

VILLAGES

of San Mateo County

Neighbors Helping Neighbors

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LET'S TALK ABOUT IT:

AGING WELL FROM 8 TO 80

**Research helps
explain key factors for
aging well into our
golden years.**

What exactly contributes to healthy aging from eight to eighty and well beyond? This is a question the authors posed to a friend, the eminent Harvard psychiatrist George Vaillant, who spent more than half of his life at the

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Contact Villages of San Mateo County at: 650-260-4569 or info@villagesofsmc.org

Sequoia Village and Mid Peninsula Village are two local villages under the umbrella 501(c)(3) nonprofit called Villages of San Mateo County

helm of the Grant Study of Adult Development, the longest-running study on human development. The Grant Study has closely tracked the physical and emotional health of 268 Harvard sophomore men as they aged since 1938. George shared with the authors the key determinants of aging well.

Habits, Not Heredity, Are More Important For Health

George has documented the revelatory findings of the Grant Study in three fascinating books. His inaugural book, 1977's *Adaptation to Life*, the now-classic tome on adult development, analyzed how the *Harvard Men* were coping up to age 55 and identified a variety of positive and negative outcomes. Twenty-five years later, he published *Aging Well*. This book showed that healthy physical and emotional aging from 55 to 80 is less dependent on genes and more dependent on lifestyle choices and healthy habits, such as engaging in regular exercise and cultivating close connections with others.

Finally, *Triumphs of Experience: The Men of the Harvard Grant Study*, published more than 75 years after the inception of the groundbreaking study, follows a few dozen of the surviving men who are currently in their '90s. Many of them are thriving far beyond conventional retirement. So, what is their secret?

"Habits, started before 50, not heredity, are more important for growing old gracefully, well into our '90s and beyond," George says. He spoke about the importance of regular exercise, maintaining a healthy body weight, and developing healthy coping mechanisms.

All You Need Is Love (and exercise helps too!)

George continued illuminating on the findings of the Grant Study. As important as physical exercise is to aging well, by far the most important determinant to healthy aging is the quality of our relationships, he said. "Loving relationships are key to thriving longevity."

Relationships can help us recover from a damaging childhood even many decades later, George found. In fact, strong connections with others formed early in life, like the bond between a son and his mother, have a protective factor down the road. Positive emotions, namely love, is the key ingredient for aging well into our golden years and beyond.

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“Having had a loving and stable marriage at 50 predicted mental and physical health at 80 better than did either exercise or weight,” George said. Feelings of joy, love, and hope affect our health. In fact, positive emotions have a calming effect on our nervous system, similar to that of the relaxation response triggered by meditation. Imagine for a moment how you feel embraced in a warm, loving hug. Or how your child responds when you hold him in your arms closely to comfort him when he’s sad and tearful, perhaps because his favorite sporting team lost a game. Positive emotions, like love, lower our blood pressure, reduce our heart and respiratory rate, and soothe muscle tension, which in turn increases our overall health.

Loving and supportive relationships not only feel good, but are also good for us

One couple, Steve and Judy, agrees about the positive implications of loving relationships and strong social connections. “Doing classes with other people is even better than exercising alone. It’s more motivating and infectious,” Steve says. He practices what he preaches in that he regularly works out with his wife, Judy, who, he says, was instrumental in his fitness goals. She had bought him his first gym membership over 40 years ago and they have been regularly working out together ever since.

“Being in a good relationship is very important because it’s your mental attitude toward aging that makes a difference,” says Judy. “And it’s good to have a partner who wants to stay active and encourages you to do the same.” No doubt that Steve and Judy are aging well not only due to their regular exercise habit but also because of their mutually loving and supportive relationship. They are what we refer to as [“Aristotelian Lovers,”](#) who inspire one another to be better by adopting healthy lifestyle habits.

Due to countless studies over the years, many of us are aware of the association between regular exercise and greater physical and mental well-being. However, what we may not realize is the huge impact our relationships have on our health as well, since not as much research was focused on this topic until recently.

Take a cue. Exercise regularly and do it with your spouse or close friends for optimal health and happiness now and for years to come.

~ References: Pileggi Pawelski, S. & Pawelski, J. (2018). Happy Together: Using the Science of Positive Psychology to Build Love That Lasts. New York: TarcherPerigee; Vaillant, George E., (2012). Triumphs of Experience: The Men of the Harvard Grant Study. Harvard University Press: Cambridge.

From the Executive Director: Linda Burroughs

Dear Members, Volunteers and Friends,

My family and I have been searching to determine the appropriate time for me to rearrange my time obligations. The combination of the pandemic, with its inherent stress, and the work from home challenges that are coupled with the increasing demands of the Villages has led me to conclude that it is time for me to move on.



I am stepping down from my position as Executive Director of Villages of San Mateo County, effective June 30, 2020. My belief in the need for services to assist seniors and the potential for this organization to make a major difference in the lives of individuals and our community remains steadfast. I wish Villages of San Mateo County much success in the future as they continue to help seniors remain in their own homes and age with dignity and grace. I salute each of you for your generous spirit and can-do attitude.

Stay creative, stay determined and stay safe.

All the best,

Linda

A HEARTFELT FAREWELL

Linda has been with us for almost three years and has made important contributions to our organization during that time. Her energy and enthusiasm have been inspiring, and we will miss the warm smile and gracious humor that she brought to every meeting and event. We were a two-year-old nonprofit startup when Linda joined us. She was instrumental in guiding this organization through several critical years of growth, bringing us to our position today as a widely recognized community partner. Please join us in gratitude and wishing Linda the very best in her future endeavors.

GETTING THROUGH COVID-19

VILLAGES OF SAN MATEO COUNTY CHAIRS AND COMMITTEES

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Let's talk coronavirus and its various shelter-in-place orders. As I write this, restrictions are gradually being relaxed. We still can't go about our business in a normal way. But at least we can get out a bit for a walk or a drive. And that is refreshing, after months of being cooped up.

During the pandemic, isolation and loneliness have become cruel side-effects, especially for older people. Along with them, and often propelling them, has been fear – fear of seeing people and even going out into the backyard, because of consternation about contracting the virus.

Unlike in 1934, when President Franklin Roosevelt coined his famous phrase about having nothing to fear but fear itself, this time we do have something real to be concerned about. (I know; the Great Depression was real, too.) Still, it's possible to inflate the danger of coronavirus, even to those of us in the supposed "vulnerable" population.

A look at the numbers can be reassuring. In San Mateo County, a disproportionate percentage of coronavirus deaths has come in what officials describe as "elder-care and senior-living centers." To me, that says if you're living in your own house or apartment and taking reasonable precautions, coronavirus is still a danger but maybe not the boogeyman that you might imagine.

With this in mind, and with certain restrictions now lifted, my 89-year-old mother has resumed her daily walks in her neighborhood in Chicago. So has a friend of mine in San Carlos, who is 80. My wife, 69, and I (65) don our masks every other day and venture out for a bit of exercise, fresh air and relief from the indoors. We do so without fear of either catching or spreading the virus.

(Continued on page 6: covid-19)

During the more rigorous stay-at-home period, my wife and I made a point of fighting isolation by connecting with friends and family, over both the phone and the Internet. Using the video-meeting software called “Zoom,” we held online cocktail hours, where we chatted and raised our glasses in anticipation of better days. The result was welcome fellowship, as well as relief from occasional bickering brought on by cabin fever.

The bottom line, in my view: The virus is still out there and needs to be respected. At the same time, we shouldn’t let our concerns become irrational or oversized. Now is the time to trust reasonable precautions, such as masks, hand-washing and social distancing, and begin to reclaim our daily routines. If that’s not comfortable, then at least we can be in touch with each other to overcome the potential for isolation, loneliness and depression.

This has been, and continues to be, a wrenching period in our history. But Americans have always been a resilient people. We will get through this, both as a nation and as individuals and as families. Hang in there, do what you think is prudent, and hope the summer will be better than the spring.

~ article by Scott Dailey, volunteer VSMC

THE GIFTS

Waking in the silent night
My dog still alive
Breathing softly in his bed
Elusive dreams fading
Finally waking early morning
Here for another day
Stepping out for our morning walk
A hug and prayer for our lives
Watching the sunrise
Thanking God for this beautiful day
Breakfast the paper and Zoom
Facing the tedium together

More fallen fence boards
Broken sprinklers again
A long hike for chai
Skin browning hair greying
Chores undone and naps like death
An evening longer walk
Dinner together watching TV
A glass of wine and dark chocolate
The next chapter in a novel
Max beating me to sleep
Dreams of running fast and free
Again

~ By Randi Kutnewsky, member VSMC Board,
published in the San Francisco Chronicle,
Monday, May 18, 2020

VILLAGES OF SAN MATEO COUNTY DONORS

VSMC extends its sincere thanks for the generous financial support and in-kind gifts received from the following major donors:

- *Charis Foundation*
- *City of San Carlos*
- *D&D Fields*
- *Dignity Health Sequoia Hospital*
- *McGovern Insurance*
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- *Paula Thompson Legacy*
- *Peninsula Healthcare District*
- *Redwood City Parks and Recreation*
- *Sequoia Healthcare District*
- *Trinity Presbyterian Church of San Carlos*
- *West Valley Federated Women's Club*

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: Ruth Tucker

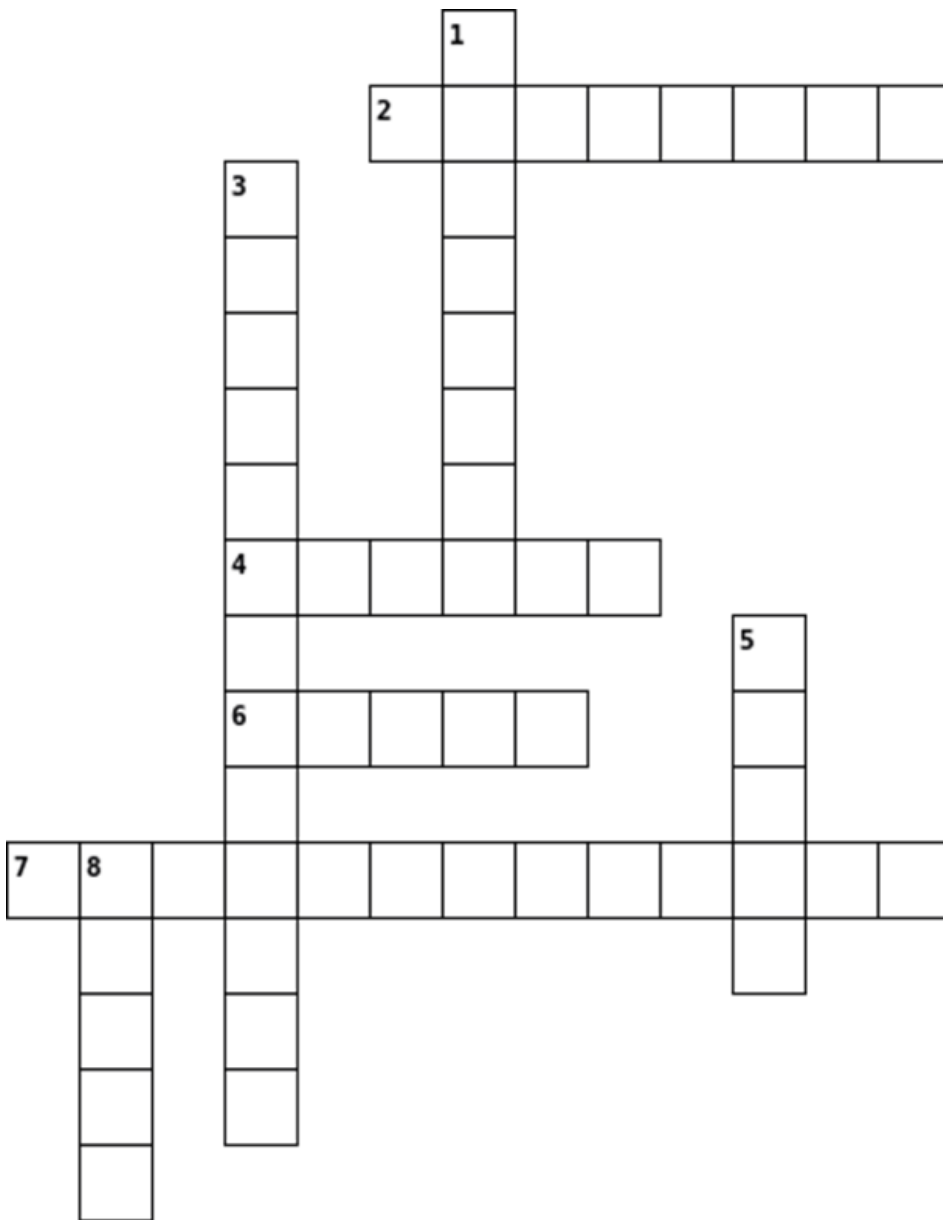
Ruth Tucker, a retired software engineer, has been actively engaged with Villages since 2016. When her software company was sold, she took early retirement to pursue her passions, elevate self-care and make family priority one. Ruth is pictured here with her daughter, Megan, whose graduation as an M.D. specializing in Internal Medicine was celebrated on May 30, 2020. Her son, Brendan, who also works in the computer field, took the photo as the family honored Megan's exceptional achievement with a festive salute.



VSMC is most fortunate to have Ruth among its generous and gifted volunteers. Ruth not only provides tech assistance to our members but has also served as a driver. In addition, she provides a wide range of handy-person services. Ruth's handy-person credentials were enhanced when she volunteered with Habitat for Humanity prior to joining the VSMC volunteer ranks.

Recently, Ruth's tech skills have loomed large as the most requested Village Member service. COVID-19 has challenged everyone to update and upgrade their technology skills. The key to becoming an extraordinary tech volunteer is not your tech skills, but having exceptional patience and listening skills. Ruth tries to provide the right amount of information for a visit, knowing that she can expand on the information she provides in a follow-up visit. She takes the time to put the Member at ease as she calmly explains, for example, how to minimize fraud risks.

Please join me in saluting Ruth Tucker, a committed and multi-talented volunteer whose ability to establish instant rapport is as legendary as her generous spirit. Thank you, Ruth!



COVID-19 CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Test your skills and factual knowledge of coronavirus.

Have a little fun with this one!

Down

1. What is most effective at removing the coronavirus from your hands?

3. What is NOT listed by the WHO as a symptom of coronavirus?

5. The first case of novel COVID-19 was identified in which location?

8. Which organ in the body does this coronavirus disease primarily attack?

Across

2. What is the official name of the COVID-19 virus as designated by the World Health Organization?

4. What is the percentage of infected people that usually recover without needing hospital treatment?

6. What is a sub-microscopic infectious agent that replicates only inside the living cells of a host organism?

7. Name the clinical trial in which blood is transfused from recovered COVID-19 patients to a coronavirus patient who is in critical condition?

*Answers can be found on page 9 (except for one...).

(Continued on page 9: Puzzle)

THREE CHEERS FOR COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP!

Many of us love to dine out, and we are missing that immensely! Then along came the gift of freshly prepared meals from the Farm House Restaurant in Belmont. One of our Village volunteers is related to the restaurant owner, who was receiving donations from patrons to give meals to local seniors. Put 2 and 2 together, and you get 150 meals provided by the restaurant and delivered by Village volunteers to Village members. What an amazing convergence of generosity and goodwill at a time when we need it most. Many thanks to all who were involved!



Midge Kerler, member
Mid Peninsula Village



Delivered meals being assembled by Todd Rafalovich,
Ruth Rafalovich and Chris Edwards



Helene Haughney,
member Sequoia Village



Scouts building planter boxes



Volunteers doing some backyard work

VILLAGE VOLUNTEERS CONTINUE TO HELP!



Father and daughter painting team

(Puzzle: continued from page 8)

PUZZLE ANSWERS

Across

2 – SARS-COV-2

4 – eighty

6 – virus

7 – plasma therapy

Down

1 – hand wash

3 – (rash)

5 – Wuhan

8 - lungs

VSMC MEETS “EACH GREEN CORNER”

In the midst of COVID-19 there has been a huge surge in volunteer spirit and a desire to do “good” in the community. This has resulted in new partnerships, such as the one that formed in April between Villages of San Mateo County (VSMC) and a new nonprofit called Each Green Corner (EGC).

EGC was founded last year by San Carlos resident Sandie Nierenberg with the idea that home vegetable gardens can supply healthy fruits and vegetables to members of the community. As we shared our visions, it quickly became apparent that some of our Village members have yards that are mostly unused and EGC could turn those yards into productive sources of fresh food. Within days we had identified several candidates. Alice Pease, in Redwood City, became the first VSMC member to have a vegetable garden planted in her yard by EGC volunteers. For decades, Alice used to tend a thriving vegetable garden. She is delighted that her yard will be producing again. In the coming months, she will be enjoying fresh tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers, etc., and the surplus will go to local food distribution charities.

Additional plantings are starting in the yards of other VSMC members, and we anticipate many more will come. If your yard is calling out to be a vegetable garden, please contact Scott McMullin at 650-464-9732 or Sandie Nierenberg through the EGC webpage (<https://www.eachgreencorner.org/>).



Alice Pease, VSMC member



EGC volunteers at Alice Pease's home