

Creating Connections in the Time of COVID

January 2021 Newsletter



The Village Network membership offers online wellness programs, interest groups, educational and social events, as well as volunteer services including grocery shopping, prescription pickups, phone friends, computer help, and personalized referrals to community resources. When it is safe, we hope to gradually begin offering in-person programs, driving, MedPals, and in-person friendly visits, computer help, and minor home repairs again.

Click [here](#) to view the new video on the Village Movement on our homepage!

What's New at the Village

Funding Campaign Progress

A generous donor has agreed to match your donations dollar-for-dollar with a pledge of \$6,000! We have already raised \$12,500 – only \$7,500 to go to reach our goal of \$20,000. We are deeply grateful for the donors who have already contributed. If your values align with ours, and you've been wanting to help, now is the time. Your important gift will help grow the Village Network's mission to empower older adults to connect, grow, and support each other in this challenging time. You can click [here](#) to contribute online or mail a check payable to VNP to P.O. Box 442, Petaluma, CA 94953.

Village iPad Lending Library Project

The Village is building our iPad Lending Library. We will be able to lend an iPad to members who have no other access to the internet. A donation of your used (or new!) iPad would be very welcome and would gladden the heart of a Village member who can't afford one and wants to connect with friends, family, and the Village. The pilot program will begin early this year.



Solstice Gathering a Great Success



Our Solstice Gathering on Zoom was truly a wonderful celebration of community with more than 40 Village members and volunteers attending. We shared poetry, music, silver linings, reflections on 2020...and much more. In Village member Tiaga Liner's words, "This celebration was such a beautiful way to end a very different kind of year. I loved how open and happy everyone was to be there!" We're learning more all the time how to nurture our community online!

Joanne Retiring

We are sad to announce Joanne Martin Braun's retirement as our Village Member and Volunteer Manager – and we wish her well in this new chapter of her life. Joanne's caring heart, deep wisdom, many talents, and amazing dedication to the Village have made a very big difference to all of us, and we will miss her. Our wonderful new Village Member Relations and Volunteer Manager, Carol Appel, has taken her seat, and we are delighted to have both Carol and Millie Anderson as a vibrant new team at the helm of the Village.

Loss of a Dear Volunteer

We are sorry to share the news that our dear volunteer Jean Wasp unexpectedly passed away. Jean volunteered on the Call Response team, then switched to doing newsletter layout. She played a major role in updating the Village logo and designing brochures and our website. She brought considerable professional skills to the Village from her work as a journalist at the Press Democrat and as Media Relations Coordinator at Sonoma State for many years. We'll miss her fun-loving spirit and are deeply grateful for all her contributions to the Village.



COVID-19 Updates from Sonoma County and CA Seniors Medicare Patrol

Get the facts! Check the county website being updated daily. Lots of good information! [SoCo Emergency website](#).

CA Senior Medicare Patrol has issued a fraud warning on COVID-19 vaccine scams at: [Medicare Vaccine Alert Fraud info](#)

Special Programs

Online calendar at www.villagenetworkofpetaluma.org

To join us for any of the online programs listed below, please RSVP by calling the office at 707-776-6055 or emailing us at info@VillageNetworkofPetaluma.org. We will then send you the online link for that class and other details. If you are a member needing Tech Help you can make a request for one of our Tech volunteers to call you. Programs on Zoom can be joined by phone as well.

Get to Know the Village Information Meeting

Thursday, January 21, 2021 11:00 – 12:00 pm.

Have you been thinking about joining the Village or volunteering? Join us on Zoom at a Get to Know the Village meeting and learn what is available, how to join, and how to get engaged with others. This is an online or phone meeting for potential members (ages 50+), their adult children, and those interested in volunteering. Those with no computer can participate in the meeting by phone.

Me and White Supremacy *Back by popular demand!*

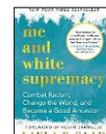


Orientation session January 10, 3:00 – 3:45 pm. Series on consecutive Sundays, January 17 through April 25, 3:00 – 4:30 pm.

We will work with Layla Saad's remarkable book, *Me and White Supremacy*, to examine our internalized and unconscious biases and to find a way forward to a more just and inclusive society. The group is open to 12 Village members and volunteers and requires a 15-week commitment. The book is available at the library, Copperfield's Books, and Amazon. **RSVP to reserve your spot!**

Leading the conversation is Sarah Fleming, a Village member and skilled facilitator who finds this discussion long overdue but very enriching.

"This group made a big difference in my awareness of the white privilege I have enjoyed my whole life, without understanding so many realities of life for a person of color in our country. Sarah is a wonderful facilitator who gently guided our small supportive group of Village members and volunteers."
- Anne Greenblatt



Stress Busters

Five Consecutive Wednesdays, January 6 through Feb. 3, 10:00 – 11:00 a.m. **NEW!**

A new five-week FREE series for Village members, volunteers, and donors, with an option to continue for an additional three sessions. For many of us, it's hard not to be stressed and anxious in the midst of challenging times. In these workshops, we'll learn how stress starts and a simple, effective method to handle our reaction to stressful situations. Stress Busters (also known as Ding Sum) has been serving older adults in San Francisco for over 30 years, reaching 900 people through monthly in-person seminars, and now via Zoom <https://123DingSum.org>.

Facilitator Eileen Chan has been practicing and leading this powerful program for 30 years. She will be joined by her husband, Gary Ow.

Spark Your Inspiration for 2021



Thursday, January 21, 1:00 – 3:00 pm.

Inspiration comes in many flavors and colors: It can be as small and personal as seeing something anew, or as big and collective as understanding the scope of the times we live in. What inspires you? Who Inspires you? How do you get yourself into a mindset to be inspired? Explore these questions with this uplifting interactive workshop led by Elad Levinson. Open to

the public. **RSVP by January 11.**

Elad has 50 years of experience as a psychotherapist. His areas of expertise include applied neuroscience and mindfulness practices. You can download his book Inspire Me! at <https://www.eladlevinson.com>.

The book is free; Elad asks only that you donate what you can to the Village Network of Petaluma.

Transforming Your Life Story New!

Tuesdays, January 26 through April 6, 2:00 - 3:30 pm.

Would you like to experience happiness no matter the external conditions? The trick is to develop an awareness of each moment and the choices we make. Providing “inspiration provokers” and “imagination stokers,” Elad Levinson invites curious, open-minded seekers to explore and reimagine their individual life stories. This series is limited to 20 Village members and volunteers able to commit to weekly attendance, with five new spots now open. **RSVP asap** to info@VillageNetworkofPetaluma.org or 776-6055 to register. *Elad has worked as a psychotherapist, leadership consultant, and coach. He is also an artist and the author of Inspire Me! – which participants will be invited to download for free.*



Classes and Interest Groups

TED Talks Discussion Group

Friday, January 8 and 22, 11:00 am – noon.

We will view a TED Talk together on zoom, and then discuss it. The subject will be announced to members and volunteers ahead of time.

Mindfulness-Based Meditation Group

Consecutive Saturdays, January 9 through March 6, 2021, 10:00 – 11:30 am.

A new nine-week series for Village members and volunteers begins early this year. Our goal is to foster compassion, equanimity, gratitude, and non-judgmental awareness through guided meditation and shared insights. The group is limited to 10 Village members and volunteers. There is currently one spot open, so **RSVP right away** to info@VillageNetworkofPetaluma.org or 707-776-6055. *Facilitator Freeman Humphrey is a retired psychiatric social worker who has led mindfulness-based, guided meditation groups for over 12 years.*

Village Social Hour on Zoom

Friday, January 15, 4:00 – 5:00 pm.

Join us to enjoy each other's company and share how we're doing. We explore new interests as well as moments of fun and inspiration we've found. Members and volunteers are welcome. *Hosted by Paul and Anne Greenblatt.*

Bocce Ball Meets More Often!

Wednesday, January 20, 4:00 – 5:00 pm, at Leghorn Park's Bocce courts. (Meets first and third Wednesdays).

We've had so much fun playing bocce ball at Leghorn Park that we have decided to play twice a month! It takes only about five minutes to learn this simple game, but it takes a lifetime to master. We pretend to be competitive, but really we just socialize and have fun. Please bring a mask and gloves. Rain cancels, but if it is raining at 3:00 pm., plan to play at 4:00 pm! Join us! **RSVP by Wednesday 12 noon** by email to George Beeler at agbcomm@sonic.net .

Gentle Chair Yoga – Stay Healthy During Stressful Times!

Mondays and Thursdays, 11:00 am – noon.



We practice yoga asanas, Eden Energy exercises, breath work, and meditation to improve strength, flexibility, and inner calm. Beginners welcome. The class is currently conducted over Zoom, and you will have the option to be seen or only heard, if you choose. Donations by non-members welcome.

Pat Martin, CMT, EEM-CP, CYT, is a State Certified Massage Therapist, Eden Energy Medicine Certified Practitioner, and Certified Yoga Teacher.

The Joy of Writing Group

Tuesdays, 10:00 – 11:00 am.

 We write for fun, in fiction, nonfiction, memoir, poetry, etc. We write original stories in a noncritical environment. Come have fun with us, whether you are a veteran writer or a nervous beginner. All are welcome. Members free, non-members \$5 donation.

Men's Discussion Group

Alternate Tuesdays, 11:00 am.

We get together with other men via Zoom to discuss our lives in a spirit of fellowship. The group is limited to eight Village members and volunteers. Let us know if you want to be on the waitlist.

The Village Garden and Chat Group

Tuesdays, January 5 and 19, noon – 1:00 pm. (Meets on alternate Tuesdays).

In this group, we talk about anything from sharing seeds, plants, fruits and vegetables to art and jigsaw puzzles. Join our friendly group!



Retired Nurses Group

Wednesdays, starting again on January 6, 10:15 – 11:45 am.

We discuss our nursing practices, education, and favorite stories, among other things, while getting to know one another.

Age-Friendly Petaluma: What's Next?



Thursday, February 18, 2:00 – 3:30 pm.

Age-friendly communities are great places to grow up and grow old in, and Petaluma is among 472 U.S. cities that have joined the AARP Age-Friendly Network. Find out what's next for Age-Friendly Petaluma and what that means to you. Learn about results from the city's recent Age-Friendly Survey and get the inside scoop on possible priorities as the city starts fulfilling its commitment to become age-friendly.

RSVP by February 8 to register and receive the zoom link.

Kris Rebillot, Director of Communications for the Buck Institute for Research on Aging and Chair of the Petaluma Senior Advisory Committee, is committed to fighting ageism and making aging as gentle and positive as possible.

Shopping Online: Individual consultation for members needing assistance with Instacart and other delivery options is available through the Village.

Staying Connected with Zoom: Individual consultations for members on how to participate in programs via Zoom is available through the Village.

Events Around Town

Saturday Redwood Fitness Hike



Jack London State Park, Saturday, January 2, 10:00 am.

Experience Jack London Park's spectacular Ancient Redwood while enjoying exercise, stunning scenery, and fresh air. Choose from two options: Hike to the lake and return (2 miles roundtrip) or continue from the lake to the Ancient Redwood (4.5 miles roundtrip). These hikes take place on uneven, rocky terrain; be sure to wear hiking shoes and bring

water. Hike is FREE but a parking fee applies. Eight-person limit. Heavy rain will cancel. COVID-19 safety protocols will be adhered to. **Please reserve a spot** at <https://jacklondonpark.com/events/hike-redwood-fitness-hike-january-2-2021>.

Gauguin: The True Story

Wednesday, January 13, 1:00 – 2:30 pm.

In 2015, a painting by French post-Impressionist Paul Gauguin sold for \$300 million. Learn more about this enigmatic artist and his bold, colorful art. Presented by Linda Loveland Reid. To register for this Zoom event, sponsored by the Sebastopol Center for the Arts, go to seabarts.org and click on Current and Upcoming Events.

Qigong Online: Teja Bell, Zen Master and committed practitioner of Qigong, offers a 12-minute guided Qigong practice at <https://vimeo.com/qigongdharma>

Santa Rosa Symphony

Anytime. Tune into the YouTube SRS@Home channel on your smart TV, computer, or other device for this and other virtual performances. You must subscribe to the channel. For more information and quick links, go to

<https://www.srsymphony.org/Events-Tickets/SRS-HOME>

Member Profile of Junko Rich

By Mary Alden



After her mother died when she was seven, Junko's father moved to the northern Hokkaido city of Sapporo. After graduating from high school, she became an executive secretary in a large steel company and participated in a community English conversation group. Later she met Peter Rich and began a relationship that continued when Peter left the Navy to work for TWA in Los Angeles. They eventually married in Sapporo, then returned to L.A. where their daughter was born.

When Peter's work took them from L.A. to New Jersey, Peter left TWA and both began college, where Junko majored in Art History at Rutgers University. Upon graduation, Peter took a Systems Engineering position in San Francisco that led to a two-plus year assignment in Tokyo in 1976. Their return to the overheated California housing market led them to purchase their home in Petaluma. Junko resumed her education and graduated from Sonoma State with a degree in Systems Management, leading to a job managing the student computer labs for SRJC. She retired in 2001. "Computer language is much simpler, and mistakes are easy to spot because the program just won't work," she notes. Everything is binary, so there's no worry about English diction and grammar."

The Richs learned about the Village Network from a PBS special about the first network in Boston, and when one formed in Petaluma they quickly joined. Their timing was ideal. With Peter's chronic health problems, Junko relied on Village volunteers' daily check-ins with him so that she could visit her daughter and grandchildren in New York and later, Tokyo.

Zoom Yoga saved my life when Peter died this summer," Junko said. Since then she has found that TED Talks, book group sessions, and other Zoom activities provide the support she needs to manage this isolating time. While Japanese, English, and computer languages have played key roles in her life, Junko is ready for new challenges. She began playing piano four years ago and may learn another language to keep her mind sharp. Note: Village members should ask Junko why she switched from Art History to computer studies. It's a great story!

Protect Brain Health During Pandemic

By Kathy Lawrence

Although measures to minimize the chance of contracting COVID-19 are essential, particularly for older adults and others with preexisting conditions, those protective efforts may have a negative impact on our brain health. Former U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Richard Carmona warns that the need to isolate from family and friends, the inability to exercise at gyms and other public places, the absence of touch, and the feeling of purposelessness that many are experiencing may all contribute to what he calls “negative brain plasticity.” Studies have repeatedly shown that our brains have the capacity to change and adapt in response to new experiences and stimulations. But the restrictions on normal life and social interactions imposed by social isolation can diminish brain health and result in cognitive decline, Carmona says.

There are ways to offset these negative effects, however, and specialists have suggested some of the following measures to keep our brains functioning optimally.

- Challenge the brain by learning a new language. Online learning programs and apps abound, and even if you never become fluent in, say, Greek, you will boost your memory and cognitive skills.
- Adopt a pet or offer some caregiving time for a friend or neighbor’s pet. Studies have shown improved mental health in people who begin caring for an animal.
- Listen to more music and perhaps branch out into new types of music. If you’re a rock ‘n roller, for example, try Jane Merryman’s suggestion for enjoying classical music broadcasts from the Santa Rosa Symphony. <https://www.srsymphony.org/Events-Tickets/SRS-HOME>
- Do participate in social groups, even if they are online. Many experts now feel that forming small groups of trusted companions while observing social distancing and wearing masks has benefits that outweigh potential risks. But if you are uneasy with the concept of a “pod,” try forming a new group online – perhaps a book club or some other type of discussion group with regular meetings and an agenda for stimulating conversations.
- Finally, do not give up on exercise. The Santa Rosa JC Older Adult Program has many choices for exercise in your own home. <https://older-adults.santarosa.edu/>
- The internet offers a wealth of other options for working out at home; for a few suggestions tailored to older people, see <https://living.medicareful.com/5-great-youtube-fitness-channels>. And of course, walking provides opportunities for enjoying nature while keeping fit; just wear a mask and avoid the more heavily trafficked areas.

For more suggestions about maintaining brain plasticity and health while observing safety precautions during the pandemic, the following sources offer a wealth of helpful ideas:

https://memory.ucsf.edu/sites/memory.ucsf.edu/files/COVID-19_Brain_Health_Handout.pdf

<https://www.nextavenue.org/protecting-your-brain-health-during-the-pandemic/>

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/coronavirus/in-depth/mental-health-covid-19/art-20482731>

What is Telehealth?

By Millie Anderson

If you mentioned the word “telehealth” back in January 2020, you’d probably see people looking at you with a vague, uncomprehending look in their eyes – we just weren’t familiar with the term back then. But COVID-19 has changed all of that. Many of us have experienced one or more “remote” visits with our doctors over the phone or via videoconference during this pandemic lockdown, and most assuredly this is what most of us think of nowadays when we hear the word. But guess what? Not only has telehealth been around for much longer than COVID-19, it also encompasses much more than teleconferencing visits with our doctor.

Here is a link to an easy-to-read introductory article published earlier this year by the *New England Journal of Medicine* online journal *Catalyst*. It gives a nice overview of the many categories that fall under the term “telehealth”:

<https://catalyst.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/CAT.18.0268>

For an interesting history of telemedicine, full of anecdotes and milestones in telehealth development, here is a great article by Jane Gaydos from *History of Wound Care*:

<https://www.todayswoundclinic.com/articles/audio-visual-connection-brief-history-telemedicine>

Senior Planet – for Thriving in the Digital Age

 Embrace Senior Planet's shared values of striving to be optimistic, curious, aware, motivated, visible, confident, focused, future-oriented, expressive, present, engaged, resilient – and imperfect. This website is designed to help older adults learn and use technology so they can save money, get in shape, and live better in the digital age. In addition to a unique program called Older Adults Technology Services (OATS), it offers classes such as Virtual Grandparenting, Stretching, Zoom Q&A, Instagram, and discussion groups. While anyone over 60 is welcome to take classes, attend lectures, and use the space for free, membership donations of any amount are encouraged.

<https://seniorplanet.org/about/who-is-oats/>

Gifts That Give Twice: If you sign up to use AmazonSmile (<https://smile.amazon.com>) for your Amazon purchases, you can select the Village Network of Petaluma as your charitable organization of choice. Amazon donates a small portion to the Village from each purchase we make. It all adds up!

More Ideas for Thriving at Home

Petaluma People Services offers Virtual Counseling Support: 707-765-8488. Also: [Rental Housing Assistance](#)

County of Sonoma
Warm Line



Call **(707) 565-2652** for free and private support if you or someone you know is experiencing emotional stress and anxiety during COVID-19.

Good Books Village People Are Reading:

Almost Everything, by Anne Lamott

Grandma Gatewood's Walk: The Inspiring Story of the Woman Who Saved the Appalachian Trail, by Ben Montgomery

The Kurdish Bike, by Alesia Lightbourne

Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community, by Robert Putman

Winter's Graces: The Surprising Gifts of Later Life, by Susan Avery Stewart

The Magic Mountain, by Thomas Mann

Still Life, by Louise Penny

The Soul of an Octopus, A Surprising Exploration into the Wonder of Consciousness, by Sy Montgomery

Where the Crawdads Sing, by Delia Owens

Out of the Gobi, My Story of China and America, by Weijian Shan

TV shows We're Streaming:

The Crown (Netflix)

Longmire (Netflix; reruns)

Dick Johnson Is Dead (Netflix)

Carol (Netflix)

Small Axe (Amazon Prime)

The Queen's Gambit (Netflix)

As part of a national movement, the Village Network of Petaluma is a nonprofit membership organization empowering adults 50+ to live active, independent, and connected lives in the places we call home.

info@VillageNetworkofPetaluma.org | 707-776-6055 | www.VillageNetworkofPetaluma.org

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