

Greetings from our President



Many years ago, as a college senior, I found myself falling prey to one virus after another in a cold and dreary New England winter. Fretting about falling behind in my studies and the dreaded “comps” exam coming on, I would then come down with yet another bug. One day, laughing with my friends over a funny letter I had received, it occurred to me that I felt better when I laughed! They say that one learns many lessons in college, and that was a huge one for me.

Marin Villages is here for many reasons, but one of the biggest is to gather Marin seniors together to have FUN! Certainly there are all kinds of “fun” – from meeting a new friend, to learning a new skill, discovering a new restaurant, watching a meaningful movie – all of these and more can make us smile and feel great!

I urge all of you to take notice of the varied and gratifying activities in which one can participate in all seven of our Villages. Many of these activities are open to all the Villages, so I urge you to come – and bring a friend!

Warm regards, and happy Spring! *Loulie Sutro*

Around the Villages

Meet Isaiah, our new Member/Volunteer Liaison

After nearly a decade working in the non-profit world as a facilities manager, it is my great pleasure and honor to be joining the staff of Marin Villages. My wife Judy and I have been living in Marin for the past six years after a sojourn to the East Bay while Judy completed her Master’s degree in Marriage and Family Therapy. My hobbies include writing and playing guitar, but my biggest passion outside of work is playing and coaching soccer. I am very involved with the youth soccer community here in the Bay Area, and work as a youth coach for the Central Marin Soccer Club, and as the Associate

Head Coach of Men's & Women's Varsity Soccer at Marin Academy.

I was hired as the facilities office coordinator at the Marin Jewish Community Center after completing my English degree at Dominican University, and before I knew it ten years had flown by. My time at the JCC is something I will always cherish and remember, but I was no longer satisfied with working behind the scenes. I realized I wanted a more tangible way to express my humanism.

I began my job search, and upon learning more about Marin Villages, I was immediately drawn to its



important mission of empowering older adults in the greater Marin community to sustain their independence and remain in their own homes. After my initial interview with Lisa, I went out for a burrito that night with Judy and said, 'honey, I think I found the

place for me!' I am very excited to roll-up my sleeves and work tirelessly to ensure that all of our Villagers are given the support and advocacy they deserve. I warmly anticipate cultivating new interpersonal connections with each of our members, and aim to become your champion of autonomy!

Isaiah Schwerin

Volunteer Dashboard Going into Pilot

It’s exciting to observe the comfort with which members are (finally) calling our office to ask for a hand. In March alone, our staff answered calls for over 400 requests, of which over 92% were filled by our unbelievable volunteers! This has, though, created a lot of email activity for our volunteers (and staff).

To help make volunteering easier, we are in the process of evaluating software to streamline how we communicate and respond to member requests. A team of volunteers met in April to test a new ‘volunteer dashboard’ which we hope to deploy to all volunteers this summer. With the system,

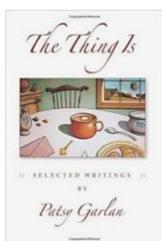
volunteers will receive one email each day, listing all open requests in their village, according to their interests. If they accept a request, they will receive an immediate confirmation with all pertinent information (including a map to and from the member's home) and the ability to add it to their own calendars. The system will also send a reminder to the volunteer on the day prior to the appointment/task.

We anticipate this system to greatly reduce the time spent by both volunteers and staff on accepting and assigning requests. Our volunteers represent the engine that keeps Marin Villages running. We hope to implement improvements to keep volunteering fun.

What Are our Members Doing?

The following is just a glimpse of some of what is keeping our members and volunteers busy:

Patsy Garlan (San Rafael Village) a member of Marin Villages since 2014, is publishing her newest book, *The Thing Is* and will debut it at a 'living room reading' hosted by Joan Sadler at her home in Belvedere.



Born in Santa Barbara (on the same day and year as Queen Elizabeth), Patsy attended Reed College in Portland, Oregon, where upon her graduation she remained for many years as a faculty wife, and traveled extensively abroad with her husband

and children. In San Francisco, her professional career included 22 years as a development director for KQED public television, and ten as an editor for Dr. Paul Ekman.

In addition, Patsy has written the book and lyrics for a new musical, *Wings of Fire*, adapted from Bernard Shaw's *Saint Joan* with the help of the Society of Authors in London and the Shaw Estate, and in collaboration with New York composer Nick Scarim. Patsy published her first novel, *Sea Change: The Uncertain Realm of the Married* in 2012.

Boning up on Osteoporosis

Mill Valley Village held its first event at the Throckmorton Theater and was delighted to attract 65 people for *Boning-Up on Osteoporosis*. Roughly a

third of the audience raised hands as being affiliated with one of our villages; a group from the Redwoods attended, and others included a donor who said it was her first ever Village event. The expert Dr. Steven Harris painted the big picture about osteoporosis and offered practical advice which listeners are always eager to get from a field specialist. His self-deprecating humor, deep clinical experience and research-informed perspectives held the crowd's interest. The magically embellished Throckmorton Theater was a bonus! Thanks go to Susan Crutchfield of Mill Valley Village's Steering Team for engaging Dr. Harris and for outreach to Lucy Mercer whose vision and tireless energy are behind the theater.

Jan Silva (Novato Village) – Gadgets and Gizmos for the Visually Impaired – Jan Silva, Novato Village member and volunteer, recently held a workshop on technology solutions to enhance the quality of life for the visually impaired.

A retired college teacher, whose areas of expertise were anthropology, humanities, history, archaeology and psychology, Jan now refers to herself as 'somewhat of a geek'.

20 years ago Jan was diagnosed with birdshot chorioretinopathy a rare form of bilateral posterior uveitis affecting the eye, causing severe, progressive inflammation of both the choroid and retina. With this diagnosis, she began the adventure of discovering ways to ensure she could continue to maintain her independence. While it has been quite challenging, it is also very rewarding as it has led her to amazing products and services that enhance her every day quality of life – and our members'!



Alan Saltzman (Homestead Village) – Supreme Court in the News!

While newspaper headlines reported the charged hearings before the Supreme Court on Monday about the State of Texas' challenge to President Obama's authority in a case affecting the implementation of immigration laws, Homestead

Villagers were lucky to have fellow volunteer and legal scholar Prof. Alan Saltzman put this issue into its historical context in an informative and lively talk.

Alan outlined the powers and limits of the Court, and then summarized many of the significant cases due for decision this year. The



death of Justice Antonin Scalia has of course added a complication to the picture, but this talk, and the lengthy exchange of questions and comments that followed left participants better able to see what is at stake in these serious issues and to interpret the outcomes. Prof. Alan Saltzman is a mostly retired law professor teaching this year at USF's Fromm Institute.

Battlefield Tales from a Doughnut Dolly

Sleeping in makeshift accommodations in the pastures of France during the midst of the war was not what Mary Lou Chapman envisioned when she joined the Red Cross in 1943.



Over 60 members, volunteers and guests were treated to the unique opportunity to hear first-hand stories from one of the original Red Cross Doughnut Dollies. In deference to Mary Lou's time camped around Eperney, the champagne region of France, Marin Villages served champagne (and coffee) with doughnuts as refreshments.

Initially deployed to Britain, Mary Lou quickly found herself learning to drive large, 2.5 ton GMC trucks, which were specially equipped with doughnut and coffee makers. She and the other 'girls' would drive these Red Cross Clubmobiles to reach soldiers on the battlefields of Europe. Slugging through France and



Germany all the way to Austria in the wake of Patton's 3rd Army, her job was to boost the morale of our servicemen, making and serving coffee and doughnuts, before, and for some, after key engagements.



"When the guys came back from their missions, we didn't ask what happened, and they didn't tell us."

She reflected on the destruction and misery she observed as she and the corps advanced through the many destroyed villages and towns and her hope that we can avoid such a waste of humanity in the future.

"The guys never complained, never questioned what they were there for – they were all just nice guys proud to do their duty."

A Coast to Coast "Village" by Judy Bissey

When I met Maggie last April 2015, she was living alone in her home. She had organized, with the help of her friends, her own support system which included a house cleaner, a handyman, a gardener and Marin Villages for grocery shopping and computer support.

My first assignment as a Marin Village volunteer was to do weekly grocery shopping and deliver the groceries to her home. Maggie and I found an instant connection - we had both lived in Illinois, we loved to read, we respected the environment and loved animals.



One day Maggie asked me to mail a letter to her sister who lived in an extended care facility in a small town in Florida. When I looked at the address I told her that my brother and sister-in-law had recently moved from Illinois to the very same town, Lecanto, Florida (population less than 6000). Maggie told me that her sister, Connie, was lonely and loved to have visitors. I suggested I ask my sister-in-law to visit with Connie and thereby began a new friendship for Connie and Marilyn. Over the weeks Marilyn and I facilitated phone calls, small

packages and pictures between the ninety year old sisters and this continued over the months.

Last September I visited Connie with my sister-in-law. I took notes and mementos to Connie and brought back pictures and small gifts from Connie to Maggie.

I still maintain communication with Connie even after Maggie's death. Marilyn tells me that her visits with Connie are filled with stories of Maggie and Connie's childhood. It keeps the memories alive for the last survivor of this family. For me, I am content that over these last months of Maggie's life and though miles were between them, a reconnection was made on a more personal familial level. Yes, some things are meant to be.

Judy Bissey is a San Rafael Village volunteer.

Marcus Byruck (Mill Valley Village) - Friday Hikes on Mt. Tam

Marcus Byruck, Marin Villages' board member, has been leading hikes every Friday on Mt. Tam – and they are catching on. We welcome members and volunteers (and guests) to join Mill Valley Village's hiking group on these 'not for sissies' adventures.



Executive Director Corner

May is the month that officially has been designated as Older American's Month and is intended to acknowledge the contributions older adults make to our country. This year the theme is *Blaze a Trail*, emphasizing the ways older adults are reinventing themselves, though new work and passions, engaging their communities and making a positive impact on the lives of all ages.

When I look at our calendar of events and see the breadth and depth of the programs we are offering, I am impressed. But what is more impressive is the realization that ALL of these activities are being organized and/or led by Marin Villages' members and volunteers. And almost all are considered 'seniors'. Being a senior citizen in this day and age may not always be easy, but it can be exciting. Our

'seniors' are joining play reading groups, hiking Mr. Tam, and exploring how technology can enhance their lives. They are organizing presentations on Brain Fitness, giving talks on Reverse Mortgages and reading from their latest works of prose and poetry. And when they find free time, they use it to drive others to appointments, lend a hand with a pet or find time to be a companion on a walk.



We're entering a new era in the realm of aging and have the opportunity create our own paths and blaze interesting, meaningful trails for ourselves and those that follow.

Lisa Brinkmann

Gruber Family Foundation Awards Challenge Grant to Marin Villages

The Gruber Family Foundation awarded Marin Villages a challenge grant which will match the first \$10,000 we receive in donations beginning in May. This generous boost to our fundraising efforts coincides with our Annual fundraising appeal which will be mailed the second week in May.

Marin Villages asks for your financial help only twice a year; spring and fall. Because memberships dues cover 35% of our costs we rely on donations and grants to cover the remainder. These important gifts help pay for social and educational programs, a leanly staffed operation and subsidized memberships.

Look for our spring solicitation letter in your mail and help us meet the generous Gruber Challenge. We are counting on you to keep Marin Villages a vital and growing organization that enriches not only your life but the lives of hundreds of seniors in our community.

**** To donate** to our Challenge Grant, send a check to Marin Villages or online at our website marinvillages.org under *Get Involved/Be a Donor*.