

## Winter 2014

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## Transportation for Older Adults in Marin

*By Paul Branson*

Marin seniors can take advantage of subsidized taxi rides and rides from volunteer drivers, as well as discounted service on Marin Transit and Golden Gate buses. These programs and many more, are available through Marin Transit's Marin Access Program. Following are descriptions of the various transportation options for seniors in Marin.

**Marin Catch-A-Ride** This taxi subsidy program allows Marin seniors (age 80 and older, or age 60-80 who are no longer driving) and younger persons with disabilities to receive a discount on taxi rides of between \$14 and \$18 (depending on income level). Since its launch in late September of 2012, Marin Catch-A-Ride has grown exponentially with over 800 individuals signed up to ride the service. The program subsidizes over 800 rides a month.

**Two Volunteer Driver Programs** are available to help meet the needs of older adult, low-income and disabled residents (one is based in West Marin and one in Central Marin). These programs provide mileage reimbursement for seniors 65 and older and persons with disabilities, to help them to find their own volunteer driver. Combined, the two programs provide a thousand trips a month throughout Marin.

**Paratransit Service** No mention of mobility options for older adult and disabled residents is complete without mention of paratransit services. In Marin County, Marin

Access Paratransit (operated by Whistlestop) provides door-to-door service for eligible riders who are unable to ride the public bus due to a disability. This ride share service transports an average of 500 passengers a day and is a lifeline to many who have no other option. For low-income paratransit riders, Marin Access also has a Fare Assistance Program to pay the paratransit fare for riders who are recipients of Social Security's Supplemental Security Income (SSI) Program.

**Travel Training Program** Group presentations to older adults on all the different transportation options available to them in Marin, as well as "travel tours" in which small groups (3-5 people), with a guide, experience riding the public bus first-hand.

You can find out about all your options by making one phone call to the Marin Access Travel Navigators at 415-454-0902. They provide personalized eligibility and information on the Marin Access programs and other transportation available in Marin. Another resource is the Marin Access interactive website, [www.marinaccess.org](http://www.marinaccess.org). Marin Transit provides many of the Marin Access programs with funds from Measure B, Marin's Vehicle Registration Fee Initiative.

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*Paul S. Branson is the Community Mobility Manager at Marin County Transit District*



## Message from the Commission Chair

*By Jim Monson*

The New Year has ushered in the year of the horse - an auspicious year, I hope, for aging seniors in Marin County. The horse has a very meaningful position in many cultures, from Mongolian tribes to Hollywood westerns. Horses have been faithful companions, sources of power, and providers of transportation over the centuries. I think that these are key services for seniors that must be met by the “horses” in our community – Marin’s non-profits, Division of Aging and Adult Services, Commission on Aging, and many more.

Our new Commissioners – see their interviews in this issue – are already contributing to educating and advocating for Marin County seniors. Their range of skills and accomplishments is diverse and impressive. Many have backgrounds in gerontology, some with certification at the doctoral level. Others have awards for work at a broader community and even international level. I hope that you will get the chance to meet them and let them know your thoughts about what works (or doesn’t) for aging in Marin County.

The Commission on Aging has scheduled some timely and interesting meetings for winter and spring. Topics covered will include prevention of fraud, scams, and identity theft, emergency preparedness, and impressions of senior health in Marin County by Dr. Matt Willis, our new Public Health Officer. In April, the Commission will hold a public hearing on the 2014-15 update to the Area Agency on Aging’s four year plan. I’m looking forward to May’s Healthy Aging Symposium, where I always learn a lot. Please check this issue’s calendar of meetings for details, and I hope to see you at our meetings.

## Introducing Lee Pullen

*By Amy Dietz*



Lee Pullen recently rejoined Marin County as Senior Manager for Aging and Adult Services and Director of the Area Agency on Aging (AAA). Lee has been in the field of Aging for over 15 years and holds a master of science in clinical psychology. He began his career at the Institute on Aging as a mental health counselor. This was followed by 10 years in Marin County Adult Services, starting as a social worker and then holding a number of managerial positions. In 2009, he left to become Director of Aging and Adult Services in Santa Clara County, where he led community-wide planning and policy development, sponsored state legislation aimed at elder abuse protections, and collaborated with non-profits, municipalities, and healthcare organizations to begin developing a connected system of long-term services and supports.

Lee is excited to return to Marin and continue his work in the field of Aging. “I was drawn back to Marin for several reasons, among them we have a strong network of public and community based partnerships, a supportive Board and dedicated staff, and residents who are willing to get involved. The commitment and expertise of volunteers and those who serve on the Commission on Aging is extraordinary. This creates a tremendous opportunity for us to build upon the existing strengths and keep moving in the direction of an aging-friendly, livable community for all. I'm honored to be a part of it and serve Marin in this leadership role.”

*Amy Dietz is a Projects Coordinator with the Marin County Area Agency on Aging.*



*Commission on Aging Chair, Jim Monson with new AAA Director, Lee Pullen.  
Photo: Chris Mai*

## Footnotes

*By Dr. Stephen Wagstaff*

Thanks to our feet, most of us stay well-grounded throughout long and prosperous lives. However, like most things, over time, maintenance issues arise and require our attention. Fortunately, most foot ailments develop slowly, and can be resolved with proper understanding and simple measures. Seek care sooner than later and always strive to learn the causes of foot problem as well as the solution. Keeping track of the basics will serve you well, as prevention certainly outweighs cure down by our toes.

Since each human foot functions very similarly, they usually falter in predictable ways. For example, if we neglect to support our mid-foot, loss of stability is a common result later in life. Therefore, maintaining our foot arch plays a large role in (1) keeping our balance against our forefoot when standing, and (2) walking heel-to-toe with fluid biomechanics. Wearing shoes that are firm in the middle, and keeping up your normal arch with a functional insole will pay dividends in the future. In addition, keeping the calf muscle stretched in a normal range-of-motion, is key to proper foot and leg function. Stretch with your knees straight and feet supported. These skeletal measures to preserve foot function will contribute to staying active, stable and moving pain free.

Another basic of foot care is fairly easy, but often neglected. Though sometimes hard to reach, keeping our feet clean will ensure all the dirt and germs they encounter on the ground, floor, and in our shoes are kept in check. Since the outer, or epidermal, layer of skin on our feet is 20 times thicker, weekly scrubbing helps maintain supple, durable and protective skin. Take a moment during or after bathing to reach or sit down and make sure to wash between your toes. Dry feet and toes well after bathing. If you are like most, and have developed a fungal infection of foot skin or toenails, seek proper medical attention to prevent more serious issues. Using a basic anti-fungal foot powder or spray often goes far in helping to address such maladies.

The benefits of proper foot care serve our entire body, well-being, and keep us involved in all the daily activities we need and cherish to maintain our independence. Seek appropriate podiatric medical care if you need more information or specific attention.

*Dr. Stephen Wagstaff is a Podiatrist, Foot and Ankle surgeon and Sports medicine physician with offices in Greenbrae and Healdsburg. Office contact: 415-925-1150 / admin@fas-med.com.*

## Marin's Libraries Are For You

*By Allan Bortel*

Where else can you come in from the winter cold or summer heat, be genuinely welcomed, where nobody is trying to sell you anything? In fact, your tax dollars finance a free, tangible service like none other—a building for the whole community which houses books, periodicals, CDs, computers and trained, helpful staff ready to serve you to use the library's resources to the maximum. They even teach you how to use the new electronic reading devices like Kindles and similar e-readers. Some also have free one-on-one computer instruction—and the fastest Internet speed you will find available to you away from home.

In addition, most of Marin's city and county libraries are like community and senior centers with free programs featuring authors and lectures, movies, book and language clubs and docent presentations about SF's incredibly rich museum treasures. The Belvedere-Tiburon Library has a New Yorker Magazine discussion group—with a waiting list. A new feature in recent years are one-day passes to most Bay Area museums, accessible with your library card online. A service for seniors or others unable to get to a Marin library is home delivery by volunteers.

If you have low vision, Marin's libraries can help. Some have special magnifying machines. Most will have a librarian or computer volunteer/teacher who can help you tweak a monitor to enlarge text and images.

MARINet is a well established database supported by all public libraries (and Dominican University) in Marin, which designates titles and where they are found (including whether there is an audio version). If it is on a shelf in some far-off location you will have it at your local county branch or city library in a day or so—no running around to pick it up. [www.Marinet.lib.ca.us](http://www.Marinet.lib.ca.us) is open 24/7, as is your local library's website.

Finally, for those less adept with a computer, Marin's libraries have real people who take requests and inquiries on that old thing called the telephone!

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*Allan Bortel, Tiburon Commissioner and Senior Senator, CA Senior Legislature*

# Ombudsman Program

*By Michele McCabe*

The Long Term Care Ombudsman (LTCO) Program was established nationally by the 1965 Older American's Act and signed into law by President Lyndon Johnson. The primary task for the Marin LTCO is to advocate for the rights of the 2,996 residents of long-term care facilities. These facilities include both skilled nursing and residential care facilities for elders. Ombudsmen also investigate abuse reports in other facilities, including board and care for the developmentally disabled and adult day care.

The Marin County Ombudsman is staffed by five part-time staff and eight volunteers under the supervision of the Area Agency on Aging. All 14 have had over 40 hours of initial training and are certified ombudsman by the State of California. To maintain that certification all must have twelve hours a year in continuing education and adhere to the Ombudsman Code of Ethics, which includes confidentiality, self-determination and professional advocacy unrestricted by personal belief. Together they maintain a presence in Marin's 63 long-term care facilities.

Although advocacy is the primary focus, ombudsmen first seek to empower facility residents and support them in addressing their own complaints with facility staff and management. In order to accomplish that, Ombudsmen must be assigned to facilities and maintain a presence in each facility. A regular presence means that the Ombudsman is available for residents. This includes investigating complaints at the facility, answering phone calls from residents, speaking at resident council meetings, when invited and making frequent non-complaint visits just to be on site and available. The Ombudsman should never be a stranger to the facility residents, as trust is a key element in the resident—Ombudsman relationship. Ombudsmen also need a working knowledge of facility staff and management and a cordial professional working relationship with them.

Last fiscal year, Marin Ombudsman accomplished the following:

- Investigated more than 734 complaints made by, or on behalf of, residents.
- Provided twelve training sessions for facility staff
- Consulted with facility staff on 932 occasions
- Made 603 non-complaint visits
- Provided 1,392 consultations to individuals on

topics including placement, resident rights and community resources

- Witnessed 27 Advanced Health Care Directives in skilled nursing facilities
- Updated *Choices for Living*, Marin's resource manual of long-term care facilities

If you would like more information about the Long term Care Ombudsman Program please call 457- 4636 and press 6.

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*Michele McCabe is a Project Coordinator with the Area Agency on Aging*

# Week of Caring

*By Carol Ann Moore*

Last October saw an annual tradition in Novato, with *Week of Caring*, under the auspices of the United Way, where local companies release their staff for a day to help out with volunteer projects for non-profits. For the past ten years, about 12-15 Chevron employees, most of whom live in Novato, volunteer a day to the Episcopal Senior Resources/Novato Independent Elders program (NIEP).

NIEP works with Marin Valley Mobile Home Park in Novato, where volunteers help residents with yard work. They work hard, pulling weeds, trimming trees, bushes and hedges, and raking leaves. The volunteers often bring vegetables and fruit from their gardens to share with seniors. The seniors have come to know and look forward to this group coming every year.



*Clay Freeberg (left), Chevron employee, and Novato resident, helping Marin Valley resident Fred Dargi.*

*Photo by Marianne Gontar York  
(www.mariannegontarYork.com)*

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*Carol Ann Moore is the Director of Marin Senior Resources/Novato Independent Elders Program*

# Be Prepared

By Pat Lewis

We don't have hurricanes here in Marin, but we can have earthquakes, power outages, floods, fires, hazardous material spills, pandemics and other disasters. The same rule applies to all of them—BE PREPARED. Plan to be self sufficient for 5 days. It is not difficult to have on hand extra items that would prevent the need to get to a store. Here is a list of some things that would help you remain safely in your own home.

- A buddy (someone close by for mutual support)
- Several flashlights around your home
- Battery operated radio for news about the disaster
- Batteries for flashlights, radio, hearing aid, etc.
- Medicines (5 day supply of prescription and over the counter meds)
- Bottled water (3 gallons per person in small, easy open bottles—lasts 3 years)
- Garbage bags (for garbage and for lining toilet if there is no water)
- Non perishable, ready to eat food, manual can opener
- Toilet paper, paper towels, paper plates, personal hygiene supplies
- Food and extra water for pets
- Extra cane, walker, etc., to use if equipment is damaged
- Money in small bills (because ATMs and credit card equipment may not be working)
- Extra blankets
- Smoke alarm (change the battery once a year)
- Fire extinguisher
- Be sure your roof and furnace are ready for winter

No matter what the problem is, you need to be informed. Listen to the radio or TV news. Plan to shelter in place (stay at home) unless it is unsafe. You will be directed to a shelter if there is danger (chemical, structural, heat, cold). If you must go to a shelter take your medications, flashlight, jacket, mobility aids, phone charger and personal care items.

Phone lines become crowded, so keep phone conversations to a minimum. It is best to have one out of area contact person who can keep your other friends and family informed. In a large disaster Red Cross will operate an online registry, *Safe and Well*, that will be a resource for informing people where you are.

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*Pat Lewis is a former Commissioner from Novato*

# Research on Falls

By Amy Dietz

The older adult population in the US is growing and falls are a primary health concern; one in three older adults experience a fall each year. Among people 65+, falls are the leading cause of nonfatal injuries and hospital admissions for trauma. After falling, many older adults become fearful of activity and losing their independence. Even if they were not injured after falling, the fear of falling again can lead to depression, poor health, and low quality of life. The Novato Fire Protection District partnered with Dominican University to examine leading causes of falls in Novato and develop best practices. A report of the findings, *Engaging with First Responders to Prevent Falls in Older Adults*, examined the 412 falls that occurred in 2012 in the city of Novato.

An analysis of emergency calls revealed that nearly three quarters of falls occurred indoors, often at home. Over half of the falls were due to mechanical issues such as tripping over an object. Adaptive equipment was more likely to be a cause for falling in those over the age of 80. Another reason for falls was polypharmacy; or taking multiple medications, a health concern among older adults. On average, those who experienced a fall were taking 5 medications. First responders were also interviewed. They stressed the importance of giving an accurate health history when they arrive after a fall.

The strategies recommended for preventing falls were:

1. Accepting the possibility of a future fall and preparing for it. It is important to learn how to use adaptive equipment before relying completely on it.
2. Reading educational materials on fall prevention.
3. Having a professional conduct a home fall safety assessment. They may be able to identify trip hazards that you don't see.
4. Talking to your doctor or a medical professional about your medicines, and possible side-effects.

The County's Public Health Office and community partners are developing Marin's first coordinated, countywide strategic plan to prevent prescription drug misuse and abuse. Medication management among older adults will be among the top priorities. To request a copy of the fall research report, contact Amy Dietz at [adietz@marincounty.org](mailto:adietz@marincounty.org)

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*Amy Dietz is a Project Coordinator at the Marin County Area Agency on Aging*

# Introducing New Commissioners

**Francie Bedinger** represents District 2. She became a Commissioner in large part because of her strong interest and background in gerontology and a desire to be more informed and knowledgeable about the resources and services available to older adults in Marin. Recognizing her long held passion for working with older adults, she made a career change a number of years ago from owning her own film casting company to becoming a client care manager for Home Care Assistance in Marin. Francie has a strong interest in intergenerational issues. She is also committed to ensuring that the current and future services for older adults in Marin are of the highest quality. Francie is currently serving on the Commission's Health and Nutrition Committee.

**Girija Brilliant** After seeing an announcement in the Mill Valley Patch, Girija applied for and was selected by the city of Mill Valley. Commissioner Brilliant has been actively involved in local planning efforts for Mill Valley including serving on the Mill Valley Planning



*Girija Brilliant with Commissioner Salamah Locks of San Rafael*

Commission and on the General Plan Action Committee, which is responsible for developing a 20 year plan for the City. She has an extensive background in public health and holds a doctorate in social epidemiology. She and her husband are the founders of SEVA Foundation, a non-profit organization dedicated to the prevention of blindness, particularly in India and Nepal. Girija looks forward to working on behalf of older adults in Marin, with a particular interest in utilizing data and research to design and improve services in the county.

**Mitzi Kemp** At the suggestion of one of her Red Hat Society friends, Mitzi Kemp replied to an ad in the Marin Independent Journal soliciting applications for a position on the Commission. She has lived in the same house in Marinwood for 56 years and knows her community well. In addition to raising a family and working as a legal secretary for a criminal law firm, Mitzi has been very active in her temple. She organized The Hannah Sennish B'nai B'rith Youth Organization for teens and is justifiably proud of her students, some of whom have gone on to very successful careers in gov-

ernment and business. In 1977, the State of Israel honored Mitzi with its Israel Solidarity Award and the Scroll of Honor for leadership



*(L to R): Sharon Turner, Patricia Smith, Mitzi Kemp, Jody Timms, Francie Bedinger*

and dedication in developing Israel's economy. Mitzi keeps busy at Dominican University, taking classes in the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute and participating in the Intergenerational Committee. She looks forward to contributing to the work of the Commission on Aging. Among her many talents, she has a great sense of humor.

**Tricia (Patricia) Smith** Supervisor Kate Sears (District 3) appointed Tricia to the Commission. She is actively involved on the Steering Committee of Sausalito Village and is currently the Chairperson for the Age Friendly Sausalito Task Force. Tricia has always worked with older adults. Her first job was a case manager for older adults in Massachusetts where she also earned a Gerontology Certificate. In 1985 she moved to California and became the first reverse annuity mortgage counselor. Her passion for housing options particularly shared housing has continued to this day. Tricia hopes to continue her interest and advocacy with regard to shared housing and other efforts to make Marin an age friendly County.

**Jody Timms** was inspired by her son on the Marin County Youth Commission and by a neighbor on the Fairfax Town Council to apply to the Commission on Aging. She loves Fairfax and looks forward to serving its seniors. Trained to practice medicine as a Physician's Assistant in women's health care, she worked as a clinician and health care administrator for 20 years. She then returned to school to earn a Ph.D. in interdisciplinary social sciences. After teaching in the Cultural Anthropology and Organization Development departments at the California Institute of Integral Studies for a decade, she began to work for Marin County, first in the Community Development Agency and then in Health & Human Services as the Chief of Women's Health Services. Jody has also worked for West Marin Senior Services doing care management for seniors in their homes in Bolinas, Stinson and Muir

*(Continued on page 7)*

Beaches. She is now a “social worker” at The Redwoods in Mill Valley, loving the community there and her experience with the wisdom of the residents. She has trained as a Senior Peer Counselor and hospice volunteer. Jody feels that chairing the Planning Committee is a good way for her to learn the scope of the Commission’s work. She’s most interested in the tools and means to hear directly from our seniors in our individual communities—what is serving them well (so we can strengthen it) and what they need.

**Sharon Turner** was appointed to the Commission representing District 3, after former Commissioner Lois Riddick encouraged her to apply. She is a long time resident of Marin County. Born in Marin City, she moved with her family to Fairfax when she was in 3rd grade. After graduating from UC Berkeley in Sociology, she began working in Marin City and continues to work there today. Among her many accomplishments, she wrote the grant that funded construction of the Marin City Senior Center and started an innovative intergenerational program for middle school children and persons over 50. Sharon looks forward to encouraging intergenerational programs and services to help build a bridge between the younger and older generations.

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*New Commissioners were interviewed by Jim Monson, Chair, representing West Marin, and Teri Dowling, Commissioner representing Ross, photographs by Chris Mai*

## Help Bridge the Gap

**Project Independence** is seeking committed volunteers to help isolated adults transition safely and remain independent at home, following a hospital stay. Project Independence volunteers:

- Help clients understand and follow through with hospital discharge plans
- Provide assistance and coaching on follow-up with doctors, physical therapy, and other appointments
- May provide transportation to medical and other essential appointments
- Provide social support and encouragement

Volunteers will receive 20 hours of training, attend group supervision meetings with other volunteers and program supervisor every other week. A minimum 6 month commitment is required, one year or more is preferred. For more info contact Tara Clark at [tclark@marincounty.org](mailto:tclark@marincounty.org) or 415-473-3515

## CSL Update

*By Ellie Bloch*

As a member of the California Senior Legislature you are expected to write a piece of legislation or coauthor a piece of legislation every other year. Over six years ago I wrote an Emergency Transportation Bill to evacuate frail seniors and those with disabilities in the event of an earthquake. The bill has to make it to the top ten proposals chosen at the end of the CSL’s annual meeting in October. I was fortunate it always made to the top ten. Two years ago it was picked up by an Assembly member from LA and made it all the way to Senate appropriation and died. In January of this year Assembly Member Ken Cooley picked it up and it was signed into law on August 28, 2013 by Governor Brown. I had to come up with a way to get it into the State Emergency Plan without it costing much money and we were able to do just that. By July 15, 2015 it will become part of the State Emergency plan.

This year five other CSL bills made it to the Governor’s desk. A bill reauthorizing the Federal Older Americans act of 1965, and the voluntary State income tax contribution that funds the CSL, which extends the sunset clause until 2020, were signed into law this year. Two other bills signed into law concern training for care facility administrator and ombudsman staff on the aging lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community and the final bill provides assistance in purchasing telecommunications equipment for persons who are deaf and/or disabled.

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*Ellie Bloch is the Senior Senator for Marin County*

## CSL Election

*By Michele McCabe*

Marin County will elect members to the California Senior Legislature (CSL) this spring. The CSL is a “Model” Legislative Session that was created by former State Senator Henry Mello in 1982. CSL develops proposed legislation on both the state and national level, prioritizes and finds sponsors for its proposals.

If you are interested in running for the CSL, you must be over age 60, registered to vote, live in Marin County and obtain 25 signatures of registered voters in Marin to qualify as a candidate. Candidate application forms and information are available at [www.marinhhs.org/aging-adult-services](http://www.marinhhs.org/aging-adult-services), or in person at 10 North San Pedro Road, San Rafael. If you have questions call Michele McCabe, Program Coordinator at 473-2702.

**Marin County  
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on Aging**

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Transportation for Older  
Adults in Marin**



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](mailto: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.

<b>January 9</b>	<b>Topic:</b> Disaster Preparedness	<b>Speaker:</b> Frank Cox, Get Ready Marin	<b>Place:</b> Aldersly 326 Mission Avenue San Rafael
<b>February 13</b>	<b>Topic:</b> The Future of Whistlestop	<b>Speaker:</b> Joe O'Hehir, CEO Whistles-top	<b>Place:</b> The Tamalpais 501 Via Castas Greenbrae
<b>March 13</b>	<b>Topic:</b> Health of Marin County	<b>Speaker:</b> Dr. Matt Willis, Marin County Public Health Officer	<b>Place:</b> Margaret Todd Senior Center 1560 Hill Road Novato
<b>April 10</b>	<b>Topic:</b> Area Plan on Aging Update	<b>Speaker:</b> Lee Pullen, Director, Area Agency on Aging	<b>Place:</b> San Rafael Community Center 618 B Street 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 second Thursday of the month. Presentations at 11:15 a.m. Meeting dates and presentations are as follows:

**Winter 2014 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 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](http://www.marin.networkofcare.org/aging).

**Find the service  
that's right for  
you!**