

FALL 2009

In this issue of *Great Age*:

Merry Holidays.....1
 Chair's Message.....2
 New Commissioner...2
 Whodunit?2
 Legislative Updates....3
 Director's Report.....3
 Season for Scams.....4
 Love is The Answer ..4
 Senior Mobility.....5
 New Transit Passes ...5
 Flu Alert.....5
 Get Ready Seniors5
 Things to Do.....7
 Thrifty Holidays.....7



Editor:

Ana P. Bagtas, MHA

Assistant Editor:

Tina Devon Gallier

Editorial Board:

- Allan Bortel
- Russ Brubaker
- Larry Glazier
- Nancy Peters-Janover
- Nancy Rhine-Figallo
- Donna Robbins
- Nancy Sangster-De Haan

Publisher:

Division of Aging and Adult Services
 Nick Trunzo, LCSW,
 Director

Creativity and Family Make Holidays Merry in Tough Times

By Marge Belknap, MD, Commissioner, District 4
 Nancy Rhine-Figallo, MS, Commissioner, Mill Valley

Nancy Peters-Janover, member, Public Information Committee; former Commissioner

In times of economic pressure and uncertainty, it is easy to feel anxious and depressed. An antidote to these feelings can be found in spirited conversations with some of our wise elders who have lived with grace, style and grit through the tough years of the Great Depression, World War II and other adversities. Their stories, advice and humor are helpful



Photo: Juanita Slater

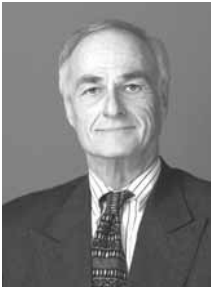
reminders that we will get through this period of challenge in our lives. A few of these elders recently shared some holiday remembrances filled with creativity and heart that put these challenging times in perspective.

Betty McAfee is an 85-year-old renowned photographer and resident at The Redwoods in Mill Valley. One Christmas 50 years ago, Betty's family decided to give \$10, which was a handsome amount back then, to each of the five members in her family. Four people pooled their \$10 together to buy a present for the fifth person. The money pooling went around so that there was a present for everybody from everybody. "We had to put our heads

together and decide what the other person would really like," she says. When Betty emptied her attic in Berkeley to move to The Redwoods, she found the sailboat that her son, who later developed a passion for sailing, got that year. "As an adult, my son built a boat and sailed solo to Hawaii. My daughter vividly remembers how much loving thought we gave to each person that Christmas," Betty reminisces.

Though the current financial crisis is understandably instilling fears in many families, Betty thinks that "young parents have to be very careful about not burdening their children with their financial anxieties because children pick up that stuff." She explains, "I'm very grateful that my parents did not burden us with financial worries. They didn't have a lot of money, and I since learned that my father's salary was cut." Betty also remembers the homeless or "hobos," as they were called, who would come to the back door and ask for a dime or a cup of coffee. "It kept us aware that we were very lucky that we had what we had, and we were taught that we had some responsibility to help those who didn't have

► Merry Holidays: continued on Page 6



A Message from the Commission Chair

By Allan Bortel
Chair, Commission on Aging

Marin's Commission on Aging works through its committees and task forces with some very vocal and extremely helpful public members. The public is invited to join and participate (only Commissioners vote) in the discussions in the areas of health, housing, transportation, nutrition, planning and public information. The public may also participate in the deliberations of the Elder Abuse Task Force and Ombudsman Advisory. To discuss joining and engaging in the work of the Commission or for more information, call the Division of Aging & Adult Services at 499-7118 or go to the www.co.marin.ca.us/aging.

Getting involved in a committee or task force often leads to an appointment to the Commission by a town council or county supervisor. In addition to appointees from each city and district, Marin County representatives on the California Senior Legislature (CSL) have seats on the Commission. Election to the CSL is open every four years, with the next election occurring in May 2010.

In this current fiscal year, ending June 2010, the Commission will focus on several issues. They include coping with Alzheimer's, transitioning of Marin General from Sutter, planning and budgeting for retirement and addressing the transportation issues associated with "aging in place."

Disaster and emergency preparedness by older adults is also on our agenda. The Commission's Planning Committee led the assembly of more than 450 disaster kits by volunteers of various ages. The kits will be distributed free of charge to older adults who complete the *Get Ready Seniors!* training sponsored by the Commission on Aging, the Division of Aging & Adult Services and the Get Ready Marin team. The Planning Committee will be organizing several *Get Ready Seniors!* trainings throughout Marin. Contact the Division at 499-7118 to find out about upcoming trainings in a town near you.

Finally, come to the annual Senior Information Fair on Wednesday, October 21, at the Marin Exhibit Hall. Admission is free. Get your flu shot, enjoy a full day of entertainment and visit the more than 125 vendors offering services and resources to older adults.

New Commissioner

By Nancy Peters-Janover
Member, Public Information Committee; former Commissioner

The Marin County Commission on Aging welcomes Martha Copeland, a new commissioner appointed by Supervisor Hal Brown, Jr. to represent District Two. "I wanted to be on the Commission because our Marin population is getting older. Boomers and older adults will be a large population in Marin soon," says Martha. She believes that it is important to recognize the impact of these groups in the county.

Martha is a native-born San Franciscan who grew up in Marin and loves it. She is interested in serving on the Public Information and Planning committees.

Martha currently works part-time as a financial planner and performs legal research for large corporations. She and her husband have two sons. In her leisure time, she enjoys good food and traveling.

As a retired financial planner with an MBA from the University of San Francisco, Martha brings a wealth of talent and experience to the Commission. "Some people," Martha adds, "write checks to help contribute to organizations and issues. I would rather make a contribution by volunteering."

Senior Information Fair
PRESENTS
WHODUNIT?

Mysteries, magic and marvelous information await you at "WHODUNIT?" the 24th Annual Marin Senior Information Fair. The fair will take place on Wednesday, October 21, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Marin Exhibit Hall, 10 Avenue of The Flags, San Rafael. Broadcaster Jan Wahl emcees the event. Visit the more than 125 exhibitor booths. Art and quilt shows, ballroom dancing, fitness activities, free health screenings, flu shots, hands-on computer and Internet activities and prizes and giveaways will be offered. Solve the lemon bar caper mystery trail. Enjoy all-day entertainment based on the theme. Admission is free. For more information, please call Patrice Garrett at 707-795-4004, or e-mail her at comink@comcast.net.

Legislative Updates

By Ellie Bloch

Marin County Representative, California Senior Legislature

The priority for the state Legislature in the past two months was to get the budget passed, and there was little new legislation passed and chaptered during this time. Here are a few of the actions taken related to older adults.

AB 392 was chaptered into law. This bill will provide additional funding for the Long-Term Care Ombudsman programs statewide. The funding replaces some of the 50% reductions enacted last year in the governor's budget and is for one year only.

AB 935, a corresponding bill to AB 392, was meant to provide ongoing funds for the Ombudsman programs using the State Nursing Home Citation and Penalty funds. Unfortunately, it was held up in the Appropriations Committee and will need to be reintroduced in the next legislative cycle.

AB 1457 is on the Senate's special consent calendar. This bill requires the disclosure of the name of the owner and the license number on patient contracts with long-term care facilities.

SB 91 continues the tax contribution check-off line (Code 402 on the income tax form) for donations to the California Senior Legislature (CSL). Taxpayers are encouraged to check Code 402 on their tax returns to support the important work of the CSL.

SJR 4 urges the president and Congress to act to establish a federally-controlled Alzheimer's Silver Alert program. It was adopted in the Assembly Aging and Long-Term Care Committee.

The Marin County Commission on Aging's Legislative Committee will continue to push for ongoing funding for the Ombudsman program and for many other vital concerns of Marin County older adults.

Finally, we are pleased to welcome Sandy Miller, the newly-appointed Marin County senior senator for the CSL. Sandy will also fill the CSL seat on the Commission. Call the Marin County Commission on Aging at 499-7118 if you wish to volunteer for the Legislative Committee. Community involvement is critical.

From the Director's Desk

By Nick Trunzo, LCSW, MS

Director, Division of Aging & Adult Services



The California budget crisis has had a significant impact on many programs, including those serving older adults and disabled persons. While many programs experienced reductions, funding was **eliminated** for several programs serving older and impaired adults.

The Older Californians Act established into law the importance of providing services to assist older adults. Enacted into law, Section 9540 of the Welfare and Institutions Code calls for the Legislature to ensure that older individuals and functionally impaired adults receive needed services to maintain the maximum independence permitted by their functional ability in order to enable them to remain in their own homes and communities.

The Older Californians Act also established the Community Based Services Program (CBSP). Services under CBSP include the following: Senior Companion Program, which provides stipends for volunteer opportunities for low-income older adults; Linkages, a case management program for individuals who may be at risk for nursing home care; Brown Bag Program, where surplus and donated food items are distributed to low-income older adults; and Alzheimer's Day Care Resource Center, which provides specialized day care for individuals with Alzheimer's and other dementias as well as resources for their caregivers. Dishearteningly, funds for these CBSP services have been eliminated from the state budget, a loss of more than \$340,000 for Marin County.

Most funds for CBSP have previously been granted by the Division of Aging & Adult Services to non-profit organizations. These organizations include the Jewish Family and Children's Services (Linkages), Senior Access (Alzheimer's Day Care), Marin Food Bank (Brown Bag), and Northern California Presbyterian Homes and Services (Senior Companion Program). The loss in funding will make it very difficult for these agencies to continue to provide these services.

In some cases, the loss in funding is so devastating to the agency's overall program budget, such as with Linkages, that service will not continue after October 1. Though other agencies have decided to continue services, they are pressed to look for funding elsewhere at a time when everyone else is also feeling the pinch.

As we move forward to meet the needs of the older adult population, I certainly hope that the promise and commitment of the Older Californians Act to the Community Based Services Programs will not be forgotten.

Happy Holidays



*From all of us at
the Commission on
Aging and the
Division of Aging
& Adult Services*

Spotlight on Marin Senior Resource

'Tis the Season for Scams

By Megan Jack, Attorney
Legal Aid of the North Bay

Charitable giving is at its peak during the holidays. Unfortunately, some of the donations given each year enter the hands of fraudulent solicitors.

People desperate to make a quick buck often put together scams aimed at older adults. Scam artists especially target older people because they are more available to listen to the sales pitch, and they are less likely to consult with a friend or family member before spending their money. Scammers also believe that retired people have bigger savings accounts than the rest of the population.

“Scam” is common language for the legal term “fraud,” which is defined as taking something of value from another person through misrepresentation, deceit or the concealing of important information. Since fraud, by its very definition, involves dishonesty, money lost through scams is hard to recover after the fact. Therefore, it is important to be cautious before spending your charitable funds.

Before donating to a charity this holiday season, consider the following tips:

- ✓ Check out the charity’s financial information at one of these reputable websites: www.guidestar.org, www.charitywatch.org or www.give.org.
- ✓ Call or write the charity directly to verify requests you receive by telephone.
- ✓ Watch out for similar-sounding names. Phony charities have started to use the “look alike” trick to get donations that are meant to go to well-known national organizations.
- ✓ Be skeptical if someone thanks you for a pledge that you do not remember making. Fraudulent solicitors like to claim that you have already promised to give in order to separate you from your money.
- ✓ Know the difference between “tax-exempt” and “tax deductible.” Tax-exempt means the organization does not have to pay taxes. Tax-deductible means you can deduct your contribution on your tax return.

The “Spotlight on Marin Senior Resource” is a regular column in Great Age that aims to inform older persons and caregivers of programs funded by the Division of Aging and Adult Services as well as other resources available for seniors in the community.

Love Is the Answer to Bridging Generations

By Nancy Sangster-De Haan
Commissioner, District 5



Love is the answer for friendship, trust, fun and smiles that connect youth and older adults together. LITA, or Love Is The Answer, was founded in 1975 to provide residents of skilled nursing facilities, residential care homes and retirement homes with one-on-one companionship with volunteer visitors. The LITA program has

expanded to include three programs promoting inter-generational friendships and activities.

The Bridging Generations program features monthly visits by elementary school children to retirement homes. Residents spend time with the students creating arts and crafts projects, sharing stories about growing up and talking about school and holiday celebrations that have changed over the years. The visits develop friendships and understanding between the generations. Surveys by LITA staff show that both age groups benefit and develop more positive images of the other generation.

At the end of the school year, some of the youngsters transition into the LITA Families Program. Youngsters are joined by their family members, including pets. Families visit weekly with the same person. This creates an ongoing relationship with an individual who may no longer be able to get out of the home, but is eager to have a link to active members of the community.

The third intergenerational program offered by LITA is the Holiday Gifts for the Elderly. High school students looking for community service hours work with LITA adult volunteers to collect and wrap gifts that are distributed to residents of long-term care and low-income independent living settings throughout Marin County. This is a great way to bring cheers to an older person this holiday.

For more information about LITA, call 472-5482. LITA has opportunities for dedicated volunteers of all age groups.

Improving the Mobility of Marin Older Adults

By Pat Wall, MPH

Program Coordinator, Division of Aging & Adult Services

The Division of Aging & Adult Services and Marin Transit have teamed up to develop a county-wide Senior Mobility Action Plan that will identify service gaps and assess the capability of transit, walking, bicycling and driving in meeting the mobility needs of older adults in Marin. A \$100,000 grant from the Metropolitan Transportation Commission has made this project possible. Transportation consulting firms Nelson Nygaard and Fehr & Peir will assist in developing the plan.

In recent surveys of Marin County older adults, transportation rises to the top among the problems they face as they age. Because of the county's topography, public transit buses cannot serve the needs of people who live in the hillier areas of the county. Furthermore, giving up driving can often lead to isolation for those who still want to continue an active and engaging lifestyle. Older adults want options, including walking and biking, to reach their destinations.

In September, the Senior Mobility Planning team hosted public meetings around the county to ascertain gaps in services that limit older adults' mobility. An Advisory Panel composed of agencies that work with older persons and policy-makers is guiding the planning process. The panel will ensure that strategies selected for the Action Plan are readily implementable to more quickly address the mobility service gaps in Marin County. For more information about the senior mobility planning project, call Pat Wall at 499-7007.

New Transit Passes

On July 1, 2009, Marin Transit introduced new discount passes good for unlimited bus rides within Marin County. Developed at the request of the community, the new passes provide significant savings for frequent riders of all Golden Gate Transit, Marin Transit and West Marin Stagecoach routes operating within Marin County.

One-Day passes are issued from the farebox on the bus and cost \$5 for adults and \$2.50 for youth, senior and disabled riders. Both 7- and 31-Day passes are activated the first time the pass is used, and costs for each pass are as follows:

7-Day Adult	\$20
7-Day Youth, Senior/Disabled	\$10
31-Day Adult	\$80
31-Day Youth	\$40
31-Day Senior/Disabled	\$25

Passes may be purchased online by going to <http://store.goldengate.org>, or by calling the toll-free number 511 (say "Golden Gate Transit" then "Operator"), TDD 711 or 455-2000. Weekly passes may also be purchased at Cafe Salute (at the San Rafael Transit Center), the Sausalito Ferry Terminal and the Golden Gate Transit Office at 1011 Anderson Drive, San Rafael.

For more information, visit www.marintransit.org, www.goldengate.org or call the above phone numbers.



Staying Informed About the Flu

The Marin County Department of Health & Human Services takes an active role in influenza planning and prevention in Marin. The Marin Flu website (www.marinflu.org) offers up-to-date, critical information on local influenza planning, with information gathered from a variety of sources to help Marin residents and health care professionals better prepare for influenza outbreaks. Use this website as a resource to keep you and your family healthy this winter season.

Get Ready Seniors!

The Division of Aging & Adult Services and the Commission on Aging are partnering with the Get Ready Marin team to conduct *Get Ready Seniors!* workshops throughout Marin. *Get Ready Seniors!* is based on the award-winning Get Ready Marin program, modified for the older adult audience. Receive a **free disaster kit** that includes a flashlight, emergency blanket, water supply, first aid kit and more at the end of the training. Call 499-7118 to find out about upcoming trainings or for more information. Also check out the Commission on Aging and the Get Ready Marin booths at the 2009 Senior Fair to pick up a schedule of workshops. Seats are limited. Classes start in November.

► Merry Holidays: *from Page 1*

as much as we had,” says Betty.

Betty’s beloved partner, 67-year-old Audrey Hazen, recalls Christmases growing up on a farm in Wisconsin. “We always had soup going on the cook stove because we had a large family. Leftovers went into soups,” says Audrey. Along with the wonderful soups, the smell of homemade bread fills Audrey’s memory. She said, “Schneckens were a special tradition. You would knead this white dough, twist it, roll it like a cinnamon roll and then frost it. I still save my Schneckens recipes.”

“A tub of warm water was another thing that was under the wood stove,” Audrey recalls. Every evening her grandparents would soak and rub each other’s feet. “It was amazing. There were towels always warmed on the rack. What a model,” she sighs.

Living in Wisconsin, the abundance of cream and butter sweetened Audrey’s holidays. “We made candy at Christmas. That was special. The candies would be packed away in little special boxes. We had all kinds — caramel, chocolate and popcorn balls,” says Audrey.

Going back to basics is an approach Audrey recommends during these hard times. “I have absolutely no fear about money. I feel resourceful,” she says. Having lived in Brazil for five years with very little means, Audrey explains, “The basics are a real joy. The simplicity brings less running around, less space.”

One of Betty and Audrey’s beloved neighbors at The Redwoods is 92-year-old Jack Reed. Jack remembers having pheasant, rather than turkey, for the holidays. Jack grew up in Iowa, and he recalls the farmers welcoming the townspeople to their cornfield because the pheasants were eating their crop. “There was no problem getting produce. Farmers grew it, but they couldn’t sell it for much, so it was pennies to buy,” says Jack. Despite remembering patching the holes on the soles of his Sunday best shoes with cardboard, Jack admits, “We never realized we were poor. Of course there were church suppers around the holidays. The food was wonderful. Dinner was probably 25 cents.” He recollects his aunt feeding the “hobos” who came to the back door. “They weren’t bums. They were just ‘without’ and ride [*sic*] the rails to try to find a job,” he explains. As little as they had, Jack remembers his aunt making them sandwiches. “Yes, things are hard now. I say, tough. Hang on. We’ve been through it before; we’ll go through it again. We’ve gotta help each other out. You can’t go it alone,” insists Jack.

Marge Belknap, M.D., who serves on the Marin County Commission on Aging, thinks of the creative survival strategies people came up with when times were tough. During the difficult years of the Great

Depression, Marge’s family lived in a small town of 2,000 people in Southern California. The town’s main industry was growing and shipping citrus, and her father worked for the Ford Motor Company. “The more affluent people in town were able to buy new cars from my father. At that time, a new Model T roadster cost about \$295,” she chuckles. Others in the town worked in the orange groves and were only able to buy used cars and bring their old cars to her father’s garage for repairs. “Over the years, I remember people paying my father with home-grown food, especially walnuts, in addition to a piano accordion, a saxophone and a guitar,” she says.

One memorable payment came in the form of a live turkey. Marge’s father thought it was a timely payment to be used for Christmas dinner, but her mother felt otherwise. “My mother was quick to declare that she would have nothing to do with killing and dressing the bird,” recalls Marge. After a short consideration, her father agreed that the turkey should be traded to the local turkey farm for an appropriate table-ready Christmas bird. “Other bartered payments never created the family crisis that the turkey did,” she says.

While some think of holiday traditions, religious observances and our friends and family around this time of year, 99-year-old Juanita Slater thinks “motorcycle!” Juanita is a mother, widow, grandmother, blind cancer patient and gifted oil and water artist. “It’s astonishing to be 99,” says Juanita, “I’m on my way out from cancer, you know.” Though now totally blind, Juanita still does some watercolor, and her small apartment is filled with her artwork. Juanita was selected Outstanding Artist for 2009 by the editors and publishers of *INSITE* magazine, a publication for and about visually impaired artists.

Juanita looks forward to her 100th birthday in December because her son, Howard, has promised her a ride on his Harley. With grins from ear to ear she says, “I am ready for that ride.” December is the end of a year. For Juanita, the end is also apparent. She does not anticipate holiday festivities. The Harley and destiny are waiting.



In Memoriam

We just received word of the passing of Juanita Slater. Juanita’s presence and remarkable spirit will be missed.

Things to Do, Places to Go Around Marin

By Nancy Rhine-Figallo
Commissioner, Mill Valley

Marin offers a wide range of activities and outings during the holidays for older adults and their families. The following is a sample list of some of Marin's wonderful community clubs and agencies that offer activities to keep you in the holiday spirit.

Bernard Osher Marin Jewish Community Center: Senior Adult Program (☎ 444-8000), 200 N. San Pedro Rd., San Rafael, http://www.marinjcc.org/lifelong_learning_activities.html

Dance Palace Community Center (☎ 663-1075), 503 B St., Point Reyes, www.dancepalace.org

Events of Interest to Seniors in Marin, http://www.marin.org/calendar/senior_calendar.cfm

Goldenaires Senior Citizens (☎ 485-3348), 618 B Street, San Rafael

Margaret Todd Senior Center (☎ 899-8290), 1560 Hill Rd., Novato, <http://www.cityofnovato.org/Index.aspx?page=560>

Marguerita C. Johnson Senior Center (☎ 332-9323), 640 Drake Ave., Marin City, www.mcjcenter.org

Mill Valley Seniors' Club (☎ 383-1370 x107), 180 Camino Alto, Mill Valley, <http://www.cityofmillvalley.org/Index.aspx?page=185>

San Geronimo Valley Community Center (☎ 488-8888), 6350 Sir Francis Drake Blvd., San Geronimo, www.sgvcc.org

West Marin Senior Center (☎ 663-8148), 11435 State Route One, Point Reyes, www.wmss.org

Whistlestop Senior Center (☎ 456-9062), 930 Tamalpais Ave., San Rafael, www.thewhistlestop.org

Whitecaps of Bolinas and Stinson Beach (☎ 868-1613), www.whitecapsbsb.org

Nifty Ways to be Thrifty for the Holidays

By Nancy Peters-Janover
Member, Public Information Committee; former Commissioner



Times may be tough, but there are ways to make the holidays joyful without spending too much.

The following suggestions and other nifty thrifty ideas may be found in the book, *365 Ways to Prepare for Christmas*, published by Harper Collins.

Use paper bags, aluminum foil, newspapers or old maps for gift wrapping. Ideally, avoid wrapping paper altogether by using plain boxes. Old holiday cards make great package labels and designs. They can also be made into tree ornaments if the paper is sturdy enough.

Visit a "Friends of the Library" sale or store in your town. You can find wonderful books that cost next to nothing for any age, hobby or interest.

If you are (and even if you are not) into arts and crafts, homemade gifts are very special. For example, use shells or buttons to decorate an old frame. Make potpourri or sachets. Write a poem. Create a handwritten coupon book that entitles friends and loved ones to a back rub, nine holes of golf at your expense, and so on. Design notecards with natural materials, such as dried flowers, or photos from trips. Make homemade jams or jellies. Knit a scarf. Sew placemats with your own designs.

If you cannot make something, you can always do something. Give a child a library card. Offer an evening or weekend of babysitting, give rides to a homebound person and give a family caregiver some respite by cooking, cleaning and watching over their disabled loved one.

Whether you craft, sew, paint or offer free work, the holidays can be made joyful and rewarding, even on a tight budget.

Marin County Commission on Aging

10 North San Pedro Rd.,
Suite 1012
San Rafael, CA 94903
499-7396
Website:
www.co.marin.ca.us/aging

Featured in This Issue

Creativity and Family
Make Holidays Merry in
Hard Times

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County of Marin

We welcome your comments, questions and feedback! Please call the *Great Age* editor at 499-6947 or send a message at divisionofaging@co.marin.ca.us.

Committee Meetings are held at the Division of Aging's facilities at 10 North San Pedro Road, San Rafael. For details call 499-7396.

<p>December 10</p> <p>Topic: <i>Keeping Your Brain Fit for Life</i></p> <p>Speaker: TBD</p> <p>Place: TBD</p>	<p>November 12</p> <p>Topic: <i>Medicare Updates</i></p> <p>Speaker: <i>Julie Bennett, Health Insurance Counseling & Advocacy Program</i></p> <p>Place: Marin County Office of Education (Auditorium), 1111 Las Gallinas Ave., San Rafael</p>	<p>October 8 (Starts at 9:30 a.m.)</p> <p>Topic: <i>Services for Rural Older Adults</i></p> <p>Speakers: representatives from the Dance Palace, Health & Human Services West Marin branch, Marin Meals on Wheels, San Geronimo Valley Community Center, Senior Access and West Marin Senior Services</p> <p>Place: Dance Palace, 503 B St., Point Reyes Station</p>
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Fall 2009 Calendar of Meetings

The public is invited to participate in all meetings held by the Commission and its Committees. Commission meetings are held on the second Thursday of the month. Presentations at the Commission meetings typically start at 10:30 a.m., followed by the business meeting at 11:45 a.m. Meeting dates and presentations are as follows:

The Marin County Commission on Aging is a federally mandated advisory council. The mission of the Commission is to provide information and advocacy for services that enable older adults to live with dignity. *Great Age* highlights programs, legislative developments, advocacy and news about aging in Marin County.

Find the service that's right for you!
Call the Marin Adult Information and Referral Line at 457-INFO (457-4636)
Also check out the *Network of Care*, Marin's comprehensive online search tool at www.marin.networkofcare.org/aging