

SUMMER 2009

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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

Local Support Can Help with Mental and Physical Health Transitions

By Nancy Rhine-Figallo, MS
Commissioner, Mill Valley

Older adults facing challenging mental and physical health transitions associated with aging can count on many opportunities for assistance in Marin County. Three local agencies to which individuals and families can turn to in time of need are Senior Access Adult Day Program in San Rafael,



Photo courtesy of Senior Access

Marin Adult Day Health Center in Novato and Marin General's Older Adult Partial Hospitalization Program. Each program offers state-of-the art specialized care as well as activities and services for older adults needing support and connection. These programs also provide a much-needed break or respite for caregivers.

Since 1973, the Senior Access Adult Day Program has been providing a safe and caring environment for people with dementia and frail older adults. It is an alternative

to placement in a nursing home and complements assistance provided by home care services, family caregivers and assisted living care.

The program is run by licensed staff especially trained to work with clients who have memory loss and chronic conditions. Medical services are not provided and private pay clients are accepted. Structured and creative social day program activities are offered in San Rafael and Point Reyes.

The Marin Adult Day Health Center (MADHC) offers a caring environment for adults 18 years and older with chronic health issues including dementia, physical disabilities and mental health diagnoses. MADHC's medical coordination-of-care model is designed to help participants maintain or improve their ability to take care of

A Message from the Commission Chair



By Patricia Lewis
Chair, Commission on Aging

In June, the Commission on Aging elected its new slate of officers. Because this is my last column writing as chair, it seems appropriate to ponder some of the things the Commission and health experts promote for healthy aging.

Nutrition is undeniably critical. It is important to eat lots of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean protein and to limit salt intake. Exercise is a must. Getting 30 minutes of active exercise six days a week and strength training three days a week are recommended. Daily stretching and Tai Chi can prevent falls. Take vitamin D supplements for bone health.

Dermatologists and dentists also have guidelines. Apply sunscreen generously. Floss daily for oral health.

Computer games, card games and crossword puzzles are helpful in keeping our brains stimulated. Social interaction with friends and involvement in community activities can maintain mental acuity. Taking some time out to pray or meditate each day is useful in staying centered and peaceful. Getting plenty of sleep will also quiet the mind and rejuvenate the body.

If all these activities seem daunting, a good book, a little red wine and some dark chocolate are always nice.

Comments from the New Chair

By Allan Bortel
Chair-elect, Commission on Aging

The pinch of the worst economic times since the Great Depression is palpable. Even when the recession comes to an end, California's budget crisis will impose major hardships on public and nonprofit agencies as services are greatly squeezed or cut altogether, including a number of programs for older adults.

The following issues will continue to be a challenge for Marin County: long-term transportation needs for older adults when they "give up the keys," the transfer of ownership of Marin General Hospital from Sutter Health on July 1, 2010 and last but not least, the lack of affordable housing for seniors and their caregivers.

With the exception of a few programs, federal stimulus funds are not likely to trickle down very much to our older population. Subsequently, Marin's older working adults are delaying retirement due to Wall Street's meltdown effect on interest, dividends and 401(k) accounts.

As the new chair, leading the Commission will be an enormous task in this recession, but together we will aggressively pursue advocacy, information and successful "aging in place." As advocates for older adults, we must be even more aggressive and innovative in creating strategies to address future needs.

Forum Raises Awareness, But Vigilance Is Key

By Roberta Romeo, PhD
Commissioner, Novato

On May 1, the Commission on Aging, Division of Aging & Adult Services and partner agencies organized a successful elder abuse awareness community forum in San Rafael. Assemblyman Jared Huffman, Marin County District Attorney Ed Berberian and elder abuse experts and trainers, including Sergeant Scott Ingels, Kari Beuerman and Lisa Nerenberg addressed the crowd of more than 100 older adults.

The forum raised the community's awareness about elder abuse, but older people continue to be easy targets of scams, exploitation and neglect. Vigilance is key in preventing and addressing elder abuse.

To read about scams, check the fraud reporting website at www.consumerfraudreporting.org. Recent

scams involve the Medicare discount card, counterfeit drugs and bank frauds. Accurate information about the Medicare discount cards may be found at www.medicare.gov. The National Association of Boards of Pharmacy at www.nabp.net lists reputable drug sellers. Beware of phone calls from a "real sounding" bank employee. Do not give out your account number or personal information. Report the call to your bank immediately. Concerns about a friend or neighbor being abused or neglected should be reported to the Marin County Adult Protective Services at 507-2774. You can report anonymously and perhaps save a life. When in doubt, stop, think and call 499-5050 or 457-INFO (4636). Your call will be returned.

From the Director's Desk

By Nick Trunzo, LCSW, MSW
Division of Aging Director



The number of older adults in the United States is expected to increase by 80% between 2010 and 2030, and improving transportation for older adults is a major issue. Many older adults drive, and there are resources available to assist older drivers, such as the AARP driver safety program and the Automobile Association of America's CarFit program. However, because of physical or mental limitations or the lack of financial resources to own and maintain an automobile, the majority of older persons will lose the ability to drive at some point as they age.

Aging in place is the goal of most people. The lack of transportation options is a significant deterrent to successful aging in place. Giving up the car can be like receiving a sentence to live a life of isolation, dependent upon the assistance of family and friends.

Resolving the transportation needs of older adults will require creativity, coordination among agencies providing services, and the use of volunteers. Most of all, both private and public funding will be needed to enhance current services and initiate new ones.

The Division of Aging & Adult Services, in collaboration with the Commission on Aging's Housing and Transportation Committee, has been working on transportation planning in Marin.

A four-person team from Marin County will attend the 2009 Mobility Planning Services Institute for Senior Transportation in June in Washington D.C. The project is funded jointly by Easter Seals and the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging. On the team are representatives from the Division of Aging & Adult Services, Marin Transit, and Whistlestop Wheels. Following the Washington meeting, the team will work on a plan for senior transportation for Marin County with technical assistance for a year from Institute staff.

In addition, the Division of Aging & Adult Services and Marin Transit competed for and won a \$100,000 grant from the California Department of Transportation for the development of an action and implementation plan for senior mobility in Marin. Work is set to begin by early July. The plan will address the mobility needs of adults over the age of 60.

The Division's planning efforts will enhance its ability to compete for additional transportation funding, as well as facilitate the coordination, improvement, and initiation of new local services.

Legislative Updates

By Ellie Bloch

Marin County Representative, California Senior Legislature

In May, I attended the California Senior Legislature (CSL) meeting at the state Capitol to see the legislative process at work and support some of the CSL's proposals. The proposals were on the consent calendar, which means that no discussion will be held on these particular items.

There are two bills both at the state and federal level that would be of interest to older adults in Marin. They are California AB 324, the Elder Economic Security Standard Act, which came from the CSL, and a federal house bill, HR 2365, that would require the establishment of a consumer price index for the elderly that takes into account the cost of living increase for Medicare benefits under the Social Security Act.

The California bill AB 392 is an emergency bill that will provide funding for the Ombudsman Program through fines imposed on nursing homes for violations of their mandates. These fines would help fund the Ombudsman Program throughout the state. The bill is in the Assembly and is moving forward. There are dozens of other bills concerning the welfare of older adults that are not moving forward due to California's budget problems.

Even in these hard economic times, the CSL has received more donations this year than in past years. California residents generously designated donations to code 402 on their state income tax returns.

I will be in Sacramento in July and on October 19-22 for the annual meeting of the CSL. I will continue to report on pending legislation. For more information about the CSL and the bills affecting older adults, go to www.4csl.org or call 916-552-8056.

Change in the Minimum Required Distribution

By Russ Brubaker
Commissioner, Larkspur

Those who would be required to take a minimum distribution from their IRA accounts have an option this year. Individuals may make the withdrawal or leave the funds in the account. Every situation is unique. It is up to the individual to make a determination about what to do with this year's distribution. If you choose NOT to take a distribution, no action is required. The option is for tax year 2009 only.

Spotlight on Marin Senior Resource

Transition to Wellness

By Andre Harris, Margaret Levine & Catherine Sullivan
Transition to Wellness Team

John, aged 60, was hospitalized for an event related to his chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. He has been homeless for the past three years. John was getting ready to be discharged from the hospital. Where was he supposed to go? Transition to Wellness was there to help.

Transition to Wellness is a pilot project launched in October 2008 with the aim of supporting homeless patients in their posthospital transition. Its goals are to shorten the length of hospital stays, improve health outcomes, provide continuity of care and decrease re-admissions to hospitals and emergency departments. Public health nurse case management is available to coordinate care and provide linkages to essential community support services. Four respite beds located at Homeward Bound of Marin's Next Key Center in Novato are currently available to homeless patients being discharged from local hospitals.

Transition to Wellness's partner organizations include the Marin County Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Kaiser, Sutter (Marin General and Novato Community Hospitals), Marin Community Foundation, Homeward Bound of Marin and others agencies. HHS, Kaiser and Sutter have provided funding, and additional funding is being sought to sustain the program.

Homeless patients who stay in the Transition to Wellness medical respite care are not only physically healed, they are also linked to local supportive services that move them towards self-sufficiency and stable housing. The average stay in the Transition to Wellness respite care program is about 21 days.

For more information about Transition to Wellness, call the Marin Adult Information and Referral line at 499-INFO (4636).

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.

When the Current Housing Situation Is No Longer an Option

By Robin Schaefer
Policy Analyst, Division of Aging & Adult Services

For those of us who live independently in homes, apartments or other types of housing, remaining independent and aging gracefully in our own residence is a shared goal. However, our needs and those of our loved ones may change over time and other housing options may have to be explored.

Marin County offers a variety of housing options, and you can make choices that consider the current and future needs of older adults such as lifestyle, location, health status, finances and level of independence.

The challenges of choosing an option can be daunting for both older individuals and their families. In addition to the wide variety of choices, the psychological and emotional strains of making a change, as well as the fear of losing independence, can often make this experience very stressful.

The most important thing an individual can do when deciding on an appropriate living arrangement is to seek advice, especially from families who have gone through a similar experience. This is also true for family members and loved ones seeking a placement for an elder who needs to be in assisted care.

The Division of Aging & Adult Services offers *Choices for Living*, an extensive resource guide of housing options in Marin. All housing options, from adult communities to assisted living, board and care and skilled nursing facilities, are explained and identified in the guide.

In addition, the Division's Ombudsman Program can provide information and counseling about the residential care facilities and the skilled nursing facilities in the county.

The changes required as we age can sometimes be overwhelming, so it is good to know that we are not alone. One of the best ways to move forward is to be armed with the most current information and utilize whatever resources are available in the community.

To request a copy of *Choices for Living*, call the Marin Adult Information and Assistance line at 457-INFO (4636) or view it online at www.co.marin.ca.us/aging, then click "Publications." The Ombudsman Program may be reached at 499-7446.

Dealing with a Medical Crisis: A True Story

By Nancy Peters-Janover,

Member, Public Information Committee, former Commissioner

Sal and Rose, ages 87 and 88, have been married for 65 years and are inseparable. Sara, their only child, lives in Petaluma. Like many older adults in Marin, Sal and Rose were independent and were very active until calamity struck.

At a family gathering in the South Bay, Rose missed the step down into the living room as she was walking to greet her granddaughter. She fell, sprawled sideways and was unable to move. When family members got to Rose, the entire left side of her face was



turning bluish purple and was swelling fast. The paramedics came quickly. "Don't move her," they instructed. Rose was taken to the closest trauma center.

Hospital intensive care units or ICUs are often noisy and frantic. Rose was scared and in great pain. After the requisite X-rays, the doctor, whose name tag only said "John," declared, "It's a fractured hip." A partial hip replacement was required and had to be done within a few days. "We have to take her off the Coumadin (a blood clot preventive medication)," the doctor explained, "We're also going to put her on pain medication." Sara never saw that doctor again.

Three agonizing days later, Rose's blood pressure and the amount of pain medication she was taking were rising. When Rose buzzed for a nurse, the response she often got was, "Push the button, ma'am," to increase her intravenous morphine injections.

Sara was at her mother's side daily. No doctors or nurses would communicate with the family. Sara grew more concerned and puzzled about what was happening, but hospital staff could not give her a straight answer. After three days in the ICU and increasing doses of morphine, no date had been scheduled for the surgery. A man later appeared in Rose's room. He had no name tag or stethoscope. "Are you a doctor?" asked Sara. He was. She frantically searched for answers. The doctor responded that Rose's blood pressure was very high and that they were trying to make her as comfortable as possible. He announced that the surgery was scheduled for tomorrow. Rose would not be allowed to eat that day.

The surgery did not take place as scheduled. When Sara arrived that morning, Rose, besides being hungry,

was acting strangely. She asked the nurse how much morphine was being given to her mother. "I can't do this anymore; bust me out of here," Rose screamed at her husband, Sal. He wept.

Sara was frightened, furious and tired. She walked to the nurses' station, found two nurses chatting, and in an authoritative voice said, "I want to see a doctor now, or we're taking my mother out of here!"

Over the next two days, a device that looked like an upside-down umbrella was placed in Rose's esophagus to prevent clots from traveling through her body. She also fasted for 12 hours in preparation for surgery. Once again, the surgery did not take place.

Early the next day, Sara found a doctor in the hall. She stopped him in mid-stride and said, "I want to know NOW when my mother is scheduled for surgery. She's in constant pain and the medication is making her delusional. No one seems to give a damn around here." Sara demanded answers.

"If I hadn't questioned, pushed and finally screamed, my mother would probably still be there," said Sara. The experience almost made her fall apart, but she explained, "I couldn't give up, give in or quit."

Rose had the surgery, moved out of the ICU, got off of morphine and was put on Vicodin. Eleven days later, Rose returned to Marin and began rehab. On her last day at the hospital, Rose said to daughter, "I feel so sorry for those old people who are alone and sick. All the nurses seem to say to them is 'Push the button'."

The lesson Sara learned from the experience is, "Question everything, be willing to break the rules and don't take 'no' for an answer." Family and friends are critical in advocating for the patient.

Editor's note: When confronted with a similar situation, here are steps you can proactively take:

- Call the hospital's Risk Management office, explain the situation and ask for a response to the problems.
- Call the director of the Hospitalist program and ask for a plan of action.
- Go directly to the top. Call or send a letter to the Chief Administrative Officer and tell your story.

► **Transitions:** *from Page 1*

themselves so that they can continue living at home for as long as possible. The goal of the program is to improve and foster clients' independence, social connections, health and well-being. Clients may also benefit from early detection of health problems. MADHC offers a team that includes a medical doctor, registered nurse, social worker, activity coordinator, physical therapist, occupational therapist, podiatrist, registered dietitian, psychologist and speech therapist. MADHC accepts MediCal, VA benefits and private pay. Door-to-door transportation is provided.

Marin General Hospital's Older Adult Partial Hospitalization (OAPH) and Intensive Outpatient Program provides a therapeutic environment for individuals 55 years and older to help them deal with loss, grief, depression, anxiety, chronic illness and decline in functioning. OAPH is staffed by a psychiatrist, licensed social worker, and a registered nurse. To be enrolled in the program, a referral is necessary from a primary physician, psychiatrist or psychotherapist. The program is paid for by Medicare, MediCal, supplemental insurance or most private pay insurance plans. Benefits for participants may include relieving of symptoms, improving problem-solving skills, increasing ability to function independently and feeling supported in a warm and friendly group environment.

The following are the locations, hours of operation and contact information of these community resources that can help with challenging mental and physical health transitions:

- Senior Access: www.senioraccess.org, 491-2500 extension 13, Monday-Friday 10 a.m.-3 p.m. at 70 Skyview Terrace, San Rafael; Wednesdays 10 a.m.-3 p.m. at the Dance Palace Community Center at 503 B Street, Point Reyes Station.
- Marin Adult Day Health Care/Lifelong Medical Care: www.lifelongmedical.org, 897-6884, Monday-Friday, 10 a.m.-3 p.m. at 1905 Novato Boulevard, Novato.
- Marin General Older Adult Partial Hospitalization Program: www.maringeneral.sutterhealth.org/services/bh/partial.html, 925-7679, Mondays and Fridays 10 a.m.-2:30 p.m. at 250 Bon Air, Greenbrae.

Resources to Help with Transitions

When faced with challenging life transitions, several agencies in Marin can help. The following is a list of selected local agencies and their contact information. This is by no means a comprehensive list, and when in doubt, call the **Marin Adult Information and Referral** line at **457-INFO** (4636) to find out about services and resources that are right for you and your loved one.

- **Alzheimer's Association of the North Bay:** www.alz.org/norcal, 472-4340
- **California Registry:** www.calregistry.com, 800-777-7575
- **Division of Aging & Adult Services:** www.co.marin.ca.us/aging, 499-7396
- **Family Caregiver Alliance:** www.caregiver.org, 434-3388
- **Health Insurance Counseling and Advocacy Program:** 800-434-0222
- **Jewish Family and Children's Services:** www.jfcs.org/Marin/default.asp, 507-0564
- **Legal Aid:** www.legalaidmarin.org, 492-0230
- **Lighthouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired:** www.lighthouse-sf.org, 258-8496
- **Marin Adult Day Health Care:** www.lifelongmedical.org, 897-6884
- **Marin City Community Services:** 332-1441
- **Marin Center for Independent Living:** www.marincil.org, 459-6245
- **Marin Community Food Bank:** www.marinfoodbank.org, 883-1302
- **Marin Housing:** www.marinhousing.org, 491-2348
- **Marin Meals on Wheels:** www.marinmealsonwheels.org, 507-4300
- **Marin Network of Care for Older Adults:** www.marin.networkofcare.org/aging
- **Novato Human Needs Center:** www.nhnc.org, 897-4147
- **Novato Independent Elders' Program:** 899-8296
- **Senior Access:** www.senioraccess.org, 491-2500
- **Senior Companion Program/NCPHS:** www.ncphs.org, 464-1767
- **Spectrum LGBT Center:** www.spectrumlgbtcenter.org, 457-1115
- **West Marin Senior Services:** www.wmss.org, 663-8148
- **Whistlestop:** www.thewhistlestop.org, 459-6700

Become a Team Player In Retirement

By Donna Robbins
Commissioner, District 4



Retirement is a major milestone in one's life. What to do in the retirement years is an overriding question, especially for baby boomers who recently entered or are about to enter this important phase in life.

Volunteering is one of the most effective activities that enhance the quality of life of retirees, and in some cases prolong life. Giving back to the community, creating new relationships and wanting to be involved in a program are reasons people volunteer.

Marin has plenty of volunteering resources. One such opportunity is offered by the Center for Volunteer and Nonprofit Leadership (CVNL) through its Civic Engagement Leadership Team (CELT), formerly known as the Masters of Marin. The Team focuses on community service in nonprofits by tapping into the talents of baby boomers. The 35–40 volunteers involved in CELT have served 70 nonprofits over the past two years. Liz Rottger, program consultant to the Team explains, “This is not about second careers. It is about skilled volunteers who have had successful careers and want to give back to the community.” Volunteers can serve on the board, provide business coaching, develop strategic plans, and consult in human resources. Use of existing skills is not required. Try something new to discover and develop new interests.

The challenge seems to be finding meaningful volunteer placement in nonprofits. Every Friday, the Team offers a free hour-long consultation to nonprofits on matters and issues confronting them.

From counting birds on a trail to planning an event, a CVNL program consultant can help retirees find volunteer opportunities. Contact Liz Rottger at 448-0334 for more information. Make that phone call today and start a meaningful transition in life.

Jazz Up Your Eight

By Libby Pope, RN, PhN
Public Health Nurse, Healthy Housing Program

We've all heard that magic number for fluid intake: drink eight cups of water a day to stay healthy and hydrated. Summer's hot weather is around the corner and dehydration can become a true health hazard, especially for older persons. Each year, more than one million older persons are admitted to the hospital due to dehydration. Chronic illness, medications, alcohol, caffeine and a decreased sense of thirst can all contribute to dehydration.

Water is essential to life. Water aids in metabolism, helps prevent constipation, regulates body temperature, facilitates digestion and helps cushion joints from impact. Staying properly hydrated is important year-round and is especially critical when the temperature starts rising in the summer months.

Water is not the only source of fluid to get your “eight cups a day.” Most fruits and vegetables have high water content and make great options for hydration. For instance, watermelon, tomato and cucumber contain over 90% water. Jazz up your water by adding slices of lemon, lime, cucumber or melon. Though salt, fat and sugar contents must be considered carefully, soups, gelatin, ice cream, milk and juices are also good sources of fluid.

Processed and fast foods contain large amounts of salt and are very dehydrating to the body. These include cookies, chips, dried snacks and pastries. Limit consumption of these foods to stay hydrated.

Some people may be on fluid restriction due to a medical condition. Please check with your doctor before changing your fluid intake.

Cooling Centers

This summer, the following sites are available as cooling centers during a heat wave. Cooling center hours are informally offered, so call the site directly.

Aegis of Corte Madera: 927-4200 ♦ Aegis of San Rafael: 472-6530 ♦ Aldersly Garden Retirement: 453-7425 ♦ Margaret Todd Senior Center: 899-8290 ♦ Marin YMCA: 492-9622 ♦ Whistlestop: 456-9062

Other Recommendations:

Kaiser Permanente lobbies ♦ Marin General Hospital lobby ♦ malls ♦ movie theaters ♦ Public libraries: Civic Center, Fairfax, Larkspur, Marin City and Novato ♦ other libraries not listed have fans.

Looking for Services in Marin?

Call the Marin Adult Information and Referral Line at **457-INFO** (457-4636). You may also search the Network of Care website at www.marin.networkofcare.org/aging

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.

Summer 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:**

July 9	August	September 10
Topic: <i>Transitioning to a New Beginning</i>	Commission recess. No meeting.	Topic: <i>Nutritional Health</i>
Speaker: <i>Mary Kay Sweeney</i> , Executive Director, Homeward Bound of Marin; <i>Rita Widergren</i> , RN, Supervising Public Health Nurse, Division of Aging and Adult Services		Speaker: <i>Nancy Bloom</i> , RD, Nutrition Counselor
Place: New Beginning Center, 1399 N. Hamilton Parkway, Novato		Place: Marin Art and Garden Center, 30 Sir Francis Drake Boulevard, San Anselmo

If you would like to be added or taken off the *Great Age* mailing list, please call 499-7396. You may also get *Great Age* online at www.co.marin.ca.us/aging

Featured in This Issue
Local Support Can Help with Mental & Physical Health Transitions

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

