulty in initiating movements. Over one million Americans have Parkinson's disease. It occurs most often in later life but can also affect younger people. It is a progressive disease, which means that it normally worsens over time. It usually, but not always, develops slowly.

Caring for a loved one with Parkinson's disease (PD) can be both rewarding and challenging. As Parkinson's progresses, individuals may experience a variety of physical, cognitive and emotional changes that require dedicated support from caregivers. The role of a caregiver is crucial in ensuring the person with Parkinson's leads a comfortable and fulfilling life.

Caregiving can be physically and emotionally draining, so it's essential for caregivers to prioritize their own wellbeing. Burnout is a real concern: without proper self-care, you may find it increasingly difficult to provide the best support. Consider utilizing these tips to help care for yourself while caring for your loved one:

Caregiver Self-Care Tips

Schedule Regular Breaks

Even short breaks are vital. Whether it's a few minutes to step outside and get some fresh air or a longer break for a cup of tea, time away from caregiving duties allows you time to recharge.

Prioritize Sleep

Good sleep is crucial for emotional regulation, physical health and overall wellbeing.

Maintain a Healthy Diet

A balanced diet plays a huge role in maintaining your energy levels and emotional stability.

Setting Boundaries

It's important to set healthy boundaries to avoid feeling overwhelmed.

Stay Active

Regular physical activity can significantly reduce stress, boost mood and improve sleep.

Engage in Activities You Enjoy

Whether it's reading, painting, gardening or even watching a favorite TV show, make sure you have activities that bring you joy and relaxation.

Seek Social Support

Stay connected with family, friends or support groups.

Mindfulness and Relaxation Techniques

Deep breathing, meditation or journaling can help you manage stress and stay grounded.

Accept Help

Many caregivers feel a sense of guilt or hesitation when it comes to accepting help. But remember, asking for assistance is not a sign of weakness. Whether it's a family member, a friend or a professional (like Senior Helpers), help can ease your load and allow you to take the time you need to recharge.

Speak to a Professional

A mental health professional can offer coping strategies and emotional support as you navigate the challenges of caregiving.

Caregiving is a profound and honorable responsibility, but it's vital to remember that your wellbeing matters too. Practicing self-care doesn't mean you're neglecting your loved one, it means you're ensuring that you can continue to provide the best care possible. By nurturing yourself, you're also strengthening your ability to care for others in a sustainable, compassionate way.

As a caregiver it is also important to educate yourself about Parkinson's Disease. Parkinson's is a progressive neurological condition that affects movement. It can also affect speech, mood and cognitive function. By learning about the disease, you'll gain insight into the challenges your loved one faces and be better prepared to offer the support they need.

To further your understanding of Parkinson's, its symptoms and strategies for care, consider joining us at the free "Living with Parkinson's" event on April 3 at the Council on Aging office. Contact Denise Johnson at 707-525-0143 x119 or djohnson@councilonaging.com to reserve a spot.

LUNCH AND LEARN



Living with Parkinson's

Join us for an informative session designed to empower individuals living with Parkinson's and their families. We will cover practical strategies for managing Parkinson's symptoms, the vital role of diet and the importance of movement. Whether you're newly diagnosed or seeking additional resources, this session provides valuable tools for navigating life with Parkinson's.

Thursday, April 3

11:30 AM – 1:00 PM

Council on Aging

30 Kawana Springs Rd. | Santa Rosa, CA

Space is Limited • Register by March 27

SPEAKERS

Susan Leport, Director of Training, Senior Helpers
Vanessa Hasslinger, Registered Dietician, Council on Aging
Jeanette Perry, Manager, Rock Steady, Petaluma

PRESENTED BY


council on aging

AND



RSVP Denise Johnson
707-525-0143 x119

djohnson@councilonaging.com

Testimonial Senior Peer Support

Tania M. - Santa Rosa

How did you first hear about Senior Peer Support (SPS)?

I don't remember exactly, but I either saw it on a flyer at the YMCA, or in Council on Aging's newsletter, Sonoma Seniors Today (SST). I had previously heard about another program, PEARLS, from a flyer that my daughter brought me, so I thought I would give this program a try as well.

What was it that interested you in SPS?

Actually, I initially thought it was offered in a group format, which was of interest to me because I was hoping to meet other people. However, when I spoke with the COA staff to learn more about the program and found out that it was administered "one-on-one," I decided to give it a shot anyway.

How would you describe SPS to friends?

I would explain that SPS is an opportunity for me to connect with another senior for the purpose of obtaining some new insights, as well as new ideas as to how to go about addressing some of the challenges in my life.

What did you most enjoy about SPS?

What I enjoyed most was the fact that my SPS volunteer was fully present with me and listened during our time together, demonstrating that he

was empathetic and understanding of what I was going through. What really got me, though, was that he would actively research solutions between scheduled visits and bring to our next meeting for discussion. This showed me that he truly cared about me and was invested in empowering me to improve my life.

How did SPS help you address challenges that were impacting your life?

Well, one thing that I would note is my tendency to sometimes not follow through with the plan. Being paired with a volunteer who was willing to hold me accountable was a big help in achieving those goals that I set for myself.

Is there anything else you'd like to share with others who might be considering participating in SPS?

I would encourage anybody to give it a try! It was a really positive experience for me, and I would hope that it would be so for anyone who feels that they could use a little extra support in their lives.

If you are interested in being a recipient of Senior Peer Support, call Chris Rairdon, LCSW at 707-525-0143 ext. 106 or email crairdon@councilonaging.com

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Want to Advertise?

Council on Aging's bi-monthly newspaper
Sonoma Seniors Today

reaches over 8,500 Sonoma County residents and is available at over 160 locations throughout the County.

It's also available online in full color at
www.councilonaging.com

Contact us at

rjones@councilonaging.com



Sonoma County Food Pantries & Distribution Sites

Providing Support, Resources, and Programs that Support Healthy Aging

Agency Name	Program Name	Phone	Website
Coastal Seniors	Food Pantry	707-882-2137	www.coastalseniors.org
COTS	Mary's Table	707-765-6530	www.cots.org/services
Farm to Pantry	Market to Pantry	707-955-9898	www.farmtopantry.org/market-to-pantry-copy
Food for Thought	Food is Medicine Program	707-887-1647 x119	www.fftfoodbank.org/about-our-services
FISH of Santa Rosa	Food Pantry	707-527-5151	www.fish-of-santa-rosa.org
FISH of Sonoma Valley	Food Pantry	707-996-0111	www.fishsonoma.org
Redwood Empire Food Bank	Food Connections Resource Center	707-523-7903	www.refb.org/programs-initiatives/food-connections-resource-center.html
Redwood Empire Food Bank	Senior Basket Program	707-523-7900	www.refb.org
Salvation Army	Food Pantry	707-542-0981	www.salvationarmyusa.org/usn/cure-hunger
Sonoma County Human Services Dept.	Cal Fresh	877-699-6868	www.sonomacalfresh.org

Ena’s Journey: Overcoming Hardships with PEARLS

Hardships are an inevitable part of life—a lesson Ena has understood from a young age. Recently, she sat down with her PEARLS coach to reflect on life’s challenges and the profound impact the PEARLS Program has had on her journey.

PEARLS (Program to Encourage Active, Rewarding Lives) offers free, one-on-one coaching to older adults facing depression or social isolation, providing them with the tools and support to regain control over their lives.

Ena grew up with her four sisters in Haiti. Her family endured heartbreaking losses, including the deaths of all her brothers. Despite these early tragedies, Ena recalls her childhood as one of privilege, with her father—a doctor and philanthropist—traveling the world to provide medical care to underserved communities. At 16, she left Haiti to attend school in New York. She enrolled in college and met a young man she would later marry. “Of course, it didn’t work out. We were too young,” Ena reflects. Her life took a tragic turn when her father was murdered in Haiti during political unrest. The loss was devastating, but Ena found strength in supporting her family and helping them move to the U.S. to start anew.

Not long after, Ena met Norman, her future husband. Together, they raised two sons and shared 52 years of marriage. As she was finding stability, tragedy struck again with the death of her eldest son. Ena focused on supporting her surviving son and moving forward.

Ena’s career in education thrived as she worked in teaching positions before relocating to Florida. There, she spent 18 years teaching elementary school. But retirement brought new challenges. Norman was diagnosed with cancer, and asked to relocate to Sonoma County to be closer to their son. Norman passed away just days after their arrival, leaving Ena to cope with yet another devastating loss.

“I always needed someone to help me. Norman spoiled me and did everything for me,” Ena admits. Accustomed to relying on him, she now faced life alone for the first time in a town where she had no connections.

Slowly, Ena began rebuilding her life. She joined a local senior center, attended grief support groups and started connecting with her neighbors. One day, while picking up lunch at a Council on Aging Community Table site, a coordinator listened to Ena’s story and recommended PEARLS.

PEARLS was exactly what Ena needed. This short-term, participant-driven program helps older adults reduce depression and social isolation by providing one-on-one support. “When you’re hurting and down, it’s hard to know what to do next,” Ena shares. “I needed help, and I was struggling. It’s easy to sit there and feel sorry for yourself. My coach helped me take things one step at a time so I didn’t feel overwhelmed. PEARLS helped me learn to take care of myself.”

During her time in PEARLS, Ena took concrete steps toward regaining control of her life. She studied for the California driving test, sought tech support, navigated insurance issues, addressed health needs she had neglected while caring for Norman and even searched for part-time work. Her coach celebrated each small victory, reinforcing the progress she had made. “PEARLS really made me feel better and allowed me to survive this ordeal. The program had me actively solve problems related to aging, health and many other challenges in my life,” Ena reflects.

Today, Ena is focused on her future. She participates in exercise classes, socializes at her temple, enjoys lunch outings with new friends and cherishes time spent with her son. Though the grief still lingers, Ena’s journey through PEARLS has helped her regain control of her life and regain hope.

For more information on PEARLS, please call (707) 525-0143 ext.139 or gramirez@councilonaging.com



Building Resilience: Preparing Seniors for Disasters

Lynn Stanton, Cofounder and Development Director for Emergency Prep Help

In 2015, my longtime friend, Indigo Perry, experienced the unthinkable: she lost her home in Lake County to a devastating wildfire. A place I had visited many times was reduced to ashes. Indigo was fortunate to escape, driving to safety with little more than a few personal items she managed to grab on the way out. Everything else was gone.

This event changed her life—and the lives of many others in the community. It also sparked a new mission for Indigo. As she began her journey to help her community recover, she became a Disaster Case Manager. She witnessed firsthand the confusion and fear older adults felt in the wake of the disaster. She saw how vulnerable they were and recognized a critical need for targeted assistance for seniors to prepare and stay prepared for emergencies.

Fast forward to 2021, when Indigo, our friend Lyn Van Tighem, and I, with years of nonprofit experience serving seniors, decided to act. We founded Emergency Prep Help (EPH), a nonprofit aimed at educating and preparing seniors for natural disasters and other emergencies.

EPH is dedicated to ensuring that seniors not only understand the risks they may face but also have the necessary tools, resources and confidence to manage them. As older adults ourselves, we recognize the unique challenges of this population and deliver education with empathy, experience and a focus on their specific needs.

We host accessible, no-cost workshops throughout Sonoma County, equipping seniors with critical skills, basic supplies, helpful resources and practical strategies to prepare themselves and their pets to respond effectively in emergencies. By addressing some common barriers, such as limited access to information, compromised health or mobility and minimal resources, EPH tailors disaster preparedness education specifically for

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Are you looking to give back
to your senior community?

The Tellegacy Program Needs Volunteers Like You!

As a volunteer, you'll be paired with a senior for eight weekly visits, where you'll share lunch and meaningful conversation.

During these guided sessions, you'll listen to their life stories and take notes on their memories, lessons, and experiences. Once completed, you'll help compile their stories and photos into a Legacy Book, created by Council on Aging and gifted to the senior.

Join us and make a lasting impact. Share a story, create a memory, and be part of something truly special.



Call Jennifer Kulpa
Tellegacy Coordinator
707-525-0143 x100
jkulpa@councilonaging.com

COA will pay for the Volunteer's mileage.



Local Hero: Gib Linzman Delivers More Than Meals

Gib Linzman, a retired Air Force veteran and former real estate professional, is a shining example of community service. For over 16 years, Linzman has dedicated his Mondays and Thursdays to delivering meals to homebound seniors through Meals on Wheels.



"I try to spend a few minutes with each client because I might be the only visitor they see that entire day," says Linzman, whose kind eyes and warm Oklahoma drawl brighten the day of many seniors. "One of my clients lights up like she won the lottery when I bring flowers."

Linzman's commitment to helping others extends beyond meal delivery. He and his wife, Jan, volunteer at the Heavenly Treasures Thrift Store on Saturdays, supporting various ministries, and the Living Room, a nonprofit that assists women and children facing homelessness. This cause holds a special place in Linzman's heart, having grown up in poverty himself.

"I was raised by a single mother, and we were dirt poor," recalls Linzman. "My mother instilled in me a strong work ethic and a deep sense of faith."

Linzman's career reflects his dedication to helping others. As an Air Force recruiter, he was recognized as the Top Recruiter in the Western States in 1981 and received STEP (Stripes for Exceptional Performers promotion), which is a promotion in the U.S. Air Force that allows commanders to immediately promote enlisted Airmen who have exceptional potential. He retired as an E8 (Senior Master Sergeant) rank to focus on his young family.

Even as Director of Admissions at Empire College, he prioritized understanding prospective students' individual needs and aspirations, often advising them against pursuing a particular path if he felt it wasn't the right fit. "I talked more people out of a career than into it," Linzman admits. "My passion is to help people see who they really are." This passion shines through in his volunteer work. Linzman is not afraid to advocate for his clients, even contacting Adult Protective Services when he suspected a client was being abused.

"He's a favorite around the office," says a Meals on Wheels staff, Di. "He's always willing to lend a hand and loves to share stories about his love of reading and his beloved 49ers."

Linzman's story inspires the community, reminding us of the importance of giving back and making a positive impact on the lives of others.

older adults and their pets. We deliver workshops at senior living facilities, low-income housing complexes, community centers and senior centers, ensuring accessibility for seniors in various living situations. Each participant receives a free emergency go-bag with essential supplies and learns how to use them effectively.

We guide seniors to develop personalized emergency plans and take practical steps, such as identifying their evacuation zones, mapping out evacuation routes, registering for emergency alerts, customizing their go-bags, storing essential supplies at home and incorporating their pets into their plans. The devastating LA wildfires emphasized how urgent it is to have an emergency plan. EPH workshops empower seniors, instill confidence and help ensure they have the best possible outcome when disaster strikes. Wildfires, earthquakes and power outages can happen at any time, and we're here to ensure that seniors are ready.

Contact EPH today to schedule a free two-part workshop for a senior housing community, senior center or community group. In 2025, EPH will host a series of public workshops. Here are ways to learn more about our work, schedule a private workshop or stay updated on public sessions:

- Visit <https://www.emergencyprephelp.org/>
- Email us at info@emergencyprephelp.org/
- Call 707-241-3280

Together, we can build a safer, more resilient community.



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GOLDEN YEARS WELLNESS FAIR



A Special Health & Wellness Event For Seniors





HSB (Health Science and Biotechnology) students practicing CPR

Date: Thursday, March 13, 2025.
Time: 10 am-1 pm
Location: Finley Community Center

RSVP: [Denise Johnson, 707-525-0143, ext. 119 or djohnson@councilonaging.com](mailto:djohnson@councilonaging.com)
Must Register by **Wednesday, March 5th**

What's Happening at the Fair:

- Blood Pressure Check
- Up and Go Test
- 30 Sec Sit and Stand test
- Balance Test
- Chair Yoga
- CPR Training
- And More!!!



Whether you're looking to stay active, learn more about your health, or just spend some time with like-minded people, our **Health & Wellness Fair** has something for you! No matter your fitness level, we encourage you to come and take part in as much or as little as you like.

Special Bonus: Free Lunch Included!!

Why Attend?

- **Free Health Screenings:** Get important health checks at no cost.
- **Interactive Activities:** Participate in fun, informative exercises to boost your health and well-being.
- **Guidance:** Learn from students.
- **Meet New People:** Connect with other seniors, students, and faculty.



HSB (Health Science and Biotechnology) class



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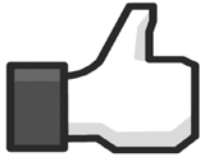
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