



Senior Life in Lamorinda

What Does it Take to Age in Place?

Community support helps it happen

By Cathy Tyson



Ballroom dancing at the Lafayette Community Center

“There are two types of people, seniors and seniors in the making” said Sandra Smith, a healthy, active 70-year-old living with her 75-year-old husband in Lafayette. She and the other members of the Lafayette Senior Services Commission work hard to “enhance the well-being of older adults by identifying their concerns and needs, providing information about resources and promoting community programs and services that enable them to live meaningful lives,” according to their mission statement.

Lucky for the continually growing proportion of older residents in

Lamorinda there are a number of community-based organizations that support the independence of our seniors, see adjacent box for contact information.

What factors influence the necessity of moving out of current housing? Dr. Kathryn Williams, an Orinda resident and a senior herself, is on the advisory council of Contra Costa County’s Area Agency on Aging. She said that a couple of the main reasons older adults aren’t able to stay in their homes are due to health concerns and memory issues. Especially if they live alone, once elders have a stroke or break a hip, it’s very difficult to remain at home, especially for those living alone.

Because of reduced mobility and normal changes associated with aging like hearing impairment, failing vision, arthritis – sometimes it’s the house that creates the difficulties. To avoid that and create an environment that is safe and accessible there are a number of options for seniors.

With funding mandated through the Older Americans Act there are numerous programs provided through the County’s Area Agency on Aging to keep seniors home longer. “This is the one place you can find complete access for older adults,” said Micki Sherman, Program Manager for the Agency on Aging. By calling their phone number staffed with trained social workers, seniors can get help with a number of services including help for low cost and free adaptive devices, weatherization, even air conditioning (800) 510-2020.

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Another great resource is Independent Living Resource; their motto is, “because everyone deserves to be in control of their life!” They provide free services to Contra Costa County residents who may need improved access in their home as well as assistive technology help for those that have difficulty hearing or poor vision. For more information call (925) 363-7293 or <http://ilrcoco-sol.org/default.aspx>

Social support:

There are a variety of organizations in Lamorinda that support and enhance aging in place. Almost all of the many churches in the area have some kind of senior focused programs; contact them directly for more information. One example is Contact Care, a free service from the Our Savior’s Lutheran Church that offers complimentary phone calls on a daily and weekly basis to “check in” with seniors. Call Elaine Welch at Senior Helpline Services Reassurance Phone Friend Program at (925) 284-8328.

Temple Isaiah hosts a monthly Senior Lunch Group, usually on the first Wednesday of the month, contact Mary Anne Winig the Adult Program Coordinator at (925) 283-8575.

Moraga Movers hosts activities for adults over 55. They have a bowling club, monthly book reviews, twice-weekly Bridge, trips and a monthly dinner at St. Mary’s College. Contact them at (925) 376-6622 at the Hacienda de las Flores.

The Orinda Senior Bridge Club meets on Thursdays at 12:15 in the Orinda Community Center. There’s a \$3 drop-in fee. (925) 254-2445.

The Spirit Van provides door to door service for elders wishing to enjoy a very low cost nutritious lunch at the Walnut Creek Senior Café. A hot meal along with socializing is on the menu Monday through Friday. One day advance registration is required; call (925) 280-7310.

Paid help:

Sometimes staying home requires help from paid staff, there are many firms in the area that provide this type of service. Sandra Lemmons of Companion Care in Lafayette said, “we have clients in their eighties and nineties, one fellow in his nineties is very active – swims every day, but he has an aide come in because of memory and balance issues.” For clients who need some assistance, like help cooking, light house keeping, running errands, or even a driver to take them to bridge club, a companion to go to the movies with, paying by the hour is an option that might help keep them in their homes longer. With an hourly rate of \$28.50 per hour with a three hour minimum, this kind of assistance can also give family caregivers a break.

The secret of aging in place for Sandra Smith is, “doing a lot of volunteering. It keeps you young. There was a university study done that showed people who volunteer live longer. It gives them a sense of purpose and a feeling of being needed.” She encourages other seniors to volunteer because you get so much out of it. Considering the many programs in the community, it looks like many already are, but they can always use more help.



Aegis of Moraga resident Tom Noyes taking a 3 mile walk with his “dog” Charley says hello to Charlotte and Al Peters of Orinda and their dog CoCo

Photo Andy Scheck

Resources for Seniors

Seniors Around Town (Orinda Seniors only) – 925-254-0800

M-F 9am-4pm, Reservations 48 hours in advance, Lamorinda, Berkeley and Walnut Creek areas.

A free door-to-door, on-demand transportation program for Orinda Seniors who are no longer able to drive and who may not qualify for the County Connection LINK system. Volunteers needed

Senior Helpline Services-Rides for Seniors – 925-284-2207

Volunteers provide door-to-door rides for medical appointments, errands etc. Available for ambulatory seniors who are in the Reassurance Phone Friends program. Cover all of Contra Costa County. Volunteers needed

Lamorinda Spirit Van – 925-283-3534

Call for reservations by 1:00 pm two business ahead. Provide low cost transportations for Lamorinda Seniors. Medical rides, errands, grocery shopping as per the schedule. Rides to at Senior Café in Walnut Creek for Nutritional lunches every day. Seniors (over 60) and people with disabilities Volunteers needed.

County Connection Link – 925-676-1976 x 601

Reservations 48 hours in advance – 925-938-7433. Door-to-door service, wheelchair accessible. Must pre-qualify under ADA guidelines. Covers central Contra Costa County. Links to fixed route bus lines.

Travel Training for Seniors – 925-676-1976

Receive one-on-one travel training to learn how to use the Country bus lines in Contra Costa County.

Taxi Service- 20% Discount for Seniors

Contra Costa Yellow Cab 925-935-1234

DeSoto Company: 925-284-1234

County Agency on Aging – one stop shopping for many senior needs. Calls are answered by trained social workers, seniors can get help with a number of services including low cost and free adaptive devices, weatherization, even air conditioning 1 (800) 510-2020.

Independent Living Resource free services to make homes more accessible. For more information call (925) 363-7293 or <http://ilrcoco-sol.org/default.aspx>

Senior HelpLine Services

Reassurance Phone Friend Program- 925-284-8328

Free Home Safety Checks- 925-284-2207

Lafayette Senior Center – 925-284-5050

Provides a variety of classes, programs, musical events, referrals and assistance

Meal Assistance

Walnut Creek Senior Café -925-280-7310. Hot meals M-F. 24 hour advanced reservations

Meals on Wheels – 925-937-8311 x 117

Home delivery of meals

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Widowed Persons Support Group– 925-932-3448

Provide one-on one support and monthly meetings

Alzheimer's Association - 925 -284-7942

24 hour help line: 800-272-3900

Offering support for people diagnosed with Alzheimer's and those who care for them.

Community education, crisis counseling, resources referrals

Hospice

Hospice of the East Bay, 3470 Buskirk Avenue, Pleasant Hill, CA 94523

925-887-5678, fax: 925-887-5679, webmaster@hospiceeastbay.org, www.hospiceeastbay.org

The Lafayette Community Foundation Senior Liaison Committee has a free "Lafayette Senior Activity and Service Directory" available in large print at the Parks and Rec and the town offices.

Activities for Seniors



Maria Erickson and Mary Blanche Reilley drawing together at Stratford at Countrywood Senior Living Photo Andy Scheck

Bi-Monthly Caregiver Support Group. Caring for frail older adults in the home often creates great stress and emotional anguish for spouses and family members. Licensed geriatric care manager Carol Shenson, M.A., CMC, offers a bi-monthly support group for family members who are considering or currently involved with the direct care of an older relative. To sign up, please call 284-5050. Drop-ins are also welcome.

Mondays: July 21, August 4, and August 18. 1:30 – 2:30 pm

Luk Tung Kwen every other Friday: July 11, July 25; Aug 8, Aug 22: 1:00 – 1:50 pm.

A health and strengthening discipline, Luk Tung Kwen helps practitioners to achieve body wellness with goals similar to western physical therapy. It also promises to combat some chronic conditions and build resistance to a host of illnesses. The program relies on the 36 body movements performed slowly and repeatedly. There is no charge although a donation at the door would be appreciated.

Seniors enjoy afternoon Tea Dancing and light refreshments every Wednesday from 12:30 – 3:00pm in the spacious Live Oak room. Come for the swell music and good company even if you prefer not to dance. \$2 fee covers refreshments. LCC Live Oak Room located at 500 Saint Mary's Rd, Lafayette. 925-284-5050

Computer Maintenance 101 with Ed Zeidan, Nerd4Rent on Thurs July 17, 10:30 - Noon

This popular and informative class will cover the basics of computer ownership for seniors. We'll describe what steps to take to keep your computer running well, when to replace vs. repair, and give recommendations on what features to look for in your next computer. Call early, this event is always well attended. . Lafayette Community Center, 500 Saint Mary's Rd, Lafayette. 925-284-5050

Lecture on Oscar Wilde's "An Ideal Husband" Wed July 23, 11:00 – 12:30 that precedes a Group Trip to the CalShakes Theater Production in Orinda. "If we men married the women we deserved...we should have a

very bad time of it." No charge for the lecture. Attendees are encouraged (but not required) to attend the afternoon matinee production the following Saturday for which there is a group discount charge of \$30.00 per admission. Lafayette Community Center, 500 Saint Mary's Rd, Lafayette. 925-284-5050

Preventing falls. Don't follow Jack & Jill down the hill. Injuries due to falls are the single major reason for hospital admissions. Come and learn how you can take control and stop yourself from becoming a statistic. All it takes is a willingness to change (just a little). Fri: July 25, 11:30 am – 12:30 pm. An Anne Randolph Workshop at the Lafayette Community Center. All workshops are free of charge. Please call (925)284-5050 to register. 500 Saint Mary's Rd, Lafayette

An Ice Cream Social - Widowed Persons Support Group -July 28 at 1.00 P.M. at St. Stephens Church on St. Stephens Drive in Orinda. There will be a Hospice Fashion Show. The Hospice Thrift Shop is providing clothes for the models and these clothes will be for sale after the Show. Charge for this event is \$5.00. For information or to make your reservation call Mildred Weisberg tel. 906-9483 or Molly Runnion Tel. 283-1119

Senior Identity Theft and You. Learn from and ask our local panel of experts what you and your loved ones can do to thwart the ID theft criminals at your home (phone, mail boxes, garbage), in public (credit card use, ATMs), on your computer, and so on. Believe it or not, there are many simple strategies to keep the bad guys at bay, and feeling safe is a very good feeling. Friday, August 8th 10:30 – Noon. Lafayette Community Center

A Summer Afternoon of Jazz Song and Piano. Vocalist Libby McLaren, an east bay icon in the jazz (and Celtic !) world teams up with the youthful exuberance of jazz pianist Maya Kronfeld, to bring you jazz standards from the 30's to the present. Light refreshments will be served. Friday August 15th, 1:30 – 2:30pm, Lafayette Community Center. For reservations call: 925-284-5050

Pain Management Friday August 22, 11:30-12:30. Learn the purpose of pain and the causes of chronic pain. Learn how improving posture and muscle strength can reduce or eliminate pain altogether. An Anne Randolph Workshop at the Lafayette Community Center. All workshops are free of charge. Please call (925)284-5050 to register. 500 Saint Mary's Rd, Lafayette

Transportation Options Help Seniors Stay Independent Longer

By Jean Follmer

Picture yourself in your early 80's. You retired what seems like ages ago. Your kids are busy with their careers and putting your grandchildren through their last years of college. Your spouse died a couple years ago so you're essentially alone now...except for the birds. Each morning, you prepare your cup of tea and make your way out to the back patio to feed the birds. The same ones fly in each morning and you smile and greet them by name. You continue your routine by moving on to the old orange tree. You pick a few and bring them inside to squeeze for your morning juice. You settle yourself in your favorite chair and read the entire paper until lunchtime. After lunch, you take a nap and wake mid-day to the feelings of loneliness. To drown the silence, you move back to the living room and turn on the television. Except for a quick dinner, you watch television until you go to bed...another day in the life.

Your son sees your routine and can't understand why you don't want to move to a "retirement facility." Sometimes you feel tempted to and you know it's a great choice for some people...but not for you. Each morning, you gaze at that orange tree and you remember planting it forty years ago with your loved one. You look at the magnolia tree that you planted in honor of your daughter's birth nearly sixty years ago. Its blooms are still magnificent. You can't imagine not being able to gaze at the fine craftsmanship of the built-in bookcases your son made during one of his summer breaks. It's your home and it holds your life's memories. You never want to leave, but you can't drive anymore. You're tired of asking everyone for favors. You wish you could still get to the grocery store or your doctor appointment on your own, but you can't. What choice do you have?

If you're a Lamorinda resident, you have a few options. The County Connection bus service "provides fixed-route and paratransit service throughout the Central Contra Costa communities." The regularly scheduled fixed-route (senior) bus fare is \$.85 per ride and free between 2pm and 4pm. If you qualify for the County Link door-to-door (paratransit) service, the fare is \$3.50 each way. While these are wonderful services, they aren't able to effectively serve all Lamorinda seniors. For some, it may be all but impossible to get to a bus stop. The County Link may not be an option because "to be eligible for County Connection LINK service, it must be determined that you are eligible for paratransit services under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)." The contact number is 676-7500.

This is where the Lamorinda Senior Transportation consortium steps in. The "three-prong approach" includes the Discounted Taxi Program, the Lamorinda Spirit Van and the Volunteer Driver Program (comprised of Orinda Seniors Around Town and Senior Helpline Services Rides for Seniors). The Discounted Taxi Program is offered by Yellow Cab and Desoto Cab of Contra Costa County. Owner George Moore offers a 20% fare discount to seniors. Moore said "I've been offering the discounts for quite some time." The cab reservation number is 935-1234 or 284-1234.

The Lamorinda Spirit Van offers seniors a free ride from their home to lunch at the C.C. Café at the Walnut Creek Senior Center Monday through Friday from 10am-1pm. For a \$3 one-way/\$6 round-trip fare, the Spirit Van will take seniors on errand runs to Safeway, Trader Joe's, Diablo Foods and Longs Drugs as well as hair and medical appointments. The errand schedule is Tuesdays in Lafayette, Wednesdays in Orinda and Thursdays in Moraga from 2pm-5pm. The Spirit Van also offers occasional trips to the mall and the movies and is trying to coordinate with some of the senior programs at the Lafayette Community Center. Although the Spirit Van is primarily funded by the City of Lafayette, the services are available to all Lamorinda seniors. Other funding sources include organizations like the Moraga Jun-

ior Women's Club. Senior Transportation Coordinator Mary Bruns said the Moraga Junior Women's Club generously "donated 50% of the money they raised in their garden tour. They were a delight to work with." The Spirit Van is driven by trained volunteers who offer a "through the door program" like helping seniors into their homes with packages. Bruns said they had anticipated purchasing a second van this fall with funds from Contra Costa County, but "due to California budget cuts," that isn't going to happen. Bruns hopes to secure a second van from donations. She stressed "We always need more drivers and we always need more funding." Seniors who take the Spirit Van have found they enjoy the camaraderie of it. One rider told Bruns he was "sitting home reading all the time and started going to the lunch program. He's glad he's not so isolated now." Contact the Lamorinda Spirit Van at 283-3534 or MBruns@lovelafayette.org.

For those seniors who would like a little more assistance or are unable to pay for a cab or van fare, there is the Volunteer Driver Program. Senior Helpline Services Rides for Seniors offers free ride service to qualifying seniors age sixty and up throughout Contra Costa County. Senior Helpline Services Executive Director Elaine Welch said "Our motto is to help seniors age in place safely and comfortably." The ride program is one of three services provided by Senior Helpline Services. The others are phone assistance and home safety education programs. The ride program currently includes 106 drivers and 180 riders. Welch said there is a "big presence of both drivers and clients in Lamorinda." The program enables seniors to receive help on a personal and individual level. The driver will not only drive them to a doctor appointment, but will remain in the waiting room during the appointment and return them to their home. Welch said the entity "largely grew out of my experience as a nurse." She saw seniors entering nursing facilities who really didn't need to be there except for loss of transportation. She said many seniors are "independent inside the door but have lost their mobility" outside of the home. She regrets that it has "somehow seemed to go unnoticed that it's become okay to place seniors in facilities simply because they've lost mobility." Welch said "I'm dedicating the rest of my life to helping seniors age in place." The Rides for Seniors program "gives riders a lift," both literally and emotionally. To volunteer, call Janice at 284-6699. For ride information, call Laurie at 284-6161.

Orinda Seniors Around Town (SAT) offers a free volunteer driver program to Orinda residents. Sponsored by the City of Orinda and the Orinda Association, SAT coordinator Eartha Newsong said they have twenty four drivers and two pending drivers. They currently have eighty five registered riders and thirty five of them are regulars. The numbers of rides given keeps increasing each year. Newsong said "So far this year through April we had already done 166 rides and 113 volunteer hours." Newsong said "We're always happy to accept new drivers." Administration costs are covered by generously donated proceeds from the Orinda Classic Car Show as well as a grant and other donations. For information on volunteering or riding, call 254-0800.

With these mobility options available to Lamorinda seniors, why don't you go ahead and plant that orange tree? You may be able to enjoy it for the rest of your life.