

Spring 2016

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Marin County Area

Agency on Aging

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Area Plan 2016-2020

By *Lee Pullen*

Safety, Security, Quality of Life—these are things important to Marin's older adults; the Area Agency on Aging (AAA), part of the County of Marin's Health and Human Services Department, is set to work with the residents of Marin in addressing these important issues. As an agency serving the public, the AAA takes a collaborative and community based approach in identifying priorities and providing services.

The priorities and services are shaped, in part, by an area needs assessment which the AAA conducts every four years. In the Fall 2015 edition of the *Great Age*, a survey was included for adults aged 60 and older to indicate their economic and health status, household and family makeup, and other potential issues of concern. Over 3,000 surveys were received.

The survey revealed that the top issues of concern overall for Marin's older adults were: Falls; Losing Memory/ Cognition; Financial Security; Crime/ Financial Abuse; End of Life Planning; and Feeling Isolated/ Depressed. Results from the survey also looked at the differences in those whose incomes were above—versus below—the amount needed to be self-sufficient and make ends meet. Those who fell below this level had a poorer health status, were more likely to be at nutrition risk, and had less access to resources, including caregiver support.

In January of this year, two convenings were held where members of the public reviewed and discussed the results. The feedback collected was used to determine the following four goals for the AAA's 2016-2020 Area Plan, which will be used to shape specific objectives aimed at addressing the identified issues of importance and funding priorities:

1. Enhance the safety, security, and quality of life for older adults.
2. Support and promote local efforts to create livable communities for all.
3. Improve visibility and usability of information, services, and resources.
4. Encourage innovative approaches to policy and services through community collaboration and advocacy.

As Marin's 60+ population continues to rise over the next decade from one in four to nearly one in three, the AAA will continue its commitment to address issues of aging and educate the public and community toward advocating and enacting good policies that support an age-friendly environment.

The AAA 2016-2020 Area Plan can be found at: www.livelonglivewellmarin.org or you can request a copy by calling 415-457-INFO (4636).

Lee Pullen is the Director of the Area Agency on Aging

Message from the Commission Chair

By Teri Dowling



Dear Readers,

As noted in the cover article, every four years the Marin Area Agency on Aging (AAA) develops a plan that will outline the goals, objectives, and funding priorities for programs and services for older adults in Marin County.

It was a huge undertaking by the members of the Commission on Aging, the AAA staff, and the Marin community. We are enormously grateful for the commissioners and staff who distributed the survey throughout the county, the over 3,000 older adults who responded to our survey, the countless hours of staff time to design and evaluate the survey results, and the public/services providers who attended two community meetings that helped us to consolidate the data into four overarching goals. Be sure to check it out on our new website: www.livelonglivewellmarin.org.

May is Older Americans month and the 2016 theme is “Blazing a Trail.” Please join us for the Healthy Aging Symposium on Thursday, May 5. Each year, over 300 people come to listen to experts speak about different aspects of aging and enjoy a delicious meal. This year’s theme is, “Trailblazing in a Changing World.” Details can be found on page 4.

I hope you are enjoying the beautiful spring weather and are taking advantage of all the beautiful trails and walking paths in our beautiful Marin County.

Warmest regards,

Teri

Meet Vivien Von Ah: Born to Sing

By Sylvia Landman

Vivien Von Ah, born in Bramston, England, speaks like the British lady she is—her accent and polished manners reminiscent of Downtown Abbey aristocrats. Raised and educated during the Second World War, she and her family endured food shortages, rations, and sirens warning of possible bombings and black outs on the way.

At age 11, singing enriched her soul. She began singing in school choruses leading her to perform with Sir Malcom Sargent, famed conductor of the London Philharmonic Orchestra. After high school, Vivien trained and worked as a Registered Nurse in London specializing in midwifery. In 1963, she spotted a newspaper ad stating, “British nurses needed in America.” Along with three nurse friends, Redlands Hospital near Los Angeles offered them airfare, housing and a salary—irresistible to young nurses. They accepted.

Two years later, she married an American citizen and moved to Grass Valley to raise their three children. Widowed in 1980, as a single mom, she

went back to school to earn her Bachelor’s degree in nursing followed by a Master’s in Health Education. Working as a geriatrics nurse for Marin’s Senior Access and later for Aldersley Retirement Center in San Rafael she could not stop singing. Her lovely, delicate soprano voice led her to become cofounder of The Novato Music Association and to resume singing and coproducing shows. Still following her passion, she also became choir director for St. Anthony’s Church in Novato, where she has been for 30 years to the present.

Retired at 75, she reaches out to others as a volunteer at Hospice Thrift Shop, Novato Village, and a reading club. She attends lectures at Dominican University and Marin’s Lecture Series for her mind but adds, “good health also requires physical activity out of doors with others.”



Sylvia Landman is a retired teacher and author living in Novato.

Dietary Guidelines 2015-2020

By *Mary-Louise Zernicke, R.D.*

The goal of the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* is for individuals throughout all stages of the lifespan to have eating patterns that promote overall health and help prevent chronic disease. Evidence shows that eating patterns, as outlined in the *2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines*, are associated with good health. There is LOTS of lobbying by the food industry to NOT include recommendations for which the evidence is at all ambiguous. These guidelines have become very political as food advocates lobby the scientists for stricter standards and the food industry tries to keep the guidelines as bland as possible.

So, what are these recommendations that have generated such controversy? Some things that might surprise you include:

Eggs are no longer “bad guys”, and there are no longer dietary restrictions on cholesterol.

The guidelines, for the first time, endorse coffee.

They suggest that 3-5 cups/day have no harm and may have benefit for the general population.

Over 73% of Americans take in MORE THAN THE MAXIMUM sodium (salt) than is recommended. The case for reducing sodium is strong, as lowering sodium will reduce your risk of hypertension and heart disease. Over 75% of our sodium comes from processed foods, including canned soups and salad dressings. The new guidelines advise us to advocate towards improving the food environment.

Half your grains should be whole grain. Have you tried brown rice? Whole wheat pasta?

There is a recommendation to limit saturated fat because it clogs your arteries (atherosclerosis). Lean meats are recommended, but nuts and legumes (beans) can easily substitute for meat.

There are many ways to consume a healthy eating pattern. Use the Dietary Guidelines (Visit: <http://health.gov/dietaryguidelines>) to help guide your overall food choices--whether you follow a Mediterranean diet, are a vegetarian, or stick very much to the cultural foods you ate when you were younger. Enjoy!

Mary Louise Zernicke is a Registered Dietician for the AAA.

Aging Action Initiative Cooking Class

By *Anita Renzetti*

The Aging Action Initiative (AAI) promotes a county-wide age-friendly environment, especially for those in need, collectively created by a strong network of aging service providers through public education, policy advocacy, and service coordination. The AAI Nutrition Team has been working over the past year to support innovative projects. One such program was a cooking demonstration and class that took place at Homeward Bound in Novato on January 21, 2016.

The Homeward Bound chef took participants on a garden tour highlighting the usage of fresh vegetables in meals. Whistlestop provided transportation to the event from San Rafael. Approximately 30 people attended the 2 hour class. After participating, almost half of the participants responded that the recipes were manageable and that they were likely to eat healthier meals.

Additional nutrition programs and policies will be supported by the Aging Action Initiative in the coming year. Among them, a Mobile Farmers Market Van will be stopping at locations throughout Marin County, including locations easily accessed by older adults. More information will be posted in this newsletter and through flyers in the community.

Anita Renzetti is the Director of Program Innovation at Whistlestop.



Homeward Bound Chef Eric Magnani

Caregiver Regulations

By Traci Dobronravova

Due to increased life expectancy and the aging of the Baby Boomers, older adults have become the fastest growing segment of the population. In fact, the growth rate of people aged 80 and older is four times that of the general population and the need for reliable caregivers is increasing just as quickly. Although nearly 40 million Americans provide unpaid care for their loved ones, many older adults rely on paid caregivers either on a regular basis or in order to provide a much needed break for their family members.

As this need for caregivers continues to grow, and as more and more homecare agencies enter the marketplace, there has been increased focus on protecting the rights of caregivers as well as the rights of those who are hiring them. In 2014, the California Domestic Worker Bill of Rights was passed, guaranteeing minimum wage, overtime pay, and breaks for personal attendants and caregivers, regardless of whether they are hired through an agency or by an individual. However, several categories of caregivers were exempt from this regulation, including those who spent more than 20% of their time on non-caretaking duties such as light housekeeping and companionship.

In 2015, the Supreme Court overturned the Department of Labor's Federal Companionship Exemption – meaning that *all caregivers hired through an agency are now required to be paid overtime regardless of the tasks they are completing.* These two regulations have benefitted caregivers by providing them with guaranteed wage and labor rights; on the flip side, they have also caused many homecare agencies to raise their rates.

In order to protect consumers, the California Homecare Services Consumer Protection Act was enacted in January 2016. This requires homecare organizations to be licensed by the State and includes requirements for caregiver background checks as well as initial and ongoing training. However, the Homecare Services Consumer Protection Act does not apply to registries in which the consumer is the caregiver's employer and not an agency. If you are hiring a caregiver through a registry, it is important to ask about what types of background checks and training is provided by the registry, since it is not required.

These recent regulations are important to ensure the safety for caregivers and clients alike. Most family caregivers reach a point when they realize they need help at home. It is vital that we have trustworthy and qualified agencies in the community they can turn to for assistance.

Traci Dobronravova is the Director of Seniors at Home, Jewish Family and Children's Services.

Don't Miss the 14th Annual Healthy Aging Symposium

“Trail Blazing in a Changing World”

Thursday, May 5, 2016

9:00 a.m.—1:00 p.m.

Embassy Suites Hotel, San Rafael

Pre-registration required before April 25. \$20 fee includes lunch.

Download registration form at

<https://www.marinhhs.org/boards/commission-aging>, or call (415) 473-2980.

No registration at the door.

Medicare Gaps, Supplements, and Help

By Frank Nelson

Understanding Medicare is no easy task. HICAP is an unbiased resource for explanations on Medicare, including related but less-understood parts, such as Medigap insurance.

As with any insurance plan, Medicare has costs you must pay for out-of-pocket, including deductibles, co-pays and co-insurances. Part A, the inpatient and hospital portion has a \$1,288 deductible per benefit period. Part B—the outpatient portion that covers physician charges, office visits, ambulance trips and related services—only pays 80% of the approved charges. You would receive a bill for 20% of those services in addition to the annual Part B deductible of \$166. There are also daily co-pays when an inpatient stay exceeds a certain number of days. These deductibles and copays are examples of the “gaps” that Medicare expects you to pay.

To avoid these charges, you can purchase an insurance product to supplement Medicare, called a Medigap policy. This product is purchased through insurance agents and pays some or all of the deductibles, co-insurance, and copay costs related to Parts A and B of Medicare. Ten different Medigap plans are available.

These plans are standardized, meaning that each plan has the same benefits no matter which company you

choose to purchase from. Price becomes the deciding factor.

One of the most important details about Medigap insurance involves “Guaranteed Issue” rights. When a person first becomes eligible for Medicare, any of the ten Medigap plans may be purchased with the guarantee that an insurance company will issue it without medical questions or underwriting. Later, a company may deny coverage or charge a higher monthly premium because of preexisting health conditions -- unless you maintain guaranteed issue status by switching Medigap plans only on your birthday plus 30 days, and only to a plan with equal or lesser coverage.

With guaranteed issue status, a policy holder can continue to get the best rate even years later. Switching plans any other time of the year forfeits a person’s guaranteed issue status which cannot be attained again except under certain isolated technical circumstances. It pays to

understand these types of important details so you can make informed decisions.

HICAP is the Medicare Health Insurance Counseling and Advocacy Program. Our nonprofit does not sell anything and is a free and unbiased source for personalized counseling and education in partnership with your local Area Agency on Aging. For more information or to schedule an individual appointment, call Senior Advocacy Services – HICAP at 800-434-0222.

Frank Nelson is a Program Manager of HICAP.



Photo by Marianne Gontarz York

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ORGANIZE YOUR LIFE

By Sylvia Landman

Do you need more time? What keeps you from finding it? Do you waste time searching for misplaced items? Always running late? Why?

Setting and organizing priorities helps to manage your time and calendar. Take charge of your home, surroundings and possessions and, voila, more time for retirement activities. Eliminating time-wasters helps create action plans to get things running smoothly. Making “new found time” is extremely satisfying.

Begin by making a list of goals you most want to reach. Think of it as suggestion list to yourself. Write until you exhaust your thoughts. Don’t prioritize now. Time for that later.

Next, make a second list of what never seems to get done. Leave nothing out. Watch your time carefully for a week or two. Note how long real tasks take and how much time disappears without explanation.

Writing a plan, activity or task list—even a grocery list becomes fixed in your mind and memory as you write. Someone who says, “My plan is all in my head,” has no plan, only an idea.

Organizing plans on paper—writing, refining, rearranging, and rewriting—will make the information a part of your conscious, and later, subconscious mind. It will become “automatic” for you to steer toward your goals when you see them clearly—on paper or computer screen.

Implementing new habits in time management and organization must be self-motivated. Coerced change of habits by others just does not work. We must want to improve ourselves because we recognize the benefits of doing so. Often people don’t really need more time, though they may say so. They just need to manage the time they have more efficiently.

Sylvia Landman is a retired teacher and author living in Novato.

BOOK REVIEW: *When Breath becomes Air* by Paul Kalanithi

By Crisula Asimos, PhD

When Breath Becomes Air is a profoundly moving memoir. The author, Paul Kalanithi, was a brilliant neurosurgeon who died of lung cancer at the age of 37. As he was dying, he wrote a memoir that is quite remarkable, affecting, and moving. He exquisitely explores the question of what makes life meaningful.

He makes a case for the value of relationships and writes, “Human knowledge is never contained in one person. . .it grows from the relationships we create between each other and the world and still it is never complete.”

Being a patient opened up his eyes; the prospect of death looked so different than it did from a doctor’s perspective and he rues the times when his professional detachment verged on callousness.

Atul Gawande, author of *Being Mortal*, described it as, “rattling, heartbreaking, and ultimately beautiful, the too young Dr. Kalanithi’s memoir is proof that the dying are the ones who have the most to teach us about life.”

This is a must read.

Chris Asimos, Ph.D. is the Commissioner from the City of San Rafael and Chair of the Health and Nutrition Committee.

FOREWORD BY ABRAHAM VERGHESE
WHEN
BREATH
BECOMES

air
PAUL KALANITHI

OLDER AMERICANS MONTH



BLAZE A TRAIL: MAY 2016

The 2015 White House Conference on Aging

By James Monson

Each decade since the 1960's, a select group of Americans has gathered at the White House Conference on Aging (WHCOA) to address issues of aging in America. The 2015 WHCOA was special in that it marked the 50th anniversary of Medicare, Medicaid, and the Older Americans Act. It also coincided with the 80th year of Social Security. For the first time, the conference used, on a large scale, information technology such as websites, webcasts, and social media to establish outreach for a year-long dialog on how to improve the lives of older Americans.

In addition, the WHCOA co-sponsored with AARP five regional forums in Tampa, Phoenix, Seattle, Cleveland, and Boston. I was fortunate to attend the Phoenix forum, where I listened to experts presenting latest research on Alzheimer's disease, describing elder abuse of all sorts, and commenting on difficulties faced by seniors in planning for retirement. There were lots more panel discussions and breakout sessions with lively interactions among attendees.

Out of the forums and networking, four common themes emerged: Retirement Security, Healthy Aging, Long Term Services and Support, and Elder Justice. The WHCOA staff members prepared "white paper" policy briefs on each of these themes to inform the discussions at the White House conference in July 2015. President Obama spoke of America as an aging, yet vibrant, nation and announced a number of major

initiatives to strengthen programs for healthy aging, helping to ensure that older Americans can enjoy physical, mental and social well-being. A few of the initiatives: Establishment of www.aging.gov, a web site linking to information on how to access a very wide range of federal and local resources for older Americans; Kickoff of the "Go4Life" campaign to promote physical activity; and Release of the Center for Medicare & Medicaid Services proposed rules to update quality and safety requirements for more than 15,000 nursing homes and skilled nursing facilities. The latter is the first comprehensive revision in 25 years.

The work of the WHCOA identified several efforts moving forward that are relevant to Marin County. First is the continuing support and development of our caregiver network. Second is the recognition of the demographics that show substantial increase of the over 60 population, but also the view that these elders are a valuable resource to improve our communities through their wise engagement in local activities. Third is the collaboration across agencies and sectors such as government, foundations, private service providers, non-profits, housing, transportation, etc.

Marin County's Aging and Adult Services Department is working in all of these areas through its Information, Access, and Referral network, the Aging Action Initiative, and contracts with service providers. In addition, the Area Agency on Aging has completed its assessment of our local needs and the development of the federally mandated plan for 2016-20 to address them. Many of our needs are the same as those identified by the WHCOA, and the Area Agency on Aging looks forward to working on the plan goals to improve health aging in Marin County.

James Monson is a Commissioner from District 4.

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 This Issue:
 Area Plan 2016-2020**



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.

May 5	Topic: Healthy Aging Symposium	Keynote Speaker: To Be Determined	Place: Embassy Suites, 101 McInnis Parkway, San Rafael
June 2	Topic: Dementia Friendly Cities	Speaker: TBD	Place: Alma Via 515 Northgate Dr, San Rafael
July 7	Topic: TBD	Speaker: TBD	Place: TBD
August	No Meeting		

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:

Spring 2016 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.

**Find the service
 that's right for
 you!**
 Call the Information
 and Assistance line at
415-457-INFO
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