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Our Paths - Our Choices

Empowering older adults to be active,
connected and independent in the place they
call home



SAN RAFAEL VILLAGE NEWSLETTER SUMMER 2020

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SRV—MAJOR VALUE DURING THE PANDEMIC

Over the past months of the Marin shelter-in-place mandate, many of us have learned how to “Zoom.” We receive regular updates on health conditions, safety advice, and creative ideas of things to do from the Villages. We all long for our lives to return to “normal,” but in the meantime, our SRV is more important than ever in helping us maintain upbeat attitudes and well-being. Offering an amazing array of virtual activities and events, SRV provides many ways to keep our minds sharp and our intellects challenged while also sharing virtual cultural and social activities and checking in on our members. We are grateful to the

enthusiastic and innovative volunteers who create, organize, and manage these activities.

WELCOME, NEW MEMBERS AND VOLUNTEERS!

Member: Jim Gross

Volunteers: Daniela Ernani, Forouzan Hakimi, Anna Krotinger, Melanie Lohmann, Fiona McGowan, Emma Rapp

Thank you for giving your time to our village. We look forward to seeing you at an event soon!

SRV ACTIVITY GROUPS

Book Chat

The SRV Book Chat, led by member Val Stilson, is *not* a book club in the traditional sense. Originally, the group met once a month to discuss books or articles or selections someone had read and wanted to talk about and share. Now they have morphed into a slightly different format—reading together a passage, paragraph, part of an article, or a bit of poetry that one person has selected because they love it and couldn't resist sharing. Val says that "sheltering in place is yielding some rewarding pastimes, one of which is reading...making a dent in that pile of books happily tempting you to explore the next new adventure, add to your misbegotten education, or simply escape to a different world." This group of book lovers is working on a plan to share books—a "Book Pass Along" system—so folks can share with one another books they have finished and especially enjoyed. This is a work in progress. Stay tuned!

Book Chat meets via Zoom the first Monday of every month at 2:00pm. Contact Val Stilson at valerie.stilson@sbcglobal.net if you're interested in joining in. In the meantime, says Val, consider the wisdom of Mark Twain: "Good friends, good books, and a sleepy conscience, this is the ideal life."

Villages Book Club

Do you see a theme here? Many of our SR Villagers are inveterate readers and feel this is a perfect time to catch up on books they've been meaning to read for ages. Karen Gray, SRV volunteer, leads the Villages Book Club on the fourth Thursday of every month. This group (currently six readers) shares discussions on a wide range of books—fiction and nonfiction, some lighter reads, some a little heavier. Some recent selections that the group enjoyed included Bill Bryson's

recent selections that the group enjoyed included Bill Bryson's delightful book on Australia, "A Sunburned Country," as well as a couple of volumes of Eleanor Roosevelt's biography by Blanche Wiesen Cook, and "My Grandmother Asked Me to Tell You She's Sorry" by Fredrik Backman. Quite a spectrum! The group takes turns making recommendations, but Karen stresses that members do not have to read the book in advance. You can simply join the discussion, learn about the book and enjoy the conversation. You may well be tempted to read it later. If you're interested, contact Karen at (714) 403-3345.

Every Wednesday Coffee Chat

Due to popular demand, the SRV first Wednesday monthly coffee has morphed into a weekly event. Now, every Wednesday afternoon at 2:00pm the group gathers via Zoom and talks about a variety of intriguing and often amusing topics. Carole Sherick, who organizes the chats, emails a suggested "trigger" topic along with the Zoom invitation each week. The group has a lot of fun sipping coffee or tea and maybe munching a favorite treat while discussing subjects ranging from a travel experience that made you squirm to something you're proud of, something the group would be surprised to learn about you, society's changing attitudes towards women, or your most outlandish family member! As you can see, the topics range far and wide and, along with updates of everyone's life and family, these humorous topics lighten the day for everyone and generate a lot of shared laughter. Don't hesitate to join in any Wednesday with the Zoom link that always gets emailed in advance. Or contact Carole at csherick@gmail.com

Weekly Movie Group

In addition to organizing the SRV Book Club, Karen Gray also leads our Weekly Movie Group. Using easily accessible Netflix, the group goes to the movies virtually, and then discusses the film. It's been a successful system. Karen or one of the group members selects a movie that is available on Netflix's streaming service. So, yes, you do have to have a Netflix account and a television, computer, or tablet like an iPad on which to watch the movie. Each person watches the film at a convenient time. Then, all gather on Zoom on Sunday evenings at 7:00pm to compare notes and reactions, and to discuss the film in depth. The interactive discussions last about 45 minutes—a nice way to start a pleasant Sunday evening.

The group tries to select films that are not too heavy, grim, or focused on social justice issues, says Karen, but they have recently watched some powerful movies. The films can be recent or golden oldies. Here's a sample of what the group watched and discussed recently: "Julie & Julia," the delightful movie about Julia Child; "My Happy Family," a

serious interpersonal relationship drama, and the terrific documentary “Crip Camp,” an uplifting film with an off-putting name about children with disabilities at a summer camp. Fascinating choices! The discussions must have been intriguing! If you’re interested in joining, please contact Karen Gray at (714) 403-3345.

Dealing with Loss—Open to Villagers

In spite of Coronavirus, the Dealing with Loss group that Jackie Hewitt has been leading for many months is still going strong. Meeting once a month via Zoom, seven participants join Jackie, a highly experienced and skilled facilitator, to share issues and perspectives as they discuss the many challenges facing us as we age—all compounded by the isolation and stress of the current pandemic.

The group provides a vibrant, active resource for interaction. Jackie says one of the most impressive aspects is how the group comes together with open-hearted, all-inclusive attitudes—no judgements, no criticisms. Participants describe and share the various challenges they face and begin to glean from one another different approaches and ways of thinking that might help them personally. It’s a perfect environment, says Jackie, to learn about and “try on” other people’s solutions and see how they might work for you.

As Jackie points out, the losses we face range from the death of a loved one to a diminution of physical capacity to a change in living situation or perceived loss of identity. Large and small, these losses force us to deal with our lives differently, to confront changes that are often unwelcome. This is *not* a grief group, she emphasizes. It is a forum where people share their “owies” and learn tools and solutions to help them reframe their challenges, form new perspectives, and discover new ways to thrive and live strong, empowered lives. “That’s the majesty of the group!” exclaims Jackie. And they’ve had some amazing success stories!

The group is ongoing and currently has space for one additional participant. The meeting time and date have shifted a few times to accommodate everyone, so please contact Jackie if you are interested and she will provide the latest information. jackiejoyous@gmail.com or (707) 849-9786

IN MEMORIUM: ROY FIDLER





Roy Fidler, a tall, lanky, charming man, a member of the SRV and the husband of our program chair, Carole Sherick, could often be found assisting at SRV Happy Hours, joining in Village celebrations, and helping in many other ways. He wrote articles and announcements for SRV and drove people who needed rides. He was cheerful, bright and funny—always ready with a good story and a twinkle in his eye. Sadly, Roy passed away on July 9, 2020. He will be profoundly missed.

Roy Fidler: A Personal Tribute

By Marlene Berkoff, Steering Committee member

I only knew Roy as Carole's husband and as a helpful SRV member until about a year ago. Then, realizing he was a docent at the Frank Lloyd Wright–designed Civic Center, I invited him to give a lecture on Wright and the Marin County complex for the Marin Philosophical Society. Roy agreed and, since I was an architect, we launched into a series of lengthy emails and long conversations about architecture and Wright's vision. This culminated in a marathon lunch one day. Roy showed me his presentation and we got into a fascinating and hilarious conversation about the confounding issue of what Roy should say about a man who was a brilliant architect but a not-very-nice human being. During our talks and emails, I learned about Roy's Brooklyn background and his work for the *New York Times*—and many commonalities we shared.

Very unfortunately, Roy's lecture was scheduled for mid-March of this year, right when COVID-19 was becoming a recognized hazard. The event had to be cancelled, but Roy said he didn't mind. He had told several other groups about the lecture he had prepared and was invited to speak at a number of other venues. He told me not to feel bad. He said a whole new career had opened up for him—as a lecturer on Frank Lloyd Wright and his Legacy in Marin. What a generous spirit!

Carole has shared information from Roy's obituary, but this is a personal tribute to a man I wish I had gotten to know better. Carole describes his many volunteer activities, from lecturing kids on the endangered salt marsh harvest mouse to working in the Marin District Attorney's office as a consumer advocate. Carole reports that Roy

claimed, "Travel is my bliss." He did travel extensively, nationally and internationally, and loved discovering off-the-beaten-track treasures. According to Carole, his curiosity for new experiences continued until the end. Based on the short time I was privileged to know him, I heartily agree. Rarely have I encountered anyone with such energy and enthusiasm for life and new endeavors. Carole says that Roy often exclaimed, "Wow, what a ride!" Amen.

LISA BRINKMANN—STAYING CONNECTED

For all Marin Villagers, the name Lisa Brinkmann has special meaning. As former executive director of Marin Villages, Lisa literally forged the connections that helped it grow into the dynamic, effective organization it is today.

With an MA in International Management, Lisa's early career took her from positions in corporate treasury to global product management to IT director. Along the way, she developed superb skills in operations, technology, and data management, but always nurtured an interest in gerontology and a desire to help older adults. "I was very close to my grandmother," says Lisa, and when Lisa's grandmother moved in with the family, Lisa's mother became a wonderful role model. "I learned valuable lessons about how to treat people with dignity even as they struggled with dementia," adds Lisa. Perhaps this early experience was what led Lisa to make a career change and pursue an MS in gerontology at USC.

During her studies, Lisa came across a small paragraph on the Villages. Attracted by the personal, grassroots nature of the organization, she met with the Marin Villages Sausalito chapter and thus began a relationship that turned into a 7½-year commitment. Lisa explains, "Working with the Villages gave me the chance to use my business and technology skills to reach more people," and that enabled her to create systems to connect local services, volunteers, and members.

But to Lisa, it's the personal connections—not the systems—that are most important: a ride to the doctor, help with a household repair, or a simple phone call. During her time with the Villages, Lisa says she met many amazing people—volunteers and members alike—and was constantly impressed by their passion and commitment. Under her leadership, they made Marin Villages the largest and most active Village organization in California.

Lisa has stepped down as Marin Villages' director but her commitment hasn't diminished. While she remains on the advisory board, she's building new connections and hopes to do consulting work with individual villages. Recently appointed senior assembly member with

the Marin County Commission on Aging, she will be a liaison with State government, advocating for seniors on issues ranging from health to transportation to housing. Her goal is to make sure the voice of seniors continues to be heard. We say kudos to Lisa—and thank you!

—Interviewed by Terry Humphrey

HELP US HELP OTHERS

If you know someone who could use our services, is interested in volunteering, or would like to donate to an organization serving older adults in Marin, please have them call the office at (415) 457-4633, or visit our website (www.marinvillages.org) for application forms and online donations.

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