

## Summer 2019

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**Editor**  
Amy Dietz

**Editorial Board**  
Allan Bortel  
Kat Braeman  
Girija Brilliant  
Jim Monson

**Published By**  
Marin County Area Agency on Aging  
Lee Pullen, Director

## Aging in Place with Grace

By Jody Timms

Aging in place is *the wish* of the majority of older adults. It generally refers to staying in our house or apartment through our later years but it can also mean moving to a new location but staying in the community or home town where we have long lived and feel deeply rooted. To be able to age in place *with grace* means being able to do so with some degree of equanimity and ease, and that requires planning ahead!

Though over 80 percent of us want to age in place, only about 30 percent of us have done any significant planning to ensure that outcome. Just using our imagination to walk ourselves through essentially the end of our lives can be a formidable challenge. Many things can get in our way such as fear or apprehension about aging (“getting old couldn’t possibly be a good thing”), superstition (“if I talk about it, it will happen”), denial of aging (“I’m not old, I’ll forever be 29”), and general procrastination (“I’ll do it when I actually need to...”).

To begin making an “aging plan,” here are a series of questions to ask yourself, and discuss with your loved ones:

**Housing:** Is my current home safe and accessible, can it accommodate me as I age? If or when I need to move, would I move closer to a support system or be able to move in with family/friends?

**Finances:** What will be my sources of income as I age and if things get tight financially, where can I turn--to family, friends, sell assets, etc.? Who can help me

stay on top of my bills, and even oversee my finances if my memory or judgment begins to slip?

**Health Care:** Who currently knows the most about my health conditions, besides my physician? Who has my power of attorney for healthcare? If tomorrow I needed to go to the hospital, who could support and help me while in the health care system?

**Personal Care:** If I were temporarily bed bound due to illness, where would I find help? If over time, I need a little assistance with shopping, cooking, staying on top of my calendar and appointments, pet care or tracking medications, to whom could I turn?

**Transportation:** How will I know when it is time to curtail or even stop driving? How will I get around when I can no longer safely drive?

Though the answers to all these questions are personal and unique to each of us, there are also social services and community infrastructure to support us as we age. It’s a great idea to begin putting our aging plan together while we are still healthy and of a clear mind to do so. And if you need to learn about resources, you can call information and assistance at 415-457-INFO (4636). Because heaven forbid, in the words of Yogi Berra, “If you don’t know where you are going, you’ll end up someplace else.”

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*Jody Timms is a Commissioner for the City of Fairfax.*

# Message From the Chair

By *Salamah Locks*

Hello Great Age Readers! Last month we celebrated Older Americans Month with our annual health forum with the theme of Connect, Create and Contribute! Many thanks to those who attended the forum; attendees heard cutting-edge topics on oral and aural health of older adults and had lunch with new and old friends. Please save the first Thursday of May 2020 for another exciting and thought-provoking event produced by your Commission on Aging. As always, we encourage and welcome your comments and topic suggestions for this annual event.

Check our schedule on the back cover for our general meeting monthly topics. On Thursday, July 4, we hope you and your family members are celebrating at our County Fair. For the fireworks finale, look for me in the best seat ever! I'll be up high on the giant Ferris wheel watching from a bird's eye view as the display begins—seek me out if you want to know the secret.

We would very much like for each of our readers to share their passion, expertise and creative skills with us. We have standing committees that do exceptional work on behalf of our county's older adults.

Are you interested in learning how various laws and policies get implemented? Maybe you would enjoy providing testimony at the State Capital on an issue that is of great importance to you? Come join our California Senior Legislators and members of our Legislative Committee and find out what our State Senator and Assemblyman have been doing for you lately! If your main interest is about the social determinates of health, mental health issues and our county health planning, then visit our Health and Nutrition Committee meetings. The Housing and Transportation Committee monitors all housing and transportation issues and support solutions such as the two recent JADU (junior accessory dwelling unit) expos. Our Planning Committee is working to ascertain the concerns of older adults in our community. Visit [www.marinhhs.org/boards/commission-aging](http://www.marinhhs.org/boards/commission-aging) or call 415-473-7118 for the dates and times when the committees meet.

All the best,  
Salamah



# Meet Mandy Reyes

By *Jenay Cottrell*

In February, Mandy Reyes joined the Area Agency on Aging (AAA) as a Senior Program Coordinator. Mandy has worked in Aging and Adult Services as an Administrative Assistant I supporting Aging Services since August 2016. Previously, she worked as an extra hire accounting assistant for six months in our office.

Before joining the County, Mandy worked for Autodesk for seven years, first as a pricing analyst then as a metrics and reporting analyst. Earlier, she worked for Greenpoint Mortgage for five years, advancing from an IT project coordinator and administrative assistant to a product and pricing analyst/project lead.

Mandy holds a bachelor's degree in dietetics and food administration with a minor in human resources from Chico State University. She also holds a certificate in business analysis essentials and planning from UC Berkeley Extension.

Mandy lives in Terra Linda with her husband Ryan, two daughters, Makena (12) and Shea (10). They share their house with their dog Abby, and cats Felix and Scout. She loves hiking, gardening and spending time with her family.

"I am beyond thrilled to have been offered this position and am loving my job every day. I couldn't be happier to continue my work with older adults with such a great team of people who I consider to be wonderful mentors," said Mandy.

Please join me in welcoming Mandy Reyes.

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*Jenay Cottrell is the Program Manager for the Area Agency on Aging.*

# The Toll of Dementia Caregiving in Marin County

By *Shelley Dombrowski*

According to the 2019 Alzheimer's Association Facts and Figures, in the United States, 83 percent of the caregiving provided to older adults comes from family members, friends or other unpaid caregivers. Half of that number (48 percent) are dementia caregivers providing help to older adults who have Alzheimer's or a related dementia. In Marin County, there are approximately 6,000 individuals 65 and older living with Alzheimer's. For every person living with Alzheimer's, there are three to five people caring for them – friends and family members, both local and long-distance, which equals to nearly 10 percent of the 250,000 residents living in Marin County.

Caring for an individual with Alzheimer's disease or a related dementia can be stressful and overwhelming. It also poses special challenges throughout the progression of the disease. Alzheimer's disease typically progresses slowly in three general stages – early, middle and late. Since Alzheimer's affects people in different ways, the timing and severity of dementia symptoms varies in each person throughout the disease process.

As the disease progresses, it is harder for the person with Alzheimer's to fulfill the roles they have typically played in the family. The burden then falls on the shoulders of family caregivers. People in the middle or later stages of Alzheimer's experience losses in judgment, orientation and the ability to communicate effectively. The personality and

behavior are affected, which are often among the most challenging for family caregivers. As symptoms worsen, the care required of family members can result in increased emotional stress and depression, new or exacerbated health problems, and depleted income and finances due in part to disruptions in employment and paying for health care or other services for themselves and those they are caring for.

To reduce caregiver burden, in Marin County, there is a Family Caregiver Support Program (FCSP) collaborative grant that can assist with providing support and respite services. Through Older Americans Act funding distributed by Marin's Area Agency on Aging, the Alzheimer's Association administers a collaborative caregiver grant offering information and assistance to family caregivers through support, education and respite care services provided by seven Marin County agencies. Now in its twelfth year, the collaborative grant has successfully demonstrated the value in having a strong network of community partners working together to coordinate community services and integrate a cohesive delivery system to benefit both the caregiver and care recipient.

For more information, call the Alzheimer's Association at 415-472-4340.

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*Shelley Dombrowski is Regional Director of the North Bay Alzheimer's Association.*



# Wavy Gravy: Look for the Bubbles

By Amy Dietz

This year marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Woodstock, a music festival that brought over 400,000 people together in music and mud over the course of four days in what the *New York Times* referred to as the definitive nexus of the counter-culture generation. Wavy Gravy was there then, leading a “Please Force” and providing life support—directing people to the bathroom or freak-out tent and providing a free breakfast to almost 500,000 people. Fifty years later, he will be returning to do the same.

Now 82 years old, Wavy is known as a hippy icon, flower geezer, poet and activist. But his true moniker is that of the intuitive clown, whose job is to take the travails of life and turn them into fun. Above his bed is painted the word, “Smile.” While he wakes up with aches and pains, it helps to remember to turn it into laughter. “I dive deep and look for the bubbles. And the bubbles will take me up.”

He’s lived an incredible life, having an impact on both the national and international stage. He’s run for president four times under the name, “Nobody.” Nobody ran his campaign with peace, love and a sense of humor, bringing levity to the national election scene. He

inspired Ben Cohen (of Ben & Jerry’s ice cream) to create a Wavy Gravy flavor, with lots of nuts.

Internationally, Wavy is an integral part and founding member of the Seva Foundation, which aims to eradicate blindness in the world. “It was a mixed bag, but I was the only clown.” He takes part in organizing concerts of renowned musicians and raising money with the result of helping “millions people not bump into (stuff).” (Those aren’t his exact words, but this is not that kind of publication.) Among the founders of Seva, which has provided eye-care services to 40 million people and restored the eye sight of five million, is his friend Girija Brilliant, the MCCOA commissioner of Mill Valley.

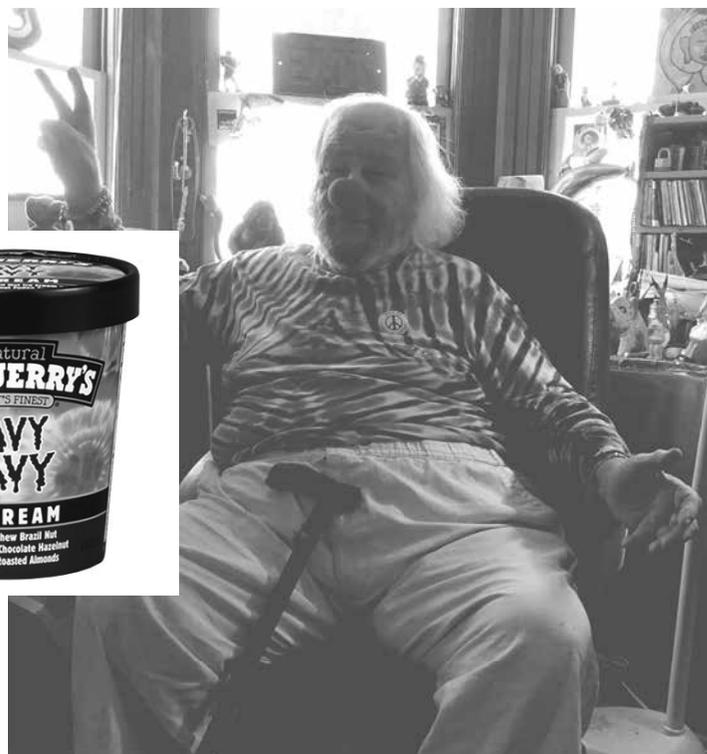
He takes the most pride in helping to create Camp Winnarainbow, where he treats all kids like they are his own grandchildren and the aim is just to have fun. “You gotta teach them to duck the hard stuff with a sense of humor, compassion and tomorrow.” Children are taught circus and theatrical arts while also learning the value of uniqueness, responsibility and self expression. “It’s the kids that have nostalgia for the future.”

His takeaway is that, “humor is necessary for survival. It is the valve on the pressure cooker of life.” You can learn more about the man and his legacy from the 2009 documentary, *Saint Misbehavin’: the Wavy Gravy movie*.

*Amy Dietz is a Senior Program Coordinator for the Area Agency on Aging.*



Chronicle / Dave Randolph, 1973



# Loneliness and Isolation

*By Chrisula Asimos*

You may have people around you, be in a long-term relationship, or at a party with friends and still feel a sense of alienation or being cut-off. You may be alone and experience solace, peace and creativity. Being alone and being lonely are not the same—one can be toxic while the other can be rejuvenating.

The effects of loneliness can be detrimental, both psychologically and physically. One study found that isolated women were at greater risk of dying of cancer while isolated men had a higher risk of dying prematurely. On the other hand, neuropeptides that secrete into the blood stream during meaningful relationships, like oxytocin and vasopressin, boost the immune system, dampen stress and heal wounds. But we need actual face-to-face interactions and meaningful social bonds to experience all of these positive effects. Facebook and social media can help us to connect to far-away grandchildren and friends, but can't substitute the need for real human interactions and connections. While network technology can do many things, it can not make an ill person, young or old, feel loved, valued and less alone. Younger people are experiencing this sense of loneliness and lack of face-to-face connections at an increasing rate as well.

According to a survey conducted by the Eisner Foundation, over 90 percent of Americans believe both that intergenerational activities can reduce loneliness across all ages and that older adults have skills and talents that can address a child's needs.

The benefits of intergenerational programs and centers are gaining popularity across the United States and here in Marin. Corte Madera recently opened an Intergenerational Center, which offers events and activities for all ages—preschool to 100-plus. Funded by grants and donations, it is a gathering place featuring over 15 monthly programs including art, games, yoga, fitness and technology.

Loneliness is affecting all generations. I highly recommend sharing your skills and experiences with today's youth, which will help all generations.

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*Chrisula Asimos is a Commissioner from District 1.*

# Detect & Connect

*By Ellen Baxter*

Detect & Connect is an educational workshop designed to teach best methods to effectively connect with older people, especially those who appear confused or in need of emotional support. Funded by a Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) innovation grant through the Department of Health and Human Services, the workshop guides people to determine how to recognize levels of need and concern, along with teaching ways to connect them to community resources.

It is a program under the auspices of the Aging Action Initiative (AAI), which promotes a countywide age-friendly environment, especially for those in need, collectively created by a strong network of service providers through education, policy advocacy and service coordination. Funded by the County of Marin and coordinated by Whistlestop, more than 65 community agencies, services providers and grassroots organizations participate in the Initiative.

The Detect & Connect workshop offers something for everyone. Maybe you are a trained social worker and work with older adults. Maybe you are a first responder. Perhaps you are part of a faith community or a volunteer group with a number of older members. You might be a bus driver - or just ride the bus - or a librarian, teacher, attorney - or a family member. Whether it's at home, work or in the grocery store, we all have neighbors, friends and family members who are aging. Knowing how to be supportive of people who are confused in public is a valuable tool.

Please join us in the advancement of awareness and action on behalf of older adults in Marin County. Together, we will grow a space where older adults will feel at ease and safe in their community.

A Detect & Connect workshop is free and bilingual trainings are available. All of the AAI trainers bring specialized backgrounds working with older adults. It's easy to schedule and publicize your workshop.

Email [ellen@agingactioninitiative.org](mailto:ellen@agingactioninitiative.org) or call (415) 914-4540.

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*Ellen Baxter is the Community Outreach Coordinator for Detect & Connect, AAI.*

# Rethink Your Drink

By Katherine Kielich

*Adapted from: Champions for Change, Network for a Healthy California Re-think Your Drink Resources.*

As the weather warms, ensuring adequate fluid intake to stay hydrated is even more important. Water is a nutrient and an essential component of the body for maintaining life.

As we age, we are more prone to dehydration because our thirst reflex does not work as well. It is more difficult to catch the signs of thirst in a timely way because our blood vessels are less flexible. That causes our brains to not realize we are thirsty.

Even mild dehydration can make us weak and confused, cause urinary tract infections, low blood pressure and can lead to severe health risks like heat stroke. Dehydration is a primary cause of falling among older adults. Also, people with dementia, including Alzheimer's, may forget they need to drink, which can cause major health issues.

## How you can ensure you are getting enough fluids:

- Drink something with every meal, snack or pill you have.



- When you feel thirsty, do not wait; this is your body's signal that it needs water.
- Eat foods with high moisture content like fruits or vegetables.
- Generally, 6 – 8 glasses of fluids per day are appropriate (unless medical conditions, such as congestive heart failure or kidney failure, rule out this amount). **Monitor urine output. If your urine is yellow or has a strong smell, you likely need to drink more!** If you have any questions, check in with your doctor about your individual needs. There are certain circumstances when overhydration can be a concern and limiting how much water and fluid you drink is necessary.
- Drink fluids throughout the day, rather than drinking large amounts at one time.
- Keep glasses of water and/or a water pitcher available throughout the day wherever you are (in bed, on the patio, in a favorite seating area in the house).
- Remember, if you are on diuretics (“water pills”), you may need to drink MORE fluids and are at higher risk of dehydration.

## What are good drink choices?

Water is your best choice for drinking, whether plain, carbonated, or with added flavors. We in the North Bay have access to excellent water, so bottled water is unnecessary. Coffee and tea will actually count towards your fluid needs, despite the fact that they have caffeine.

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*Katherine Kielich is a Registered Dietician for the Area Agency on Aging.*

# CalFresh

By Roxy Yekta

## What is it?

CalFresh, formerly known as food stamps, provides money for nutritious food to those who qualify. It is California's largest and most impactful nutrition assistance program. Qualifying individuals and families can use CalFresh to purchase fruit, vegetables and other healthy foods from most neighborhood grocery stores and all of Marin's Farmers' Markets.

## How does it work?

CalFresh is easy to use. Each month, CalFresh benefits are issued on an electric benefit transfer (EBT) card -- like an ATM bank card. The card can be swiped at the register at grocery stores, discount chains and neighborhood stores when paying for groceries. At your Farmers Market, bring your EBT card to the Market Information Booth, where money on the EBT card gets exchanged for silver EBT tokens. These can be used to make purchases from the vendors. If you are not mobile enough to shop, you can choose an authorized representative, someone to go shopping for you.

## Are people on SSI/ SSP eligible?

Beginning June 1 2019, hundreds of thousands of seniors and people with disabilities in California who receive SSI/SSP benefits will also be able to apply for CalFresh food benefits. This historic change will increase nutrition and health while reducing hunger and poverty among these populations. There will be no change or reduction in the SSI/SSP benefit amount. If you or someone you know receives SSI/SSP, this could mean up to 15 percent of their monthly income. The dollar amount varies on a case by case basis.

## How do I apply?

There are three ways to apply:

1. Call 877-410-8817
2. Online at [www.getcalfresh.org](http://www.getcalfresh.org)
3. In person at Marin Health and Human Services:
  - 120 N Redwood Dr., San Rafael (Mon.-Thurs. 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.)
  - 3240 Kerner Blvd., San Rafael (Mon.-Fri. 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.)
  - 1 Sixth St., Point Reyes Station (Mon.-Fri. 8 a.m. - 12 p.m.; 1 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.)

*Roxy Yekta is a Program Coordinator for Community Health and Prevention.*

# Marilyn McConnell and MMER

By Kat Braeman

Marin County seniors have benefitted from Marilyn McConnell's brilliant idea of recycling medical equipment. Her volunteer efforts have a huge impact to help those struggling with medical costs. Indeed, in July 2018, Marilyn and Mack Stanley received the prestigious Jefferson Award, given to those who demonstrate outstanding community service, for forming Marin Medical Equipment Recyclers (MMER). An environmentalist and member of the Northern California Recycling Association, Marilyn is a native Californian who moved to Marin in 1965. She has served as a nurse and was the Administrative Nursing Supervisor at Marin General for many years. She has always been a Reduce, Reuse Recycle person. As a nurse who saw much waste in the

healthcare system, upon retiring, Marilyn saw that the natural next step was to do something about the equipment that was ending up in the dump!



Marin Medical Equipment (MMER) is open every Wednesday from 11 a.m.- 2 p.m. They can accept clean items in good condition that can fit into a small storage unit, such as wheel chairs, canes and crutches. Items are distributed free of charge on a first come first serve basis. While in 2005 a total of 343 items were given to those in need, ten years later a total of 11,903 medical items were distributed.

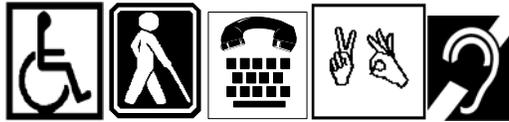
"I go there on a regular basis to pick up equipment for my clients and deliver it to their homes," said Jan Zaslav, a Public Health Nurse for Marin County's Aging and Adult Services. "The majority of the equipment is distributed to our low-income clients. We are all very grateful to obtain this equipment without any hassle and for such a great service to our community." For more information, go to [www.marinmer.org](http://www.marinmer.org) or call 415-388-8198.

*Kat Braeman worked as an administrative judge in Washington D.C. and now lives at Villa Marin.*

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**Featured in  
 This Issue: Aging in  
 Place with Grace**



Request for an alternative format of this publication may be requested by calling 473-4381 (voice)/711 (TTY) or by e-mail at [disabilityaccess@marincounty.org](mailto:disabilityaccess@marincounty.org).

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

September 5	August	July 11	June 6
<b>Topic:</b> Health Insurance Counseling and Advocacy Program (HICAP) <b>Speaker:</b> TBD <b>Place:</b> TBD	<b>Speakers:</b> Dr. Lisa Santora, Deputy Public Health Officer and Jason Weber, Fire Chief <b>Place:</b> Tiburon Town Hall, 1505 Tiburon Blvd., Belvedere	<b>Topic:</b> Disaster Preparedness for Older Adults <b>Speakers:</b> Sue Kwentus and Fred Silverman, MCOA Health and Nutrition Committee <b>Place:</b> Margaret Todd Senior Center, 1560 Hill Rd., Novato	<b>Topic:</b> Mosaic of Family Caregiving <b>Speakers:</b> Sue Kwentus and Fred Silverman, MCOA Health and Nutrition Committee <b>Place:</b> Margaret Todd Senior Center, 1560 Hill Rd., Novato

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

**Summer 2019 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!**