

Winter 2018

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Published By
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Emergency Preparedness

By Teri Dowling

This summer and fall in Marin we experienced dangerously hot temperatures and terrible wild fires that forced our neighbors in Napa and Sonoma to leave their homes with minutes to spare. These same fires created dangerous air quality in Marin and throughout the greater Bay Area. This winter may bring rains, flooding, and loss of electrical power. In addition, we know that we live in earthquake country and that an earthquake is going happen. So, given all this unwelcome news, what can we do to prepare?

The following are some relatively simple steps you can do now to prepare for a disaster, whether it's a major earthquake, a power outage, or three days of very hot weather. Preparing can help reduce stress during a disaster, to recover, and to be more resilient.

Know your neighbors.

- Studies show that when disasters strike, for the first few days, neighbors depend upon on each other. First responders and government may not be able to reach you for days, but your neighbors are close and can be an important support.
- Reach out and make a point of knowing your neighbors, especially those who have access or functional needs (including people living with disabilities and older adults). If you are an older adult, make your self known to

your neighbors, develop a relationship with the people who live near you.

Come up with an emergency plan.

- Agree on a communications strategy with friends/ family. It's best to have someone out of the area you can contact by phone to let them know how you are. That person can then call others to let them know what's happening.
- Keep contact information complete and up-to-date. Make sure you have the current home, work, and cell phone numbers of the people you need to contact in an emergency. Keep an extra copy of these numbers in your Disaster Supplies Kit.
- Designate a meeting place in case you're asked to evacuate your home.
- Make travel arrangements in case of evacuation. Will you be able to drive, or will you need someone to pick you up?
- Plan and practice the best escape routes from your home/apartment.
- If you will be sheltering in place, you need to be self-sufficient for at least 3 days and ideally for 5 days.
- Make plans for your pet. Remember if you have to evacuate, shelters may

only accept working animals, like seeing-eye dogs.

Assemble a Disaster kit.

- Make a list of the medications you take, allergies, special equipment, names of doctors and pharmacists and put this in your kit. Also include a list of your emergency contacts.
- It is best if you can have on hand at least a two-week supply of medications in their original packaging. If some medications need to be refrigerated, pack those medications with ice packs from your freezer.
- You will need at least 1 gallon of water per person per day. You should have a 3-day supply; a 2-week supply is ideal.
- Stock at least a 3-day supply of canned, dried, and other non-perishable foods.
- Don't forget a manual can opener, flashlight, portable radio, waterproof matches, knife, plates, utensils, cups, and basic cooking utensils.
- A change of clothing and practical shoes suitable for wet or cold weather.
- A blanket and first aid kit.
- Cash, preferably in small denominations. An ATM may not be working when you most need it.
- Basic hygiene products: soap, toothpaste, toothbrush, hand sanitizer, toilet paper, baby wipes, etc.
- Don't forget to assemble a smaller Disaster Supply Kit for your car if you have one.
- Supplies for your pet including a carrier, water bottle, and a 3-day supply of food.
- Phone charger and extra batteries.
- Put your important papers -insurance, bank information, social security card, will/trust in an accessible location ahead of time so you can find them quickly and easily if you need to evacuate. If possible, give copies to family

members and put in a bank box.

Make your home/apartment safer.

- Be sure you have one or more smoke and carbon monoxide detectors in your house.
- Eliminate hazards, such as bookcases that could fall and block doorways—attach them to the wall.
- Make it as easy as possible to get under a sturdy table or desk quickly for protection.
- Have a fire extinguisher. Know where it is and know how to use it.
- Know how to turn off your gas and water.

Stay informed

- Participate in a local CERT (Community Emergency Response Team) program. The training is excellent and appropriate for all ages. You will meet friends and neighbors who also care about emergency preparedness and response. Ask your local Fire Department about the next CERT training in your neighborhood.
- Sign up for a Get Ready class that teaches you how to stay safe before, during, and after a disaster. Go to: <https://readymarin.org/get-ready/>
- Listen to the news on the TV, radio, or the internet. Check on-line for National Weather Service information for Marin County to find out about weather related events.
- Register your cell phone with www.alertmarin.org to receive emergency notifications.

Check out websites, including:

- <https://www.cdc.gov/aging/emergency/preparedness>.
- <https://readymarin.org/get-ready/readyseniors/>
- “Disaster Preparedness for Seniors by Seniors” available on www.redcross.org

Teri Dowling is a Commissioner from the City of Ross and is the Community Planning Manager for the Emergency Preparedness and Responses Branch of the San Francisco Department of Public Health.

Message From the Chair

By *Salamah Locks*

Hello Great Age readers. I hope you had joyous gatherings with your friends and family over the Fall holidays. Did you attend the Marin Senior Information Fair in October? The Commission's booth theme was a memory lane of 'Keep on Dancing' - I met the oldest Fair attendee, a lovely lady of 109 years young! I am wishing you a Happy New Year as we Commissioners move forward celebrating the wonders of our Marin County older adults. Stay tuned for Supervisors Dennis Rodoni and Kathrin Sears announcement of the "Older Adult Campaign 2018".



The Commission continues to organize our monthly informational meetings on topics from your surveyed areas of concern. January and February will be a two-part series on the Dimensions of Dementia. Our presentations include the latest research about some dementias that are reversible, and new treatment therapies. You will learn about the early, middle and late signs of cognitive decline from both professionals and family caregivers. Whistlestop will be our host site. If you live north of San Rafael, we say, be SMART, do SMART, take the SMART train and stay for your GRUB to socialize and dine with new and old friends at the Whistlestop café. You can use your discount ride Senior Clipper card to travel to and from Whistlestop. If you do not have a Clipper Card, you can buy one at the Whistlestop station for your next ride.

Our March topic is new and exciting and is sponsored by the Commission's recently developed Public Information and Engagement (PIE) Task Force, led by Commissioner Marianne Gontarz York of District 5. The PIE Task Force develops innovative ways to publicize the Commission on Aging's educational forums to you and increase community awareness and participation. Our April topic will be a discussion of the updates of the Commission's recommended goals and objectives to the Area Plan. We invite your passion and involvement with the Commission as we continue to support all activities that promote making Marin an inclusive age friendly place to live long and live well. For more information, please call 415 457-INFO (4636) and/or check out our website at: www.livelonglivewellmarin.org

New Commissioners

By *Jim Monson*

Sue Kwentus
City of Tiburon

When Sue Kwentus learned of the opening from Tiburon on the Commission, she knew that as a senior living in Marin County, she had the qualifications, interest, and time to take on the job.

Sue has 50 years of experience in health care: working as a nurse, administrator, graduate student, professor of nursing, and consultant. She worked for 14 years at California Pacific Medical Center, serving as Director of Regional Referrals. Fulfilling a long term goal, Sue earned a Doctorate in Nursing Practice at the University of San Francisco. Along the way, she taught courses at USF in Health Administration and Nursing. Sue is now working as a consultant with Elder Care Alliance, an organization committed to holistic care for seniors. It operates Alma Via in San Rafael along with other assisted living communities and services. Sue is very interested in health care reform issues and looks forward to advocating for seniors as part of the Health and Nutrition Committee.



Judith Saffron
City of Larkspur

Judith Saffron has lived in Larkspur for 40 years. When she learned recently from a friend that the City of Larkspur's seat on the Commission on Aging was open, she applied for it and was appointed. Now retired, Judith worked for many years in real estate development and property management. Locally, she has been involved with projects such as Cecilia Place in Tiburon and Edgewater in Larkspur. She has acquired extensive experience in both senior and affordable housing. She has plunged into the work of the Commission and looks forward to being part of the Housing and Transportation Committee. She hosted visitors to the Commission's booth at the Senior Fair in October, where she enjoyed the music of Fats Domino provided by Commissioner Locks.



Jim Monson is a Commissioner from District 4.

Marin's Response to the Wildfires in the North

By *Jim Monson*

From October 8-October 14, a series of 250 wildfires burned over 200,000 acres in Northern California and multiple people were evacuated from their homes. Many of the evacuees were residents of areas just north of Marin, including Sonoma and Napa Counties. Fleeing with minimal belongings, some of them drove south into Marin.

The County of Marin opened the Marin County Exhibit Hall building as a temporary shelter. Over 7 days, more than 700 people came through for resources, a place to stay, and to regroup. There were over 450 cots set up, with an overflow at Terra Linda High School.

There was a children's play room, a room for pets, and a medical area for those with chronic or acute health issues. A Memorandum of Understanding with a local pharmacy ensured that those displaced were able to attain their medications. County employees and volunteers provided 24 staffing and the donations from local restaurants, organizations, and the public were nothing short of incredible.

This County-run shelter was not the only one that housed evacuees. Many churches and other community based organizations also opened their doors, relying on their neighbors to provide aid and respite for those forced to leave everything behind.

One such "pop up shelter" was the San Geronimo Valley Community Center (SGVCC). Dave Cort, the Executive Director, received a call on his cell phone at at 8 am on Monday, October 9. In the parking lot, 25 evacuees had arrived from the Sonoma County fires. They had been traveling most of the night, escaping the fires and then heading west and south to find shelter and clean air. A number of them suffered from asthma or other respiratory problems. After passing through Petaluma and Nicasio, they found themselves on Sir Francis Drake Boulevard in front of the Community

Center. They decided to stop there to seek help when the Center opened. As it turned out, they were in very good hands.

Dave Cort immediately called Jim Fazackerley from the Valley Emergency Readiness Group. The first task was to provide food. On Mondays and Thursdays, SGVCC hosts a senior Congregate Meal, funded by County of Marin Aging and Adult Services (call 457-INFO to make a reservation). Dave called the meals provider, Good Earth Natural Foods, to bring additional meals for evacuees. The senior Congregate



Marin County Exhibit Hall Shelter. Photograph by Amy Dietz.

Meals program turned out to be a key component of the support infrastructure. The volunteers, many of them seniors, were skilled at preparing and serving the meals from the Center's kitchen. It was a relatively smooth transition for them to expand from 2 meals per week to 3 meals per day. Their food safety training helped to keep

the visitors healthy during the evacuation period. Very quickly, more food, volunteers, bedding, cots, and other resources turned up from all parts of the San Geronimo Valley.

County Supervisor Dennis Rodoni set up a command center to coordinate relief efforts all over West Marin. Two hundred evacuees arrived at the Dance Palace Community Center in Point Reyes Station, where they were helped by local residents, organizations, and businesses. Marconi Conference Center in Marshall housed and fed many of the Dance Palace visitors.

Back in San Geronimo Valley, the evacuee count had grown to 45 in 24 hours. Lagunitas School District is next door to the Community Center, making it easy for evacuated children to attend school. Families slept in the school library and other district spaces. Other facilities included portable toilets and shower. Local doctors and nurses dropped by the Center to check on medical needs of the visitors. After 9 days, the evacuees were able to return home, and the "pop-up" shelter was dismantled. It was an extraordinary example of a community's response to helping its neighbors.

Jim Monson is a Commissioner from District 4.

Meet Grace Damman

By *Girija Brilliant*

Dr. Grace Damman, a physician who was honored by the Dalai Lama for her extraordinary work with AIDS patients, was a resident of the Buddhist Green Gulch Farm in Muir Beach for many decades. Her life was changed when she experienced a head-on collision on the Golden Gate Bridge. After 48 days in a coma, Grace miraculously awoke. Once the thrill and euphoria of survival had passed, the hard, painful work of rehabilitation and caregiving began. Today, Grace runs the Pain Clinic at Laguna Honda Hospital and Rehabilitation Center from a wheelchair.

I met Grace 5 years ago in an Iyengar yoga class in San Francisco. Grace was in the back of the large studio and while 50 of us followed the teacher's instructions, 5 of his assistants were helping Grace do a series of intense poses. After each session, she would tell me she felt great and couldn't wait until the next class.

Two years ago, at the age of 68, Grace moved from Green Gulch to the Redwoods in Mill Valley. It was an adjustment for her and a boon to the facility, as she brought with her years of experience in medicine and Buddhist practice. A great door opened after my accident," she said. "I have had amazing experiences and few regrets. I have learned so much about patience and surrender."

In addition to working at Laguna Honda, Grace is enrolled in a chaplaincy program in Redwood City that is based in Buddhist philosophy. The program requires extensive volunteer hours as part of the training, and Grace plans to do much of that at the Redwoods. With her quick smile and mischievous sense of humor, Grace will soon be a sought after 'listener' in the community.

A documentary film about her experience, *Finding Grace*, has been shown nationally.

Girija Brilliant is a Commissioner from the City of Mill Valley.



Grace Damman

Ashton Applewhite on Ageism

By *Marianne Gontarz York*

The term "silver tsunami" is often used in the media to describe growing numbers of older people. I think it is a terrible term and I hate it. Happily, I am not alone. Another critic of the term is Ashton Applewhite. In her words, "A tsunami is something that strikes without warning and that sucks everything out to sea - as [if] we're supposed to believe old people are going to suck all our resources out with them. In fact, the demographic wave that we're looking at is an extremely well-documented phenomenon that is washing gently across a flood plain. It's not crashing on some undefended shore without warning."

Ashton Applewhite writes and speaks about Ageism. She has set out with full force on all media to catalyze a movement to make discrimination on the basis of age unacceptable. The pioneer geriatrician Robert Butler coined the term "Ageism" in 1969. Ashton says "It [is] a combination of prejudicial attitudes towards older people, old age and aging itself; discriminatory practices against elders; and institutional practices and policies that perpetuate stereotypes about them. I define it less formally as any time we think differently about a person or a group of people based on how old we think they are."

Ashton is passionate, playful, and convincing. She was chosen by www.nextavenue.org as the Influencer of the Year in 2016 because they believed her writing and speaking has sparked a movement that challenges all of us to examine the ageist stereotypes and language that has gone unquestioned until now.

Ashton's website is www.thischairrocks.com. I absolutely urge you to check it out. On it you will find videos of her talks, her blogs (one is Q&A blog called, *Yo, Is this Ageist?*), a consciousness raising booklet, and information about her book, *This Chair Rocks: A Manifesto Against Ageism*. You can also look up and hear her recent (6/17) TED Talk, *Let's End Ageism*. Additionally, Ashton writes articles and an occasional op-ed for the New York Times. As you can see, she is busy and really wants to get the word out that we need to challenge ageist stereotypes and language every time, everywhere.

Marianne Gontarz York is Commissioner from District 5.

Social Isolation, Loneliness, and Depression Among Older Persons

Mary E. McCall, PhD

In understanding how to support older persons who may be experiencing social isolation, loneliness, and/or depression, it is important to be able to distinguish between these terms, and to think about how they are related, though distinct. People can be socially isolated in terms of having very little or no social interaction with others. This *may or may not* lead to feelings of loneliness, which is the emotional experience of feeling a lack of meaningful connection with others. For some people, little or no social interaction does not lead to loneliness – they are okay with being alone. And then, similarly, social isolation and/or loneliness *may or may not* lead to a state of depression, which is a psychological condition generally characterized by feelings of helplessness (“How can I help myself?” or “I can’t make any changes in my life to better my situation.”) and/or hopelessness (“It doesn’t matter what happens, things won’t change.”).

Research has shown that while social isolation, loneliness, and depression may be reported together by some people, it is not typically clear which is the cause, and which is the effect. In other words, if people are socially isolated, that may lead later to loneliness and/or depression. On the other hand, if someone is depressed first, for example, due to a loss or grief, then they may begin to become socially isolated (e.g., by withdrawing from others), and then they may feel lonely on top of that.

Thus, it is important to try to uncover what factors are contributing to the experiences of someone who may be feeling isolated, lonely, or depressed. For example, sensory changes (e.g., hearing loss, vision loss, loss of taste) may lead to people feeling more uncomfortable in social situations, thus leading to social isolation. Many people feel that if they can’t hear well, they can’t participate in social situations where hearing is difficult. Vision loss may impact someone’s ability to drive to social occasions. Loss of taste can make it less attractive to go over to someone’s house, or out, for a

meal. Grief and loss are common experiences that can lead to social withdrawal.

In reaching out to someone, the goal should be to determine what has happened – what has “come first” – and then begin to identify simple ways to re-engage them.

Neighbors can help by inviting people to participate in neighborhood activities – garden parties, walking groups (or just two people walking), having a quiet meal where hearing problems are minimized, taking food to someone to just reach out, sharing local news, engaging in casual conversation, even just saying hello to someone you don’t usually greet can help someone feel “seen”. Family members can consult with their physician to rule out any physical causes of cognitive or emotional changes they observe (e.g., malnutrition, interaction between medications, etc.) and make and keep agreements about phone, email, or physical visit contacts (“I’ll call every Tuesday at 7pm”). Senior center staff can ensure that their materials are inclusive of all types of diversity and multicultural, so that people can “see themselves” coming to the center, conduct needs assessments of their geographic area residents – versus just the people who already attend the center; community agency staff can examine issues such as transportation challenges that may prohibit some people from attending events such as worship/religious services or community fairs, etc.

Serious depression or loneliness should be addressed by a physician if possible, but there are lots of local agencies and programs that can also be a place where someone might begin to reconnect.

For more information, call 415-457-INFO (4636).

Mary E. McCall, PhD is a Gerontologist and Professor at Samuel Merritt University School of Nursing



Photograph by Marianne Gontarz York

Volunteering/ Helping Others is Good for You

By Marianne Gontarz York

Emily Fletcher, a leading wellness expert says “Humans feel best when we feel useful, [with volunteering] the reward is in the act itself”. Additionally, Alex Korb, a neuroscientist and author, says, “Volunteering helps you focus on your positive qualities...Because you are reflecting yourself as being a good person, that can have a self-affirming effect.” Volunteering can reduce anxiety and depression, help to lower blood pressure, and give us a sense of purpose.

The recent fires that ravaged the North Bay most assuredly brought out the best in us. Thousands of people in Marin generously donated time, gift cards, money, clothing and more to our neighbors in need. According to the Center for Volunteer and Nonprofit Leadership (CVNL), thousands of people signed up the week of the firestorm to volunteer. This outpouring of support was critical to helping our neighbors recover. I volunteered with the Salvation Army in Santa Rosa to provide emotional support to families in neighborhoods who had lost their homes. I still find it hard to put into words, but it was one of the most valuable and meaningful experiences of my life to date. And I feel I received far more than I gave.

But remember that you don't need a disaster to volunteer. And you don't need to do it formally through an organization; you can volunteer all year in small ways. Fletcher suggests thinking about “micro acts” throughout your day, “What's the most pressing need right now? And how do my gifts and talents best serve that need?” It could be as simple as asking a frail neighbor if there is anything you can pick up at the grocery store or picking up trash on your daily walk. Visit the Volunteer Portal at the Center for Volunteer and Non-Profit Leadership (www.cvn1.org), which posts local opportunities for volunteers to connect with the causes they care about.

Marianne Gontarz York is a Commissioner from District 5.

Volunteer Drivers

By Allan Bortel

In recent years Marin County has seen the startup of a number of volunteer driver programs consistent with the County's aging demographic. Seniors can now rely on others, aside from relatives and friends, for shopping, medical appointments, social activities, and some trips outside Marin.

Marin Transit offers the STAR and TRIP volunteer driver programs to empower older adults and people with disabilities to remain independent. These programs provide a mileage reimbursement directly to riders to offer their friends, neighbors, and other community members who provide them with rides. To qualify and to find out more about paratransit services and the Catch-A-Ride subsidized taxi program, call 415-454-0902.

Whistlestop's CarePool program offers free volunteer rides to medical appointments or grocery shopping for eligible clients, providing “door-through-door” service and extra support, such as unloading groceries. Optional mileage reimbursement for volunteer drivers is available. Eligible clients must be Marin residents and 65+. To sign up for CarePool, call 415-454-0927 or email carepool@whistlestop.org.



Photograph by Marin Transit

Sausalito residents 60 and older have the CARSS (Call A Ride Sausalito Seniors) program for free trips within Sausalito, the floating homes community, and Gateway Shopping Center (CVS, Target and more). Call 415-944-5475 for rides Monday through Friday from 10:00 – 2:00. Riders will be requested to fill out a simple application prior to their first ride.

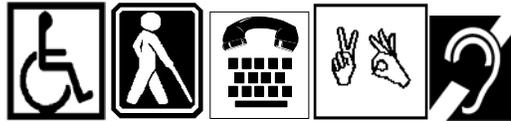
Marin Villages and Sausalito Village have dozens of volunteer drivers available to members. These drivers are also able to assist riders with a variety of tasks. To find out more, visit www.marinvillages.org or sausalitovillage.org. If you are part of a community or faith based organization interested in starting your own volunteer driver program, contact Erin McAuliff, Senior Transportation Planner at Marin Transit, at 415-226-0871.

Allan Bortel is the Senior Senator from Marin County in the California Senior Legislature.

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 This Issue:
 Emergency Preparedness**



Request for an alternative format of this publication may be requested by calling 473-4381 (voice)/473-3232 (TTY) or by e-mail at disabilityaccess@marincounty.org.

Committee Meetings are held at the Division of Aging and Adult Services facilities at 10 North San Pedro Road, San Rafael. For details call 473-7118.

January 4	Topic: Dimensions of Dementia: Part 1	Speaker: Carol Zeller, R.N.	Place: Whistletop, 930 Tamalpais Blvd, San Rafael
February 1	Topic: Dimensions of Dementia: Part 2	Speaker: Dr. Ram-mohan Rao	Place: Whistletop, 930 Tamalpais Blvd, San Rafael
March 1	Topic: Civic Engagement, Anyone?	Speakers: Encore.org staff	Place: Margaret Todd, 560 Hill Rd, Novato
April 5	Topic: Public Hearing, 2018/2019 Area Plan Update	Speakers: Commission on Aging and Adult Services Staff	Place: San Rafael Community Center, 618 B St, San Rafael

The public is invited to participate in all meetings held by the Commission and its Committees. General Commission meetings are held on the first Thursday of the month. Presentations at the Commission meetings typically start at 10:00 a.m., followed by the business meeting at 11:15 a.m. Meeting dates and presentations are as follows:

Winter 2018 Calendar of Meetings

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.

Call the Information and Assistance line at **457-INFO** (457-4636)

Find the service that's right for you!