

Solo seniors

By Linda Fodrini-Johnson

Forbes magazine, December 2022 issue had an interesting article about the number of people living alone over 50, with the article noting that number to be 26 million Americans. If you or a friend is a “solo senior” without family, it is very important to do some good planning for your next steps and those “what if’s” of a longer life, including considerations for housing, healthcare, and personal safety.

Housing

The Forbes article mentioned above focused more on the financial impact and the shortage of small space housing more suitable for downsizing seniors. Selling a bigger home and moving into a more manageable space is appealing to many but the inventory is not there to meet the growing needs. I have seen people in our community selling big homes and moving into luxury apartments. Some are choosing retirement living options, if they need more support and desire more socialization. The latter seems to be appealing to younger active solo seniors

who might not have children or spouses. They often choose a retirement community that will meet their needs now and in the future. Those are most often buy-in communities called “Continuing Care Retirement Communities” (CCRC).

Healthcare

An important document to work on is your Advanced Health Care Directive. Seniors living alone need to have a trusted friend, professional fiduciary, or financial institution on standby to oversee their care if they lose capacity. An Advanced Healthcare Directive serves as a guide for that individual or institution for short-term care or a long, progressive illness. We all have little “quirky” likes and dislikes. Those can range from what you would desire in a care setting to the type of food you never want to see. For instance, I have stated in my documents that I need to see trees in every environment in which I live, or even stay for a short-term stay. I would never want to be served beets or red meat. We need to be specific in our planning and the information we communicate to those who would make decisions for us. These “you” val-

ues and desires need to be written into your legal documents. I highly recommend “Prepare for Your Care” (prepareforyourcare.org) as a place to download an Advanced Health Care Directive document. It is a wonderful document and a great guide for a conversation with the person who would be making decisions for you.

It is also very important for solo seniors to stay healthy – because they are their own watchdog. They do not have a spouse or partner pointing out what they should be doing and many are without adult children. Developing a healthy lifestyle will ensure you are in charge of your own quality of life.

Safety

Living alone means thinking about safety as well. A brief checklist of some important items that focus on safety: 1) Universal Design within the house or apartment; 2) Having monitors to alert someone you might have had a fall. There are many options in this area. Some will send an alert when you use the bathroom or open the front door; others only send an alert when you fall. 3) Declutter your home to reduce the risk of falls, as well as

to provide a better environment for relaxation and rest.

4) Annual wellness exams – staying on top of possible problems early.
5) Keep a “go to hospital list” with names of doctors, lists of health diagnoses, and all current medications as well as a copy of your Advance Health Care Directive and your POLST (Physicians Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment) form if you have one. Be sure this is posted or visible in your home. Many of my clients have put this in a plastic sleeve and attached it to the refrigerator or a side cabinet.
6) Put together a “Go-Bag” with the essentials you need to take in the event of a fire or earthquake: three days of food, medications, extra pair of glasses, etc.

If you need help designing a “road map” for yourself if you are a solo senior you can have a consultation with a professional Aging Life Care member through Aginglife-care.org. You will want to choose someone with a care management certification and a license in his or her field of expertise – like nursing, social work, or counseling. I am always willing to give you names of fiduciaries, elder law

attorneys, or Professional Aging Life care experts, also called Geriatric Care Managers.

Upcoming class: Feb. 17: Dementia: From diagnosis to family care! For a Zoom link email: LindaFJ620@outlook.com



Linda Fodrini-Johnson, MA, MFT, CMC, is a Licensed Family Therapist and Certified Care Manager. She has been practicing professional care management since 1984. Linda founded Eldercare Services, a full-service care management and home care company in 1989. Eldercare Services is now a division of Home Care Assistance and continues to provide Bay Area families with care management, advocacy, counseling, support groups and education.

Miramonte student spreads awareness on Catalan Independence Movement

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“Ardal would mention Catalonia and its independence movement on an almost daily basis. He would talk about his summer in Catalonia and his talks with the leader of

Catalonia,” Miramonte senior Ricky Davis, a captain for Inesi’s favorite sport of cross-country, said. “At practice he would educate people about its independence movement and would frequently engage in educational debates over

the legitimacy of Catalonia.”

Though Inesi’s documentary is now finished, his efforts to raise awareness about the Catalan people’s struggle for independence are anything but over. In addition to future projects, this fall he be-

gan working on an Original Oratory speech for his public speaking class to inform his classmates about Catalan independence. He hopes to take the speech to tournaments in 2023.

“I’m excited to continue

discussing Catalonia and its right to self-determination. Until we get independence, it’s a topic I want to keep bringing people’s attention to,” Inesi concluded.

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