



Matt helps Judy with her grocery shopping.

Marin Villages Helps People Stay in Homes

By John Bowman

A Marin Villages volunteer noticed one day that a woman she had taken home after a trip to the grocery store was having trouble reaching the chain to her front door lock. By that afternoon, a handyman had been dispatched to lower the chain.

Lisa Brinkmann, executive director of Marin Villages, has a bagful of stories like that. “Ours is a neighbor to neighbor operation,” she says. “We have three-pronged services: helping people with a variety of needs; directing folks to other local organizations, like Whistlestop and its Meals on Wheels Program; and direct service, like helping a grandmother watch her granddaughter’s wedding on Skype.” She said they enjoy their relationship with Whistlestop. “Joe O’Hehir is a friend and we provide our clients with Whistlestop’s Travel Navigator options.”

Lisa, who has a master’s degree in Gerontology

from USC, pitches in herself, driving people to appointments and helping with errands when needed. “I enjoy it and I like to see first-hand what the needs are. One time when I went into a home, I saw that some light bulbs were burned out. I got a volunteer to return later with new bulbs to replace them.”

Marin Villages has 420 members who sign up for services and pay a \$32 monthly fee. They can then call in when they need a ride, help at home, or would simply like some companionship while waiting for a cab or a bus ride. “We have more than 250 volunteers,” Lisa said. “Mostly older adults. They are a great team. We fill between 85 and 90 percent of all requests.” She said the organization receives about 500 requests per month from people who want to stay in their homes. Marin Villages helps them to avoid isolation.

Technology helps. “We have a web-based dashboard where a volunteer can log in and click a button to fill a need of a client. Volunteers do a variety of things. They can even help someone find a good plumber, which is difficult if they don’t use Yelp.”

Clients range in age from some in their late 50s, but most are 75 or older. One client, who is 99 and a half, goes to Trader Joe’s every Saturday and hosts a domino game once a month at her village community.

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Visit marinvillages.org for more information.

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