



# The Health of Humboldt: Part 2

## Moving Away

By Ted Pease

Traveling out of the area for medical care is common for Humboldt County patients. In a remote rural region where doctors are scarce and specialists are scarcer, driving six hours to the Bay Area is part of life and health.

Over the last couple of years, that became the stark reality for longtime Humboldters Jim and Joan Baker of Trinidad, for whom all-too-regular trips — first to Stanford Women’s Cancer Center in Palo Alto and then to Sutter Health in San Francisco — became a life-and-death necessity.

“You do what you have to do,” said Jim Baker, 75. “I learned that in the service.”

Jim, a surveyor, was born in Arcata and raised at the timber company town of Crannel. He and Joan, 69, originally from the East Bay, married in 1978 and have lived in Humboldt since 1981.

After coming back to Trinidad eight years ago, the Bakers plunged into community life, Jim as a respected two-term city council member, and Joan with civic work with the Trinidad Civic Club and the annual Blessing of the Fleet.

“This is home,” they agreed.

But then, in 2016, Joan was diagnosed with uterine cancer, and her gynecologist sent her immediately to the Stanford Women’s Health Center. A year later, her hairdresser noticed a suspicious mole on Joan’s scalp. “She said, ‘You should have somebody look at that,’” she recalled.

That hair appointment may have saved Joan’s life. A biopsy found melanoma, a malignant cancer that can be very aggressive. Her dermatologist removed it, but couldn’t get it all. She was referred to specialists in San

Continued on Page 8



ROCK STEADY — O’Rourke Swinney takes a swing at Parkinson’s disease in St. Joseph Health’s Rock Steady Boxing gym. Ted Pease photo.

## Fighting Back Against Parkinson’s

By Carol McFarland

Until recently, a diagnosis of Parkinson’s disease (PD) has meant few treatment choices for local patients: try medications, or trav-

el outside the area for PD-specific physical and occupational therapies.

Continued on Page 23

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**Be Careful**  
Page 5

**Redwood Coast PACE**  
Page 11

**Pets, Politics & the P.O.**  
Page 20

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# TEDtalks: Vital Signs

By Ted Pease

Our June issue on “The Health of Humboldt” hadn’t even gone to press before we knew that there was much more to say on the topic of health and medical care in Humboldt County. Here, as across rural America, getting sick and staying healthy pose greater challenges than in more urban areas.

Anyone who has needed to see a doctor in Humboldt for more than an annual checkup knows about the access problem — there just aren’t enough doctors in Humboldt County to cover the demand, either primary care/family physicians, or specialists. This is a common ailment across rural areas.

Nationally, there are about 55 primary care physicians per 100,000 people in rural America, compared to nearly 80 in cities. That number is down to 50 across California, and down to 35 in our most rural areas.

The disparity is much worse for specialists — 30 per 100,000 rural population, but 263 in urban areas, where specialists compete for patients instead of what Humboldters are used to.

In California, the demand for primary care clinicians is expected to fall short statewide by nearly 12% by 2030, says a University of California-San Francisco study, and by about 10% in the region stretching from the Sierra to the Oregon border.

“Humboldt suffers a health disparity when compared to the State of California,” reports a 2018 Humboldt County Department of Health

and Human Services public health report. One dire result is a higher death rate in Humboldt County (804 per 100,000) than statewide (612).

Still, there are positive trends to report in Humboldt. For one, in an era that has seen rural hospitals close at an accelerating rate nationwide, Humboldt County has four hospitals and two urgent care options, plus 12 Open Door Community Health Centers.

St. Joseph Health-Eureka, a 138-bed full-service hospital that employs 352 physicians, admitted 6,963 patients last year, and treated 31,106 in the emergency room.

Progress also has been seen in health coverage of poor and indigent patients. Open Door, whose core mission is to treat low-income people, has seen its number of uninsured patients drop from about 40% before passage of the Affordable Care Act in 2010 to around 5%, meaning fewer Humboldters are falling through the cracks.

There’s good news to report on the opioid front as well (page 3). Although the opioid crisis continues here as across the nation, Humboldt has made significant progress over the last six years, although opioid use remain one of the county’s greatest health challenges.

So, as the doctors say, the Health of Humboldt is a serious condition that should continue to be closely monitored.

—  
Ted Pease is editor of Senior News.



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## In This Issue Humboldt Health 2 FEATURES

Fighting Parkinson's.....	1
Moving Away.....	1
Opioids: The Crisis.....	3
Opioids: The Doctors.....	3
Aches & Pains.....	4
Building a Village.....	6
Hold My Hand.....	7
At the ER.....	9
Medical Cannabis.....	15
New Rehab Center.....	17

## COLUMNS

Tedtalks: <i>Vital Signs</i> .....	2
The Doc: <i>Be Careful</i> .....	5
Goodspeed: <i>Sense</i> .....	6
Kellermann: <i>Beauty</i> .....	8
Heckel: <i>Remember Me</i> .....	10
Rainwater-Gish: <i>Falls</i> .....	16

## CALENDARS

Senior Centers.....	12-14
Community Events.....	19

## HSRC News

Redwood Coast PACE ...	11
Eureka Highlights.....	11

## & ETC. . . .

Healthcare Shortage.....	5
On Turning 70.....	18
Letters to the Editor.....	20
'Always Loleta'.....	21
Crossword.....	22

COMING NEXT MONTH

Back to Nature

# Opioids: ‘We’ve Worked Hard. We’ve Made Progress’

## Turning Back the Crisis

By Mary Meengs, M.D.

The “opioid crisis” and Humboldt’s response to it have been in the news lately, especially since a federal Drug Enforcement Administration database on opioid use nationwide was released in July.

The DEA data wasn’t new — it tracked 380 million drug transactions between 2006 and 2012, including some 70 million pills dispensed in Humboldt County — and much has changed in Humboldt since then.

The Rx Safe Humboldt coalition has been working for nearly six years to help make the treatment of acute and chronic pain both safer and more effective. We have had some successes, thanks to partnerships among healthcare organizations and providers, public health and insurers.

In fact, contrary to the alarming DEA data, the amount of opioid pain medication prescribed in Humboldt County has decreased by approximately one-third over the last seven years, and capacity to treat opioid dependence has increased significantly.

How does this impact you personally? It is true that some seniors have tended to gradually accumulate a growing list of medications, and this “polypharmacy” leads to increased risk of interactions, side effects, confusion and cost. Many seniors also suffer from chronic pain — arthritis often worsens with age, for example.

So how do you recognize risky situations and stay safe?

Opioid pain medications like Vicodin or oxycodone have many side effects, in addition to the risk of

dependence and overdose. They can cause constipation, sleep problems such as sleep apnea, confusion and memory issues, reduced testosterone levels and heart rhythm disturbances.

Also, chronic opioid use often actually *increases* pain sensitivity. Many people who have slowly reduced their dose of opioids, or stopped them altogether, find that they have *less* pain, and they function much better overall.

If you take daily prescription pain medications, talk with your primary care provider about the safety of your regimen, and whether any of your other medical problems could be opiate side effects. Other risky medications are sedatives (like Xanax, Ativan or Valium), sleeping pills, and stimulants. Alcohol combined with any of these meds can put you at risk.

This does not mean that all opioid pain medications are bad or unwarranted. If you are on a safe dose that continues to benefit you, and if you are not suffering obvious side effects, it’s probably OK to continue. You need regular, open discussions with your provider to make certain that the benefits outweigh the harms.

Finally, whether you take opioid



Dr. Mary Meengs

Continued on Page 22

## The Toll on Doctors

By Ted Pease

As Humboldt County struggles to attract and retain new physicians — like the six new medical residents who arrived in July — one of the challenges is to protect young medical practitioners from burnout.

This is a worry that keeps Dr. Bill Hunter, medical director of Open Door Community Health Centers, awake nights.

Treating opioid patients is a big factor in provider burnout, he said. “They encounter a lot of pain patients, and they just hate it.”

Not just in Humboldt, but nationwide, a disproportionate amount of doctor time and energy is consumed by chronic pain patients who have been prescribed opioids for years. Many older doctors, Hunter says, have come to terms with prescribing moderate maintenance doses of pain meds, as long as the patient understands that there is a downside.

But there’s been a cultural change in the medical profession, and many younger clinicians have trouble with this. “When they treat someone who has been on these pain meds for all this time, they think, ‘But I’m hurting him by prescribing that, I am causing him harm. And I’m sworn first to do no harm,’” Hunter said. “That’s hard.”

The opioid crisis was created in large part by bad advice from pharmaceutical companies. “All through the ’90s, we were all told to prescribe more opioids,” Hunter said. “The experts told us, ‘Don’t be afraid of opioids. If you’re treating

for pain, people won’t get addicted,” they said.”

He shook his head. “The science wasn’t very good.”

As understanding improved of the impacts of opioids on society and lives, coalitions of doctors, public health and law enforcement agencies have pushed back to help patients reduce their dependency on pain meds.

Although Humboldt still ranks high in opioid use compared to other California counties, the partners in these multidisciplinary efforts say the county has seen significant improvement.

“We’ve seen a huge reduction in the number of prescriptions,” Hunter said. “We’ve held our opioid deaths steady, unlike nationally. We’ve worked hard. We’ve made progress.”

Even so, young doctors, physicians assistants and nurse practitioners who are just starting their careers are often dismayed by the number of chronic pain patients they see. Part of Hunter’s role is to try to protect new medical recruits from burnout.

“They don’t want to be doing that work,” he said. “They want to be treating diabetes, pneumonia, or bro-



Dr. Bill Hunter

Continued on Page 22

# Things That Ache in the Night — Is it Serious?

By Annie Kassof

It seems like every week or two a different body part hurts. Last month, it was my neck. During long drives to town from out in the boonies, where I live, I'd find myself driving one-handed, massaging the back of my neck with the other.

Sometimes I'd turn my head rapidly back and forth, hearing mysterious clicks and pops. At home I'd lie on ice packs. Other times I'd heat up a sock full of dry rice, two minutes in the microwave, and mmm, doesn't that feel good (until I have to get up).

"Go see a chiropractor," said my boyfriend.

"I don't think my insurance will cover it," I replied.

"Then I'll pay," he said.

"No, you won't. I will," I decided.

So I went to a chiropractor and he did some adjustments and told me to come back the following week. I went home and felt worse than I had before I'd gone, but after a few days, my neck stopped hurting even without subsequent adjustments, so I decided I didn't need to spend another chunk of change on the back doctor.

Not too long after my neck stopped hurting, my right hip started hurting. I had a hip replacement shortly before my 60th birthday, and I was due for a follow-up exam with my surgeon.

Having convinced myself it was a hip-replace-



Annie Kassof illustration.

ment-gone-bad, I sat apprehensively in the sterile little exam room anxiously awaiting my X-ray results, imagining with my glass-half-empty mentality that my newest pain would result in another surgery, another month of depending on someone else to shop for my groceries, feed my horse, take me to appointments, etc.

The X-ray results came back with no alarming changes, and my doctor shook my hand and said, "See you in two years."

Next, it seemed my mystery pain rotated to my lower back, and my stress level ratcheted up a few notches as I started thinking it was related to my kidneys. I began reading everything I could about kidney conditions online, until I was sure I had, at the very least, Stage 2 kidney disease.

Now here I should interject that I don't live a totally unhealthy lifestyle. I ride my horse, I walk, I've been known to go to the gym. I have a jump rope and I eat my vegetables. And I'm only 62.

So I start to wonder: Am I becoming a hypochondriac? Recently, I've found myself Googling everything from fibromyalgia to pinched nerves to multiple sclerosis to lupus.

It was 3:00 in the morning (because I also suffer from insomnia) that I started reading about the different stages of kidney disease. And I wonder: Is this what I want to be doing for the rest of my life? Researching conditions and diseases I probably don't have? And even if I did, wouldn't it be healthier to bake bread or visit a friend or paint a picture? Or to write a story about aches and pains, that others in my age group may be able to relate to?

But wait. I've been typing so long that my wrists are starting to hurt. Oh dear, I must be suffering from carpal tunnel syndrome.

—  
Annie Kassof, 62, of Carlotta thinks her medical binge-Googling phase is finally over.

## VA Offers a Full Range of Health Care for Veterans

By Dave Rosso

For qualified veterans, the Veterans Administration (VA) provides needed healthcare services.

You are eligible if you served in the active military, naval or air service and are separated under any condition other than dishonorable. Current and former members of the Reserves or National Guard may be eligible for VA health care as well.

To qualify, apply for benefits online

or by mail to: San Francisco VA Medical Center, Business Office/Member Services (136), 4150 Clement St., San Francisco, CA 94121. The form can also be faxed to 415-750-2210.

Send a copy of both sides of your current insurance card (including Medicare or Medicaid/Medi-Cal), a copy of your DD214, "Armed Forces Report of Transfer or Discharge," a copy of your award letter if "Purple

Heart" is not noted on your DD214.

Services include comprehensive general medical care, an assigned primary care physician, lab tests and X-rays, social services, pharmacy, and at-home primary care (by referral).

Specialty medical services include audiology, nutrition, optometry, physical therapy/occupational therapy, podiatry and prosthetics.

Mental health services are also in-

cluded, as well as rehab and recovery, individual and group counseling and group treatments.

The Humboldt County VA clinic is located at 930 W. Harris St. in Eureka, (707-269-7500). The VA eligibility office is at (415) 750-2015.

—  
Dave Rosso of Eureka is a journalist and Air Force veteran.

**ASK THE DOCTOR****Be Careful***By Jennifer Heidmann, M.D.*

When my daughter came home to us from China at age 6, one of the phrases I had learned was *xiaoxin* (careful!). She was prone to adventures, and I wanted to keep her safe. It is a balance we all try to find when parenting or caring for others — between allowing them to soar and take chances, and keeping them from harm.

Each of us has to find this balance for ourselves as we age and no longer answer to parents. Others will continue to give us advice throughout life, but we can choose to ignore it.

My husband recently painted

our house, and I sat him down to discuss the many times in my career that I have seen middle-aged people present with broken body parts from falling off ladders. He listened, took cautions, and painted the house without mishap. It looks great.

I would still advise people against climbing ladders as they age, but am biased by the fact I tend to see the bad outcomes rather than the successes.

Working as a physician mainly with older folks, one of my big worries is falls. People can trip over their pets, slip on a slick redwood deck, wear improper shoes and stumble, and resist the use of canes or walkers. For most people, however determined, a fractured hip is a definite game-changer that leads to hospitalization, surgery and a long rehabilitation with eventual return to

walking, if you're lucky.

At worst, hip fractures can contribute to functional loss and even mortality, especially in older people who already have some frailty and cognitive dysfunction. Vertebral fractures can result from minor falls if bones are not as strong as they once were. It's a common problem as both women and men age, though the risk for women presents about 10 years earlier than it does in men (without other medical reasons for bone loss). These fractures can be

**"...a fractured hip is a definite game-changer..."**

very painful and — again — can reduce mobility and function.

So the best thing to do is sit down on a soft surface and never move again as long as you live. Right?

Ha! No. I am definitely not serious about that. Ironically, sitting still and safe makes us weaker and more unsteady, and thus more likely to fall.

Aside from physical risk, there is also the aspect of joy and quality of life. Paternalism, wherein we treat someone as fragile and in need of our protection, is not a great approach with any adult, even someone who is frail and has memory problems. Yes, we want to provide a safe environment, but is it ethical to restrict people from activities that may benefit them just because there is theoretically some risk?

I like the concept of risk reduction. When my husband painted our

Continued on Page 19

**Elder Healthcare Crisis**

One of the fastest growing occupations in America these days is in home health care. We'll need about 1.6 million new home health workers between now and 2026 to care for our growing elder population.

Unfortunately, these are jobs that are tough to fill, with an estimated 74% turnover.

"America is not prepared for this coming shortage," reports TIME magazine. "Caring for America's elders is the single most expensive domestic priority on the horizon."

The state of Maine may be the canary in the eldercare coal mine. Statistically speaking, Maine is the oldest state in the country, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, with more than one-fifth of its residents over 65 — defined as a "super-aged" population.

More than half of U.S. states will

fit that category by 2030.

One result in Maine is that home health aides now demand \$50/hour, if you can find one. A rising elder population, coupled with a shortage of younger workers, means families can't find help for their aging parents.

"We are in such dire need of help," said one woman, an insurance agent, who has become one of about 43 million other unpaid family caregivers nationwide.

Maine, Hawaii and Washington state are working on their own long-term care insurance programs to support family caregivers.

"As the oldest state, Maine is the tip of the spear," said eldercare advocate Ai-jen Poo, "but it foreshadows what is to come for the rest of the country."

—Ted Pease

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## HEAVENS TO BETSY

BY BETSY GOODSPEED

### Common Sense

I've never suffered from writer's block, but I shy away from talking about health because I'm in Classic Denial. Not only about health, but Reality.

I've heard medics reverse their opinions so often that I'm in danger of becoming a pragmatist. I believe in miracles more than TV commercials that say, "Talk to your doctor."

But what doctors tell me seems insane. I suppose that's typical of people in their 90s, and senility is blamed. The young laugh when you say that a roll of Life Savers used to cost a nickel.

They can't relate to that, and I understand why. What I can't comprehend is how TV has deteriorated into focusing on violence and sex, with language that includes words I didn't hear until I was 30.

As I look for TV shows that make sense, it seems like more are produced in England than the U.S. Prescription drugs appear to be the answer to stress because our minds are being filled with toxic nonsense that overrides the grim warnings about side effects.

Friends in the TV industry, where I spent much of my career, tell me how veteran writers were replaced by kids in their 20s to improve ratings. I thanked God that reruns of "Cheers" and "The Dick Van Dyke Show" were still available. Honest humor still existed, even if only in reruns, and I wholly believe in laughter.

I can't help blaming the education system for the failure to teach

youngsters about health. Physical education in public school taught me to play basketball, but now teenagers are learning how to have sex without risking pregnancy. That's so full-circle that it's dizzying.

Overpopulation could be more threatening to the planet than climate change, but politics and religion are spookier areas than health.

Nutrition may still have a chance. There are signs that junk food may be found guilty of murder. Dieting is becoming a way of life for some, and people have discovered that yoga has little to do with lighting candles and chanting, "Om."

I taught music in a private school where the meals were vegetarian, and yoga was standard procedure. The kids could ask, "Why are we learning this?" I learned to listen more than I talked, and can verify that students retain only what they want and need to learn. Wow, there's a clue and a half.

The Internet provides answers to everything, and while misinformation abounds, the fact is that college textbooks can't keep up with how fast the world is changing.

Maybe our minds have become so cluttered that our immune systems are threatened. It could be that the only cure is common sense.

**Betsy Goodspeed, 92, of Eureka, a former stage and TV musician, and author of more than 30 books, specializes in common sense.**

## Building a Village

By JoAnn Schuch

Staying healthy as you get older is more than just eating your vegetables (though that helps). Being active, feeling like part of a community and, most importantly, having a sense of purpose all bring some important benefits.

A 2017 Washington Post article summarized it well: "[D]ozens of studies have shown that seniors with a sense of purpose in life are less likely to develop Alzheimer's disease, mild cognitive impairment, disabilities, heart attacks or strokes, and more likely to live longer than people without this kind of underlying motivation."

Redwood Coast Village (RCV) channels that sense of purpose by coordinating members' skills and abilities to help each other with the kinds of things a good friend or neighbor might do, from rides to a medical appointment to a fix-it job around the house.

Members can call the RCV office and get connected with like-minded folks for activities like kayaking, board games, a theater trip, or simply coffee and a chat.

RCV has 120 members from Big

Lagoon to Eureka and east to Blue Lake, plus another 70 who volunteer.

"While RCV is part of a national Village-to-Village network, we are grassroots-built and member-driven, so we're creating the future we want to have here in Humboldt County," said RCV board chair Sylvia Ryan.

"It's a great way to help each other stay active, socially connected, and continue living in our own homes for as long as possible," she said. "Getting older is easier with just a little help."

Members pay an annual fee for services. Volunteers pay nothing and do only the tasks they want to do, when they want. And there's nothing quite like the warm feelings you get from being appreciated.

Learn more about RCV at the Trinidad Town Hall on Saturday, Sept. 14 at 2 p.m., or visit RCV's booth at the North Country Fair in Arcata on Sept. 21-22. For more info call 707-422-3763 x230 or visit [redwoodcoastvillage.org](http://redwoodcoastvillage.org).

**JoAnn Schuch of Arcata is a Redwood Coast Village volunteer.**



**FRIENDS DRIVING FRIENDS — Jan Rowen drives fellow Redwood Coast Village member Audrey Sandberg to an appointment. Catherine Wilkes photo.**

# Someone to Hold Your Hand

By Janet Patterson

Last May, when a local cardiologist recommended a pacemaker for my low heart rate, I was mostly for it. I did have some misgivings. It was my heart, after all; what could be more vital?

The implant was scheduled at St. Joseph hospital for July 23, and, after much mental back-and-forth, I appeared on that day.

I was given a drug so that I “wouldn’t care anymore,” as one of the nurses aptly put it. The operating room that I was wheeled into was very large and extremely cold. I was freezing! There were busy people all around me. At some point, I couldn’t tell if my shaking was from the cold, or from fear.

Checking in with myself, I became aware that I was indeed frightened. This was going to be a huge change. And even if the doctor knows what he’s doing, I thought, there’s always a first time for failure.

I remembered how, years ago, when I had a legal abortion at a clinic in Oakland, a volunteer was there just to hold my hand.

“You know what you need?” I asked a young nurse as I was prepped for my pacemaker.

“What’s that?” She was very attentive.

“A volunteer who will hold my hand,” I told her.

Whenever she wasn’t too busy, that nurse held my hand. She ex-

plained why they couldn’t have a volunteer in the operating room. Because of radiation, the medical staff has to wear special smocks, like those bulky aprons we have to wear when we’re X-rayed at the dentist.

I don’t care about radiation. I would volunteer to hold hands.

The next morning, as I recovered in my hospital room, two volunteers came by to offer me a free morning paper. So, I thought, they do have the volunteers.

When I left that day, a skillful volunteer wheeled me out of the room and helped me into my sister’s waiting car. When I told that person about the need for a volunteer to hold my hand in the operating room, she said with authority that such a volunteer would only get in the way of the surgeon and the nurses.

We’ve long known about the value of caring in the medical profession. We’re not just cars going in for a tune-up. I’m glad I knew what I needed and asked for it. But what of hundreds of patients who don’t know what they need, or are too timid to ask?

We are all human beings, made up of feelings as well as bodies, with a need for human connection.

—  
**Janet Patterson** of Eureka, is a retired Spanish Immersion teacher with a PhD in psychology and a strong heart.

## Free Smoke Alarms Installed

The Red Cross of Northern California offers a service to install free 10-year smoke alarms in homes.

Installation takes about 15 min-

utes. To schedule the service, call the Red Cross office in McKinleyville at 707-832-5480, or email SmokeAlarmInstallNorCall@RedCross.org.

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## PAINTING THE OCEAN

BY MARGARET KELLERMANN

# Beauty, Grief or Both

This may or may not surprise you: the verb “surprise” comes from Old Latin, meaning “seize,” and then Middle English, “attack suddenly.” Still today, when we’re surprised, we retain that sense of being seized, attacked without warning. We’re bowled over by beauty, grief or both.

Even for those who say, “I’m never surprised,” serendipities and shocks can attack from every rounded corner of the natural world. Sometimes, I bet, nature even surprises itself.

Take the male Wilson’s warbler I found lying on an outdoor café table the other foggy morning. The bird gazed up at me, seeming to ask, *What ... in the... world...?*

“You’ve had an accident,” I explained, inspecting him. Then I wanted to know, “What day is it? Who’s the president? Do you have a favorite candidate for 2020?” And so many other questions that don’t matter to an injured warbler.

I called him Wilson. A crush of tiny down feathers against the café window told the story. When I picked him up, Wilson didn’t struggle, but released himself magnificently into my palm. I cradled him loosely, just enough to warm the bird, allowing escape if he made a miraculous comeback.

Wilson’s back glowed green-yellow, the color of a strange, electrical storm. The rest of the bird, minus the smart black cap and other dec-

orations, was dazzling yellow, like the sun after that storm. So brilliant, so brave, without even a self-effacing cough to announce he was dying, this bird was hard to believe.



As Wilson gave up the ghost with the smallest sigh, a passerby peered at my handful of golden surprise and remarked before walking on, “Ah. Everything dies.” True, but not in my hand. Not with such remarkable heroism.

I showed him to my dog, Luke. Instead of trying to taste Wilson,

Luke gently sniffed him and showed proper respect. We three went home. I took a few pictures of the bright sun-bird in my grasp. Then, as Dylan Thomas wrote, “I said some words to the close and holy...” and buried Wilson in a short ceremony that Luke attended.

I hope Wilson understood that I loved him — still do — and that I stroked his cheek so he’d know he wasn’t alone. As the passerby mentioned, everything dies. Okay, eventually. Not all at once. Not every time you think it will.

Some days the sun wins, and the brave bird flies up in a fiery spark like a phoenix. Surprise.

**Margaret Kellermann** has tried for decades to be rational about birds dying, but it never worked, so she finally quit that. Read more at [bluelakestudio.net](http://bluelakestudio.net).

## MOVING AWAY . . . From Page 1

Francisco. “I was freaked out,” Joan said as Jim nodded.

They connected with an experimental cancer trial at Sutter Pacific Medical Foundation and started a year of treatments, and so far, the results are good. Joan isn’t out of the woods yet, but the prognosis is positive.

What wasn’t positive was the wear and tear — and the expense — that the near-constant back-and-forth had on them both, especially driving through last winter’s rainy season. More than once, Jim said, he worried about “driving off a cliff” or falling asleep at the wheel.

“The treatments and their side effects have been a walk in the park compared to the 24 trips to San Francisco,” they said, “especially during the winter months.”

So they sold their home of 25 years in “downtown” Trinidad, packed up their stuff and moved to Cloverdale in Sonoma County, to be just 90 minutes from Joan’s doctors instead of six hours.

Of course they will miss Trinidad — they already do. But they won’t miss the drive, and Joan’s melanoma treatments and easier access to her oncology team take priority over everything else.

“It was an easy decision,” said Jim, 75, sitting with an ice pack on an ankle in the back yard, amidst piles of stuff he was clearing from his shed. A huge United Van Lines truck had emptied the house a few weeks before. “I figure I have two or three more trips,” he said.

Trinidad will always be part of them, they say, but for now they have other things to deal with.

“We care about what happens here,” they said, as Jim eyed the tools and bins and crates of books strewn around his back yard. “We don’t like what the universe has thrust upon us, but we’ll be back.”

—  
**Ted Pease** of Trinidad is editor of *Senior News*.



**HOME AGAIN** — Humboldters Jim and Joan Baker are settling into their new home in Cloverdale. Joan Baker photo.



# Not Your Father's Emergency Room, Thankfully

By George Ingraham, M.D.

Humboldt County has four emergency rooms, and nobody wants to go to any of them. The wait can be long; people who got there after you get seen before you. The doctor who sees you is a stranger, and someone different will remove the stitches or take the cast off.

But emergency care in Humboldt is far better than it was back in the 1970s.

Back then, St. Joseph Hospital had just one emergency room bed. There were no ER doctors or nursing staff, and the ER door was locked until a patient came by. A nursing supervisor would unlock the door and call the patient's usual doctor.

If the patient was an out-of-towner, a "doctor on call" was summoned, and it could be anybody, since every doctor on staff took turns. (Have you ever seen an ophthalmologist try to set a fracture, or a dermatologist deliver a baby? Not recommended.)

That wrong doctor would then call the right doctor. By the time the right doctor arrived, not much

had been done for the patient.

The nursing supervisor did what she could for hearts that hadn't yet stalled completely, or for injured patients who weren't yet in shock. Sometimes it wasn't enough. Medically speaking, 1970 was the Dark Ages.

Today's ER staff are specialists in emergency care, unlike the old days, when emergency care training didn't exist. The 21<sup>st</sup> century ER is a different animal, with on-duty nurses, aides and doctors, 24/7. There are several beds instead of one, each with monitors for vital signs, oxygen, splints, IV fluids, and the rest.

Most complaints about the ER these days aren't about the care, but how long people may have to wait to be seen. But this is not the checkout line at Safeway; severe cases must come first.

So there you sit, thinking you've been forgotten. But trust me, you have not. The first caregiver you'll see is detailed to do "triage" — deciding

where you belong in the schedule: "immediately," "pretty soon," or "when we can."

If you have life-threatening problems, you receive far better care today than you would have in 1970.

Most importantly, modern emergency care in Humboldt County is first-rate: each time, every time, all the time. I'm speaking from experience, because, you see, old doctors get sick, too. And we have to wait, just like everybody else.

But we don't grumble very much, because we remember the dark ages of the 1970s, and we shudder a little bit. We don't like being sick, and we don't like waiting, but we are very glad the old days are gone.

—  
**Dr. George Ingraham, 84, of Eureka is a retired ophthalmologist who began his Humboldt practice in the 1960s, and hung up his white coat 16 years ago.**

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AGING IS AN ART — BY JOHN HECKEL

## Remember Me

At a recent Grand Jury training session in Sacramento, I met a young man who was reading Stephen Jenkinson's "Come of Age: The Case for Elderhood in a Time of Trouble."

"Pain is no longer our most dreaded fear when it comes to dying," he said.

All right, I thought. "What, then, has replaced pain as our major fear?" I asked.

Separated by 35 years or so in age, we nevertheless soon found ourselves deeply engaged in a rich and rewarding conversation about death and dying.

With the pain of death not being such a monumental issue anymore, what, then, has become our main concern?

Some research, including Jenkinson's, suggests it is the fear that no one will remember us when we are gone. It's the fear that we will have spent our lives doing whatever we did, and then, *presto, we are gone*, and no one cares or remembers that we were here.

The young man in Sacramento and I could relate.

Our ancestors did not seem to have had this problem. They remembered and honored their ancestors with ceremonies and rituals of remembrance, so they knew that when they died, they would also be honored and remembered.

When we honor our ancestors, we honor ourselves.

The young man suggested another good death and dying read: "Elderhood," by Louise Aronson, an

honest and passionate look at what it means to grow old in America.

I immediately ordered Jenkinson's book from Audible so I could listen to it while driving home from Sacramento, and, once home, I also bought Aronson's book. I highly recommend both.

It seems our medical community has taken the responsibility for eliminating pain as our predominate concern about death, but we will have to take responsibility ourselves for dealing with our fear of not being remembered.

I shared with my new friend in Sacramento an image from a photo essay from Time or Life magazine, can't remember which, of a man living in some desolate town — in Nevada, I think. Anyway, the man had his name, date and place of birth tattooed on his chest because he was afraid of dying and no one knowing who he was, or who he had been.

I find that image very sad.

What does it mean for you to be remembered?

"If we had the courage to think and reflect about life and death," wrote Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, "we would raise our children differently...we would make death and dying part of life again."

—  
**John Heckel, Ph.D.**, reflects on life and aging as a regular Senior News columnist and chair of the Senior News Community Advisory Council. He is a retired HSU theater and film professor with a doctorate in psychology.



Ramona Lima, R.Ph.

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[www.hafoundation.org](http://www.hafoundation.org).



## Redwood Coast PACE's 5<sup>th</sup> Year

Redwood Coast PACE — the Program of All-inclusive Care for the Elderly at the Humboldt Senior Resource Center — turns five years old on Sept. 1, and for its staff and participants, there's plenty to celebrate.

PACE is a state-of-the-art model for medical care and other support that helps seniors who would otherwise need skilled nursing home care remain in their own homes.

For participants, what's worth celebrating about the program is contained in the term "all-inclusive," because that's what they get: "We do everything we can to keep participants in their homes and out of skilled nursing facilities," said Redwood Coast PACE Director Barbara LaHaie.

That means everything from meals

to a fully trained medical staff, social workers and in-home care providers to physical and occupational therapy to day center activities.

Redwood Coast PACE now enrolls about 180 participants, with further growth expected as HSRC and its programs expand into a new Fortuna facility early next year.

"PACE is a success story," said HSRC Executive Director Joyce Hayes.

"The preventive care provided by the Redwood Coast PACE team focuses on wellness, with the goal of reducing the need for emergent care, and maintaining our participants' quality of life."

For more information on Redwood Coast PACE, call 707-443-9747 or email [PACE@humsenior.org](mailto:PACE@humsenior.org).



## Farmers Love CalFresh

Since the early 1980s, farmers' markets in Humboldt County have worked with what is now known as CalFresh to help Humboldt seniors put fresh fruits and vegetables on their dining tables.

The North Coast Growers Association (NCGA), which operates seven farmers' markets in Arcata, Eureka, Fortuna, McKinleyville and Willow Creek throughout the growing season, accepts "CalFresh Dollars" on electronic benefit (EBT) cards.

For the NCGA, the CalFresh EBT program is an ideal way to connect local farmers and the land to the people who live here. "Our long history has given us deep levels of connections between us, the farmers, and the CalFresh community," NCGA says.

To use your CalFresh benefits at farmers' markets, go to the market's info booth and exchange funds on your EBT card for \$1 wooden tokens that you can use with individual farmers for CalFresh-eligible fresh produce and other products.

And there's more! Under the Market Match program, the farmers' market manager will give you up to \$10 in additional Market Match tokens when you get your CalFresh tokens.

CalFresh benefits are issued monthly on an EBT card that can be used like a debit card at most grocery stores, farmers' markets and neighborhood stores. Applying can be as easy as a phone call. Most applicants can have savings, a house and cars, and still qualify. Part of housing costs may be deducted from your income to determine eligibility. Seniors and people with permanent disabilities can also deduct medical expenses.

To apply for benefits, go online to [GetCalFresh.org](http://GetCalFresh.org), call 877-410-8809, or go to the Humboldt Department of Health & Human Services CalFresh office at 929 Koster St. in Eureka. Local agencies, including Humboldt Senior Resource Center, Food for People, St. Joseph Hospital and Open Door clinics can also assist.

— Ted Pease

## Artist of the Month



**ART IN THE HSRC LOBBY — The work of local artist Cynthia Julian is featured in the HSRC Lobby through the end of September. "I love everything about this country," says the SoCal escapee, "the fog, the rain, the ocean breeze, and always knowing a brilliant blue sky is not far away."**

## 'Vial of Life' Workshop

The Humboldt Senior Resource Center, 1910 California St., Eureka, will host the California Alliance of Retired Americans for a free Empowered Elders Workshop on Tuesday, Sept. 3, from 12:30-2 p.m. The session will focus on "the Vial of Life," which helps individuals compile complete medical information in case of emergencies, plus hospital stay rights and advance care directives. Refreshments and a door prize. For reservations, call Tasha Romo at 707-443-9747 x1228.

## Flu Shots

CVS pharmacists will be on-hand at HSRC's Eureka Dining Center, 1910 California St., on Wednesday, Sept. 18, for the annual flu shot clinic. Flu vaccine, plus Shingrix, Pneumovax, Prevnar 13, Hep A, Hep B and Tdap shots will be available. The flu shot is free with most insurance plans, and each flu shot recipient will receive a \$5 Target coupon.

For questions about insurance coverage, co-pays or vaccines, call Tina with the CVS Pharmacy inside Target at 707-442-0549. For more information, call Tasha Romo at 707-443-9747 x1228.

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Advertisement for Redwood Coast PACE featuring Joyce, a participant, with text: 'For one, I don't have to worry about going to doctor appointments, they pick me up and bring me home and...schedule everything.'

Redwood Coast PACE advertisement with logo and contact information: www.humsenior.org, 1910 California Street, Eureka CA 95501

SEPTEMBER SENIOR CENTER ACTIVITIES

Humboldt Senior Resource Center in Eureka

An HSRC Senior Dining Center

1910 California Street

Call Tasha at 443-9747 x1228

Lunch: Tuesday-Friday at 11:30 a.m.

Fortuna Senior Dining Center

An HSRC Senior Dining Center

Mountain View Village, 2130 Smith Lane

Call Launa at 725-6245

Lunch: Tuesday-Friday at 12:00 p.m.

Arcata Community Center

An HSRC Senior Dining Center

321 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Parkway

Call Vanessa at 825-2027

Lunch: Tuesday-Friday at 11:30 a.m.

Every Weekday

9:00-1:00 Library
9:00-3:00 Senior Service Office
12:00-3:00 Billiards

Mondays

Sept. 2 CLOSED Labor Day Holiday
9:30-10:30 Karate with Jerry Bunch
10:00-1:00 Mahjong
11:00-12:00 Tai Chi for Better Balance w/Sandi
1:15-2:00 S.A.I.L. w/Muriel
2:10-3:10 FABS/S.A.I.L w/Beth & Lois
2:30-4:00 Memoir Writing Class

Tuesdays

10:00-11:00 Harry's Bingo (not Sept. 3)
11:30-12:15 Lunch (See menu at right)
12:15-2:15 Pinochle
2:10-3:10 FABS/S.A.I.L w/Beth & Lois
3:30-4:30 Tai Chi for Balance & Arthritis Practice Group
Sept. 3 10:30-11:30 Dine & Dance w/Ray, Dave & Lois
Sept. 3 12:30-2:00 Hospital Stay Rights & Vital Life
Sept. 17 11:30-2:00 Foster Grandparents Program
Sept. 24 6:00-9:00 Stamp Club

Wednesdays

10:00-11:00 Bunco
11:30-12:15 Lunch (See menu at right)
1:15-2:00 S.A.I.L. w/Muriel
1:30-3:00 Android Smart Phone & Tablet Group
1:30-3:30 Intermediate Line Dancing
2:10-3:10 FABS/S.A.I.L. w/Beth & Lois

Sept. 4 & 18 1:00-2:00 Caregiver Support Group
Adult Day Health & Alzheimer's Services Library, 2nd floor, Bldg. B
1901 California St., Eureka

Sept. 11 11:00-11:30 LeAnne Morini performs
Sept. 11 11:30-12:15 Emblem Club serves lunch
Sept. 18 10:00-11:30 Commodities distribution
Sept. 18 12:00-1:00 Flu Shot Clinic

Thursdays

10:00-11:00 Grocery Bingo: Bring 1 grocery item
10:00-11:30 Intermediate French
11:30-12:15 Lunch (See menu at right)
2:10-3:10 FABS/S.A.I.L w/Beth & Lois
3:30-4:30 Laughter Yoga
Sept. 5 & 19 10:00-12:00 Genealogy group

Fridays

9:00-10:00 Falun Dafa
10:00-11:00 Beginning Tai Chi Movements
11:00-12:00 Beginning Yoga
11:30-12:15 Lunch (see menu below)
1:00-4:00 Bridge Games
Sept. 6 11:30-12:15 Grandparents Day Celebration
Sept. 6 & 20 1:30-2:30 Conscious Living Book Club
Sept. 27 10:30-11:30 Accordionaires perform
Sept. 27 11:30-12:15 Birthday Celebration

Saturdays

Sept. 7 Noon Sassy Seniors
Bayfront, 1st & F St., Eureka
Sept. 28 Noon Nooners
Hunan's, 2912 E St., Eureka

Tuesdays

12:00 Lunch

Wednesdays

Sept. 4 10:30 Music with Bill, Corena & John
5:00-8:00 pm Bingo

Thursdays

12:00 Lunch
Sept. 5, 12 & 19 Caregiver Support Group
12:00-2:00 United Methodist Church,
Fireplace Room
922 N Street
For info call 443-9747

Fridays

Sept. 6 12:00 Lunch
Sept. 27 12:00 Grandparents Day Celebration
12:00 Birthday Lunch

SEPTEMBER 2019



Humboldt Senior Resource Center

Nutrition & Activities Program

SENIOR DINING CENTER MENU

FIRST WEEK

Sept. 2 All HSRC Sites Closed for Labor Day
Sept. 3 Sloppy Joes
Sept. 4 Roasted Pork w/Apple Walnut Sauce
Sept. 5 Butternut Ravioli
Sept. 6 Beef Stew Happy Grandparents Day

SECOND WEEK

Sept. 9 Dining Centers closed
Sept. 10 Salisbury Steak
Sept. 11 Summer Berry Salad
Sept. 12 Chicken Pesto Sandwich
Sept. 13 Old Fashion Goulash

People 60+ are invited
\$3.50 suggested donation. \$6.00 for those under 60.

No senior 60 or older will be denied a meal if unable to donate.

Call for Reservations

Arcata • 825-2027 Eureka • 443-9747 Fortuna • 725-6245

THIRD WEEK

Sept. 16 Dining Centers closed
Sept. 17 1/2 Chicken Salad Sand. & Broccoli Cheese Soup
Sept. 18 Beef Bourguignon
Co-op Nearly Local Day
Sept. 19 Braised Pork Stew
Sept. 20 Chicken w/Fire-Roasted Tomatoes

FOURTH WEEK

Sept. 23 Dining Centers closed
Sept. 24 Chinese Chicken Salad
Sept. 25 Hamburger & Potato Salad
Sept. 26 Lemon Dill Fish
Sept. 27 Cheese Tortellini w/Alfredo Sauce
Birthday Cake

FIFTH WEEK

Sept. 30 Dining Centers closed
LOW-FAT OR NONFAT MILK SERVED WITH EACH MEAL

Mondays

Sept. 2 CLOSED Labor Day Holiday
Sept. 9 & 23

11:00-12:00 Silver Quills Writing Group

Tuesdays

9:00-11:00 Katie's Krafters
10:00-10:50 Senior Aqua Time-HealthSport
\$5 fee (prior registration required)
Bread distribution
11:00 Lunch (See menu at left)
11:30-12:15 Lunch (See menu at left)
12:30-2:00 Bead Jewelry Class
Sept. 3 & 17

10:00-11:00 Caregiver Support Group
Mad River Community Hosp.
Minkler Education Room
3800 Janes Road, Arcata
For info call 443-9747
Sept. 3 10:00-11:00 Blood Pressure Check
Sept. 24 2:00 Arcata Marsh Slow Walk

Wednesdays

10:00-11:00 Chi Gong
11:00 Bread distribution
11:15-12:15 Tai Chi with Kathy (advanced)
11:30-12:15 Lunch (See menu at left)

12:30- 1:30 Tai Chi with Kathy (beginning)

Sept. 4 & 18 10:30-11:30 Brice Ogan & Guitar
Sept. 11 10:00-11:00 Site Council

Thursdays

9:00-10:00 Tai Chi w/Tim (\$3 donation)
9:00-11:00 Katie's Krafters
10:00-10:50 Senior Swim hour-HealthSport
\$5 fee (prior registration required)
Lunch (See menu at left)
11:30-12:15

12:15-1:15 Learn Tech w/ Mayor Brett
Sept. 5 10:30-11:30 PJ's Musical Group
Sept. 19 10:15-11:15 Swing 'n' Sway Trio
Sept. 19 10:30-11:00 Commodities Distribution

Fridays

10:00-11:30 Ping Pong
11:30-12:15 Lunch (See menu at left)

Sept. 6 10:30-11:30 Grandparents Day Celebration
Sept. 13 & 27 10:30-11:30 John Humphrey on the Piano
Sept. 20 10:15-11:15 Music with the Half Notes
Sept. 27 10:30-12:15 Birthday Celebration

September is Falls Prevention Awareness Month

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**Crossword Puzzle  
on page 22**



# SEPTEMBER SENIOR CENTER ACTIVITIES

## McKinleyville Senior Center

**Azalea Hall • 1620 Pickett Road**  
**Open Monday-Friday 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.**  
mckinleyvillecsd.com  
azaleahall@att.net • 839-0191

### Mondays

8:30-9:30	Tai Chi
9:00-12:00	Computers <i>(call for availability)</i>
10:30	HighSteppers at Knox Cove
1:00-4:00	Party Bridge
Sept. 2 10:00-11:30	Genealogy
Sept. 30 11:00	Low Vision Workshop

### Tuesdays

9:00-11:00	TOPS
9:30-10:30	S.A.I.L. Class
10:40-11:40	Stretching
12:30-3:30	BINGO
1:00-2:00	Exercise

### Wednesdays

8:30-9:30	Tai Chi
9:00-12:00	Computers <i>(call for availability)</i>
9:45-11:00	Writing Workshop
10:00-12:00	Needlework
10:30	HighSteppers at Knox Cove
1:00-4:00	Pinochle
Sept. 4 & 18	
3:00-5:00	Caregiver Support Group Timber Ridge at McKinleyville Private Dining Room, 1400 Nursery Way. <i>For info call 443-9747</i>
Sept. 25	
12:00	\$5-Monthly Luncheon Baked ham, mashed potatoes & gravy, green salad

### Thursday

9:30-10:30	S.A.I.L. Class
10:30-12:00	Pinochle Lessons
10:40-11:40	Stretching
12:30-3:30	BINGO
Sept. 5 11:00-11:30	Pulled pork sand. & veggies -\$3
Sept. 12 11:00-11:30	Bean soup & hush puppies-\$3
Sept. 19 11:00-11:30	Potato soup, 1/2 ham sand.-\$3
Sept. 26 11:00-11:30	Beef w/rice & green salad-\$3

### Fridays

8:30-9:30	Tai Chi
10:00-11:00	Drop-In Grief Support Group by Hospice of Humboldt
10:30	Walking Group at Knox Cove
1:00-4:00	Pinochle

## Rio Dell

**Every Mon, Wed & Fri**

11:30-12:30	Senior Exercise Class Chamber of Commerce Bldg. 406 Wildwood Avenue
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## Fortuna Senior Center

**MGC is at 2280 Newburg Road**  
fortunasenior.org  
admin@fortunasenior.org • 726-9203  
Mon-Fri 10-noon & by appointment

### Mondays

<i>River Walk</i>	8:30	Walking
<i>MGC</i>	9:00	Tai Chi
	11:00	Line Dancing
Sept. 2	1:45	Book Club
	3:30	Ukulele Group
	5:00	S.A.I.L. Class

*Rio Dell/Scotia Chamber of Commerce*  
11:30-12:30 Exercise Group

### Tuesdays

<i>Rohner Park Trails</i>	8:30	Walking
<i>MGC</i>	1:30	Senior Stitchers
	2:00	Seated Tai Chi
	3:00	Recorder Group

### Wednesdays

<i>River Walk</i>	8:30	Walking
Sept. 4	12:00	Senior Lunch Bunch
		<i>Call Chris 725-2020 or Carol 725-2931</i>

*Rio Dell/Scotia Chamber of Commerce*  
11:30-12:30 Exercise Group

<i>MGC</i>	1:00	Tai Chi
	5:00	S.A.I.L. Exercise

### Thursdays

<i>Rohner Park Trails</i>	8:30	Walking
	3:00	Bocce Ball
<i>MGC</i>	9:00	Cards
	1:00	MahJong
	2:00	Seated Tai Chi

*United Methodist Church*

Sept. 12, 19 & 26	12:00-2:00	Caregiver Support Group Fireplace Room 922 N Street, Fortuna For info call 443-9747
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### Fridays

<i>MGC</i>	9:30	Cards & Games
	2:00	Scrabble Group

*United Methodist Church*

Sept. 27	7:30 pm	Fortuna Camera Club
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*Rio Dell/Scotia Chamber of Commerce*  
11:30-12:30 Exercise Group

<i>Fortuna</i>	9:00	Hiking (Call 725-7953)
	9:00	Biking (Call 725-1229)

### Saturday

Sept. 21	11:00-12:00	Speaker: Nutritionist
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### Sunday

<i>Fortuna-The Monday Club</i>		
Sept. 22	2:00-4:00	Open Mic

# GREEN'S

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# Using Medical Cannabis

By Diane Dickinson, M.D.

I am a family practice physician who has advised folks about use of cannabis as medicine since 2008.

Back then, I really had no special interest or expertise in medical cannabis, and I was working two jobs. But a local doctor who was providing this service really wanted to retire. So I helped him out two afternoons, and learned so much from those few patients that I became fascinated.

My first patient was 88. She ate half a cannabis cookie, made by her daughter-in-law, three times a week. This stimulated her appetite enough to maintain her weight. She had tried a prescription for appetite that gave her tremors, so she stopped taking it.

She remained my patient, eating her cannabis cookie-and-a-half each week, for many years.

All these years later, it is a challenge to keep up with all the science and research, but I love trying.

With my patients, the most common conditions are pain, PTSD (especially among veterans), depression, anxiety, insomnia, seizures, cancer, and so much more.

Our bodies have receptors in every organ, including our skin, that the compounds in cannabis (cannabinoids) interact with. This is why cannabis can provide so much help with such varied conditions and symptoms.

The most common concerns I hear with new patients coming to me for education and directions are: "I don't want to feel it and I don't want to smoke." Fortunately, with all the options available, my answer is: "That is totally doable."

The methods of use available include: medicine to swallow (edibles, tinctures, teas, capsules), sublingual or under the tongue (tinctures or

candies/mints to hold in your mouth), topical creams/salves, smoking or "vaporizing."

Many of my patients use an oil-based tincture sublingually during the day, and a tiny edible dose (1-5 mg for many) at bedtime.

For sleep, the cannabinoid that is effective is THC, not CBD. When you swallow anything containing THC, it enters your bloodstream and is processed in the liver. The end result is more sedating — and potentially more intoxicating. Definitely helpful for sleep.

When a cannabis medicine is absorbed under the tongue, that conversion does not happen.

Tolerance does develop to the intoxicating effects of cannabis, but not the medicinal effects. So tolerance is useful. On the other hand, as one 95-year-old patient told me, "There is no harm in a little giggling." Cannabis can enhance activities we enjoy.

Regarding cannabis use for pain, studies have shown two important points: combining a pain medication with a cannabis product can result in twice as much pain control as the pain med alone. Also, people who combine use do not develop tolerance to the pain medication over time — the same dose continues to be effective.

For those who wish to try cannabis in any form for the first time, the most important thing to remember is to start with a very low dose and increase gradually over days to weeks to get the effect you desire.

—  
**Dr. Diane Dickinson** is a family practice physician and cannabis clinician in Eureka and Crescent City. 707-826-1165

## Arcata Road 'Taxi'

Humboldt Transit Authority (HTA) is offering a discounted taxi/van service along Old Arcata Road between Arcata and Eureka.

The service picks up passengers at several locations — Indianola, Freshwater Corners, Bayside, etc. — and will take them to their destinations, and then return them home.

Rides cost \$3, or \$2 for seniors, and companions ride free.

Riders must call HTA at 707-442-4555 before 3 p.m. the day before the trip for reservations.

Go online to HTA.org and click on the green "Old Arcata Road Service" to check the map and details.

## Emergency Alerts

The Humboldt Sheriff's Office of Emergency Services is offering a free alert system to spread information about local emergencies by phone, cell phone and computer.

The system sends notifications of severe weather, flooding, evacuations, fires and other local incidents that affect the neighborhoods where you live and work.

To register, go online to [humboldt.gov/alerts](http://humboldt.gov/alerts) and enter your information. You will receive alerts of events that affect specific neighborhoods you select.

Questions? Call 707-268-2500 or email [oes@co.humboldt.ca.us](mailto:oes@co.humboldt.ca.us).

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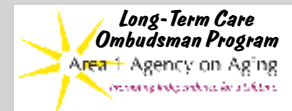
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## LIVE VIGOROUSLY

BY JOAN RAINWATER-GISH

# Preventing Falls

September is Fall Prevention Month. That's when agencies such as American Bone Health (ABH), National Osteoporosis Foundation and the National Institute on Aging provide materials, workshops and media events to help people learn what they can do to prevent falls.

The majority of the following information is from an workshop I gave at the Humboldt Senior Resource Center. My hope is that you find the information helpful, and only scary enough to get you to take preventive action.

Older adults are often more at risk because, as we age, our bones may become thin and fragile (osteoporosis), resulting in bones that break easily.

According to the federal Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, Americans sustain 2 million fractures every year — more than the incidence of breast cancer, heart attack and strokes combined.

Falls are the leading cause of fatal and nonfatal injuries for older Americans. About 25% of all seniors fall each year, and every 11 seconds, a senior is in the ER for an injury related to a fall.

Therefore, it is important to maintain good bone strength and balance to prevent falls.

According to ABH, the risk of falling increases with:

- Age.
- Conditions that affect walking.
- Low blood pressure.
- A previous fall.

- Fear of falling – previous falls can increase your fear of falling, making you even more tentative when you walk.

The good news is we can do something about these risks.

- You are at a higher risk if you take four or more medications. Ask your pharmacist if any of your medications can make you dizzy.

- Get your eyes checked. Vision plays an important part in falls and avoiding them.

- Do exercises to strengthen your legs and core. (Contact me for recommended exercises.)

- Improve your balance with daily exercises such as standing on one foot – work up to 30 seconds on each leg.

- Make your home safer to reduce risks by installing nightlights, using handrails, clearing clutter, and eliminating throw rugs.

Osteoporosis affects men and women from all racial/ethnic groups, and can rob people of their independence and quality of life. Make fall prevention a priority this month and every month, so that you can continue to live vigorously and independently.

**Joan Rainwater-Gish, 76, of Eureka is a certified personal trainer and group fitness instructor.**

*To find out about her exercise classes, or to get her recommended four exercises for fall prevention, email [jrainwater-gish@suddenlink.net](mailto:jrainwater-gish@suddenlink.net) or call her at 707-442-4415.*



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# New Fortuna Rehab Center

By Cheryl Kelly

Humboldters with complex medical issues too severe to treat at home or at a skilled nursing facility will have an important new resource in Spring 2020 when Redwood Memorial Hospital opens its new Acute Inpatient Rehabilitation center in Fortuna.

The 12,000-square-foot addition, now under construction, will be housed in a single-story building featuring 10 private patient rooms, a 700-square-foot physical therapy gym, and spaces for occupational therapy and speech pathology.

St. Joseph Health's entire rehab program will move into the new facility from the General Hospital campus in Eureka, because that building does not conform to new California seismic standards.

"This new addition was built from the ground-up with input from physicians, nurses and therapists," says Jim Peaker, area director for Rehabilitation Services at St. Joseph Health-Humboldt County. "It will truly be a gem in a rural setting with comparable services usually available only for people willing to drive three to five hours out of the area."

Under Peaker's leadership, the Acute Inpatient Rehabilitation program was ranked in the top 1% for patient satisfaction in 2018 in a health-care industry assessment survey. Peaker also noted that about 10,000 patients have gotten rehab treatment through the program over the last 12 years, and consistently ranks in the top 25% even when compared to much larger institutions like UCSF for patient outcomes, including patient length of stay, percent of patients able to go home, and high level of function at discharge.

The program's multidisciplinary

team approach includes physical, occupational and speech therapists. The average patient needing this level of therapy is 70, and recovering from a serious illness, injury or surgery.

"Acute rehabilitation is a unique medical program that targets complex medical issues like strokes, amputations, surgeries that have gone wrong, and injuries resulting from serious vehicle accidents," Peaker said. "In these situations, patients are stabilized but can't yet leave an inpatient setting."

Enrollment in the rehab program requires a doctor's referral. For information, call 707-441-4414.

Cheryl Kelly of Trinidad is a regular Senior News contributor.



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# On Turning 70: How'd That Happen?

By John Meyers

It's happened. I turned the big 7-Oh. I know you older folks will chuckle, remembering what it was like to be that young, but this is a new experience for me. I've never been 70 before.

In its wisdom, and to help me celebrate my 70<sup>th</sup> birthday, the state of California decided that, due to my advanced age, I needed to take the written driver's test again. I passed and got a five-year license. My goal now is to outlive it.

What feels different this time? My body seems to be catching up with my age, for one thing. "You're as young as you feel," they say. Well, somehow, I feel like I'm 70. My knees aren't

like they used to be and my back sure isn't like it used to be. I don't have the stamina I used to, and my eyesight seems to be failing.

OK, I don't know where I was going with that, but I know I like bacon.

My wife and I see the same doctor. I recently mentioned to him that she is having some hearing trouble as she also approaches 70. He told me that a good test was to stand a ways behind her and say something in my normal voice, and to keep doing that to see how close I had to be before she could hear me.

I stood maybe six feet behind her and said something. No response, so I moved about four feet away and

repeated it. No response. I moved right up behind her and said it again. She then turned around and said, "Oh, for Heaven's sake. For the third time, we're having spaghetti for dinner!"

I didn't bother to call the doctor back.

That didn't happen when I was a youngster in my 60s. But now, I'm 70. The big 7-Oh. Yep... seven decades.

For all of you about to turn 70, I say, "Holy cow! How'd that happen?"

—

**John Meyers, 70, of Trinidad has many years' experience in aging. But not as many as some.**

"[A]t my age you care less. You just plain care less. You get tired of people's problems, and you take less interest in them. You think, Oh, to hell with them. I'll go out and tend to the garden. The kinds of problems you can care about in your old age are different from the kinds of problems you care about when you're thirty."

—Wallace Stegner

(1909-1993), Western novelist.



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# September

## Community Calendar

### Fortuna Benefit Concert

The St. Francis Episcopal Church at 16<sup>th</sup> and L Streets in Fortuna hosts a classical concert of Latin guitar and song on Sunday, Sept. 29, to benefit the church's furnace replacement fund. Guitarist Jennifer Throwbridge and vocalist Mark Baum will perform Latin and Colombian folk music starting at 2 p.m., followed by a gourmet tea reception. Donations accepted.

### Want to Sing?

The McKinleyville Community Choir is looking for singers to join its musical family. Rehearsals begin Monday, Sept. 2, at Grace Good Shepherd Church, 1450 Hiller Road, McKinleyville. Come sing with the community. Contact Clare, 831-419-3247 or ccgreene46@gmail.com.

### Natural Fiber Fair

The 29<sup>th</sup> annual Natural Fiber Fair is Saturday-Sunday, Sept. 7-8, at the Arcata Community Center, 321 Dr. Martin Luther King Parkway, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Fiber workshops and demonstrations, local artists, gourmet food and more. Info at naturalfiberfair.com.

### Food for Thought

The Ink People Center for the Arts presents two new films that celebrate local food. "Going with the Grain" focuses on locally grown grains, such as wheat and quinoa. And "Coastal Foods" looks at community-supported agriculture (CSAs). Saturday, Sept. 14, 6:30 p.m., the Eureka Theater, 612 F St. Tickets \$10; info at 800-838-3006.

### 'The Age of Love'

The Humboldt County Library in Eureka, 1313 3<sup>rd</sup> St., will host a free screening of a documentary about a group of adventurous seniors looking for love and companionship at a speed-dating event for 70- to 90-year-olds in Rochester, NY. Saturday, Sept. 14, 2-4 p.m., followed by a short discussion. Call 707-839-1745 for details.

### 'Found in the Woods'

Local author Glory Ralston will talk about her new novel, "Found in the Woods," and read from the book at Trinidad Library, 380 Janis Court, on Thursday, Sept. 19, 7 p.m. The event is free. Proceeds from sales of the book will be shared with the library.

### Nonviolence

Two activist groups, the Kunle Community and Women's International League for Peace and Freedom — will host an event of poetry and music for nonviolence at the Gazebo at 2<sup>nd</sup> and F Streets in Old Town Eureka, Saturday, Sept. 21, 5-8 p.m. Email lohara320@yahoo.com for info.

### 'Solidarity'

That's the theme of the 46th North Country Fair, Saturday and Sunday, Sept. 21-22, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on the Arcata Plaza. Some 170 art and craft vendors, 20 live local acts on three stages, local food booths, activities for kids, and the All Species Parade on Saturday and the Samba Parade on Sunday at 1 p.m. Info at northcountryfair.org.

### BE CAREFUL ... From Page 5

house, he built special scaffolding and supports for the ladders he climbed, and used a harness to tie himself down when leaning out of windows to reach tricky spots.

When my children were young at the pool, we watched them and used flotation devices, but we didn't keep them from exploring. When they surfed, they took lessons first. When they biked, they wore helmets.

With age, a walk that once seemed like no big deal might require some planning to reduce risk. Check in with your body. Am I dizzy? Am I hydrated? Do I have decent, stable shoes on my feet? Do I need a cane or a walker? Is the surface slick or uneven? Are my glasses working? Where are my glasses, anyway?

Be aware of pets around your

feet, stray cords in the path, and throw rugs that might try to throw us to the ground.

Being cautious is good — to a point. If the goal is to remain healthy, content and mobile, then it is worth being as active as your body allows, and to take the time before activities to reduce the chance that something avoidable might trip you up.

—  
**Dr. Jennifer Heidmann** is  
medical director and primary  
care provider at Redwood Coast  
PACE (443-9747). This column  
should not be taken as medical  
advice. Ask your medical provider  
if you have health questions. Send  
comments to [seniornewseditor@  
humsenior.org](mailto:seniornewseditor@humsenior.org).

# Letters to the Editor

## Pet Owners Beware

To the Editor:

I'm not a pet lover, so I admit I have a biased view. I wish the July issue of Senior News, with its focus on pets, might have included some sort of alert or warning to elderly pet owners about injuries and accidents caused by pets, or at least an acknowledgement that pet owners should be aware of that possibility.

I couldn't find more current statistics, but a 2010 Centers for Disease Control study found that falls caused by pets "happen with relative frequency." Of course, pet owners still say they love their pets despite a dislocated shoulder, etc., that will limit them for life.

So this is a friendly request that this aspect of pet ownership might be included in future articles lauding the companionship and love that some people enjoy with their pets.

**Gladys Burritt, Cutten**

## 'Passing the Torch'

To the Editor:

With regard to "Passing the Torch" [John Heckel, August 2019], I think there is a time that our aging says to do it, especially if you are a public servant.

We all age a little differently but, if we are honest with ourselves (and have not fallen victim to dementia), we know when our physical and/or mental capabilities are becoming less than needed for optimum functioning.

It would not be a wise elder who continues as a public servant when that time comes. But many wise elders are able to pass the torch of occupation while continuing to carry the brighter torch of wisdom, and offering it to younger generations by way of writing or consultation on important issues.

**Irene Van Natter, Kneeland**

## For the Troops

To the Editor:

2019 marks the 10th year I've been involved with the Overseas Coupon Project (OCP), a national organization that helps our military families overseas.

The local effort started as a project of the Humboldt Republican Women in 2009, but quickly grew to include friends from Fortuna Methodist Church, Fortuna Seniors, Eureka, Arcata and Ferndale.

We mail coupons for food and household products, clipped from newspapers and magazines, to our military families overseas to help with their living expenses. The coupons are good at every PX on military bases around the world, and are greatly appreciated by the many recipients.

Once the coupons are cut, sorted and totaled, they are packed into a priority mail box, taken to the post office and mailed to an overseas military base. Our group chose Okinawa, Japan, which had thousands of service families and, at that time, few sponsors.

The last mailing, in July, totaled \$56,287, bringing our cumulative 10-year total to over \$966,000. We expect to break the \$1 million mark our next mailing.

Many thanks to all the generous, hard-working people who participate in this fine project. It definitely requires many helping hands. For info, email [chrisiewen7@gmail.com](mailto:chrisiewen7@gmail.com).

**Chris Wennerholm, Fortuna**

## Down at the P.O.

To the Editor:

In her article about rural post offices ["Rural Post Offices, Center of Community Life," July 2019], Jessie Wheeler mentions that a few still exist.

Honeydew Post Office is one. For many Honeydew locals, going to the P.O. for the mail daily means a stop to sit and gab.

Often, talk is with tourists doing the Lost Coast Redwoods tour. Recently, tourists who had had a flat tire while at the store/P.O. wrote a letter from their home thanking the locals who happily and readily helped them out.

Going to the P.O./store makes my day.

**Jeanne Mattole, Honeydew**

## Insurance for Less

To the Editor:

I would like to offer an answer to John Dillon's letter ["But What Will It Cost?" August 2019] in response to Kathryn Donahue's "One Nurse's Perspective on Humboldt Health Care" [July 2019].

The answer is "less." I agree with Mr. Dillon that the government can screw up practically anything if we let them. Nonetheless, it will actually

cost much less for the government than for private insurance companies to run comprehensive healthcare programs.

Numerous studies have variously estimated the savings, but the bottom line is that, believe it or not, Medicare costs much less to administer (2-3%) than private insurance companies charge (20-30%).

**Carol Moné, Trinidad**

**Letters Policy:** Senior News welcomes letters to the editor. To be considered for publication, letters should be received by the 12th of the month, must not exceed 300 words, and may be edited for space. Submissions must include the writer's full name, mailing address, phone number and e-mail address. Senior News reserves the right to reject any letter. The same requirements apply to those interested in submitting longer commentary columns (up to 400 words). E-mail [tpease@hum senior.org](mailto:tpease@hum senior.org) or mail to Senior News, 1910 California St., Eureka, CA 95501.

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# For Santa Cruz Couple, 'There's Always Loleta'

By Jane Parks-McKay

We love Loleta. In fact, we love the whole of Humboldt County.

My husband and I have wanted to live in Humboldt for well over 10 years. Why, you ask, has it taken us so long?

Well, life keeps us pretty busy here in Santa Cruz, but we've heard how difficult it is to get medical care in Humboldt. For us 60-somethings, that's scary.

So we've looked elsewhere. I can't tell you how many houses we've looked at, all perfectly decent places . . . but every time, it's not Humboldt.

So our family joke is, "There's always Loleta."

Being the artistic types, we think we may have found a way around the

medical issues after agonizing over it for years: accept the health challenges and make other plans. Do what others do and travel for medical care. We can do that! We also have enough faith in the Humboldt community that changes being made now will eventually bring in more providers.

Most people would think that what attracts us is the beauty of the redwoods and the Zen of the ocean. That's part of it, but it's really the people, who have put out a welcome mat to us time and time again.

For us, all it took was one visit to Humboldt to convince us we were home. After the second visit, we were ready to load the moving van.

Humboldt is eclectic, with people from many walks of life. There's

beauty all around. We have loved the flower show in Fortuna, going to the library on the Eureka waterfront, walking the streets and admiring the Victorians. We also love the weather — every rainy, foggy, overcast drop of it.

We first heard about Humboldt after my parents took an RV trip. They kept talking about this amazing place in Northern California, so we had to go see it ourselves.

Our friends in Santa Cruz think we're crazy. They're worried about us selecting such a "remote" place. We should be moving to a senior community, they say. And, the most frequent comment: Why would we leave a world-class place like Santa Cruz? We don't hate the place, but traffic and

the high cost of living is driving many people out, and we're finally joining the caravan.

We have a great realtor in Humboldt, and once the right place comes up, don't be surprised if you see two gray-haired seniors doing the Happy Dance.

That will be us, with a permanent smile on our faces and a glint in our eyes. Because, finally, there will always be Loleta for us.

*Jane Parks-McKay and her husband, Tim McKay, have lived in Santa Cruz County for more than 40 years. They are excited about their Great Adventure.*

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**TURNING BACK OPIOIDS . . . From Page 3**

pain medications or sedatives regularly or occasionally, make sure they are stored securely, as you would other lethal items like guns or alcohol. Many young people who develop addiction to opioids, including heroin, say they got started by swiping pills prescribed to someone else. And if you have leftover meds, dispose of them in a safe bin.

In summary:

- Take as little opioid medication as possible, and talk to your doctor about other, safer ways to treat your pain.
- Beware of dangerous drug inter-

actions, and discuss safety with your provider.

- Store meds securely and dispose of unused meds appropriately.
- Medication disposal locations and instructions, resources to treat opioid dependence, and more information on Humboldt's opioid safety efforts can be found online at [rxsafehumboldt.org](http://rxsafehumboldt.org) and [stopoverdosehumboldt.org](http://stopoverdosehumboldt.org).

**Dr. Mary Meengs** is a family practice physician in Eureka who works with the Rx Safe Humboldt Coalition.

**TOLL ON DOCTORS. . . From Page 3**

ken legs, doing Pap smears and immunizations and well-child checks. They want to be finding weird little diseases and making people happy. They don't want to be having these difficult, hard discussions."

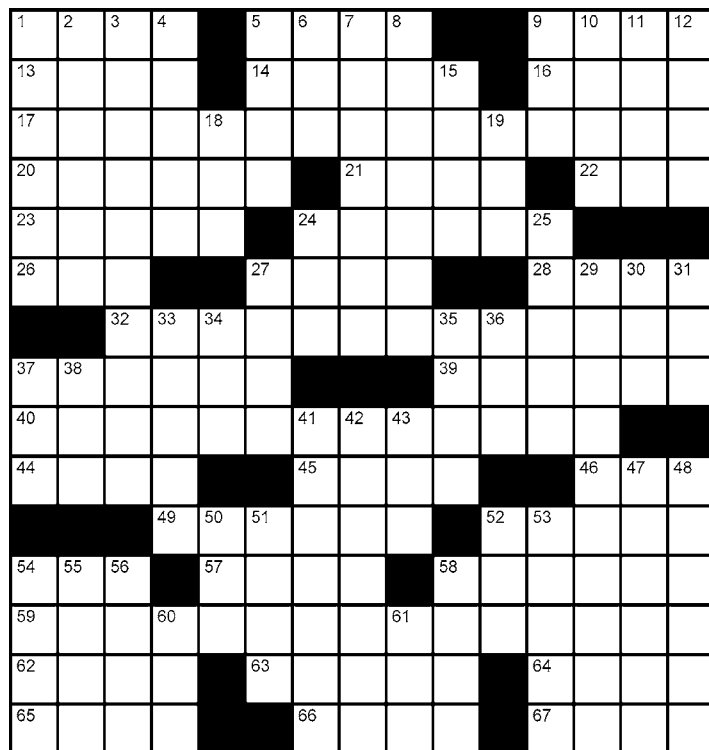
"Stressed docs — that's a really big part of my world," he said. "We wouldn't have a doctor shortage in Humboldt County if there weren't an opioid crisis."

**Ted Pease** is editor of *Senior News*.

# Crossword Puzzle

Service, Please by Caitlin Reid

Edited by David Steinberg

**ACROSS**

- \_\_\_ carotene
- It may go out on a limb
- Way over yonder
- Pupil surrounder
- Extend, as a contract
- Posh
- Auto shop request?
- Purple dinosaur of '90s-'00s TV
- Kansas's neighbor, informally
- Allow
- Troubled constantly
- No-clothes ideology
- Smidgen
- "You never had \_\_\_ good!"
- "Tears in Heaven" singer Clapton
- Deli request?
- Language whose name contains the letters A, B and C
- "Laughing" beasts
- Bar request?
- Classmate, e.g.
- Remini of "Kevin Can Wait"
- Signs off on
- Most ticked off
- "Aquaman" star Jason
- Red or Black follower
- Sheltered bay
- Critical of
- Post office request?
- Operatic chance to shine
- Ewok moon in "Star Wars"
- Postings at JFK
- Ring around a fortress
- Bygone fliers, briefly
- Midterm, maybe

**DOWN**

- Baseball team's heavy hitter
- Printing blunders
- Dessert at many weddings
- Yoga position
- "South Park" co-creator Parker
- Like fresh paint
- Not outsourced
- Nerdy realm
- Ginger \_\_\_
- Energize
- One of two on most cars
- Musical sign of silence
- Axis vs. Allies conflict, briefly
- Theatrical backdrop
- "\_\_\_ a real nowhere man": The Beatles
- Utmost degree
- Dispensed, with "out"
- It begs to be scratched
- One might be written with letters cut from a magazine
- Nest egg initials
- '90s music store buys
- Alternatives to Lyfts
- \_\_\_ for tat
- "No way, Jose!"
- Thesaurus item: Abbr.
- Guitar music blaster
- "Insecure" actress Issa
- High Monopoly rolls
- Plants anew

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- CROSSWORD PUZZLE ANSWERS ON PAGE 14 -

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- Cereal component, often
- Turtle-like Troopas in Mario games
- Most sensible
- Second-to-last 31-day mo.
- Architect Mies van der \_\_\_
- A Stooge
- Hooting baby bird
- Inbox nuisance
- Coin of Germany and Greece
- Home to Laos
- They're often attached to TVs
- Bowler, for one
- "Thou shalt \_\_\_ steal"

## FIGHTING BACK AGAINST PARKINSON'S . . . From Page 1

When Harry Hardin of Hydesville met physical therapist Jennifer Dannenbring at the St. Joseph Outpatient Rehabilitation clinic for a problem that she recognized as Parkinson's, he found treatment programs that helped, but he was frustrated and exhausted because he had to go to Santa Rosa

**Parkinson's disease is an incurable degenerative movement disorder that causes loss of motor skills, balance, speech and sensory function. More than 1 million Americans have Parkinson's, and about 60,000 people are diagnosed each year. For information on Parkinson's programs at St. Joseph Health, call the outpatient clinic, 707-441-4454.**

for them. It is a common complaint in Humboldt County.

So in 2018, Hardin and his wife, Janie, donated \$100,000 to help St. Joseph Health develop its own treatment programs for Parkinson's and other neurological conditions. The Hardins have made another substantial donation; additional funding comes from the St. Joseph Community Benefit Program.

It all supports four treatment initiatives designed to reduce stiffness, increase oxygen flow, and improve coordination. Lee Sullivan Vocal Training (LSVT) Loud/Big is aimed at improving neuroplasticity — the brain's ability to change; "PWR Up!" and S.A.I.L (Staying Active & Independent for Life) are exercise programs for seniors; and "Rock Steady Boxing" is an exercise regimen that uses noncontact boxing to help people fight back against Parkinson's.

"Our gift recognizes and thanks St. Joseph Health, especially the outpatient rehabilitation physical therapy team, for improving the quality of life for Janie and me," Hardin said.

The Hardins' donation meant that Jim Peaker, St. Joseph area director

for Rehabilitation Services, and his team could help patients like Hardin both at St. Joseph Hospital in Eureka and at Redwood Memorial in Fortuna, eliminating the need for out-of-area travel. And many of the programs are free.

"We are blessed to be the only two hospitals in all of Northern California to offer such a robust variety of free and low-cost exercise and rehabilitation programs," Peaker said.

Businessman O'Rourke Swinney, 67, of Arcata, is a Rock Steady Boxing believer. When his PD symptoms started to appear some years ago, "I was in denial, like most folks," he said. For years, stiffness in his hand felt as if were covered by a diving glove, he said.

Many in his situation "curl up in a fetal position," Swinney said. "That's the worst thing you can do." He tried medications — "back in the day, that was it" — and traveled out of town in search of therapy, including yoga, dance and swimming.

When Swinney and his wife Linda discovered the PD Patient Support Group, his outlook improved.

For a decade, Mary and Bob Kay,

and Ken and Rose Bond have run the support group to provide PD patients and their families "relief from the isolation." Mary Kay, now a widow, says PD patients understand that their doctors have limited time for "lots of talk," so the support group provides ways to share experiences, information and camaraderie.

The group meets on the second Friday of the month from 3-4 p.m. at Immanuel Church, 3230 Harrison Ave. in Eureka.

Now, Swinney hits the gym for PD exercise sessions at St. Joseph Health's general campus five days a week, and is a Rock Steady Boxing believer. After years of driving to the Bay Area for treatment, which was expensive, tiring and not that effective, things are definitely looking up.

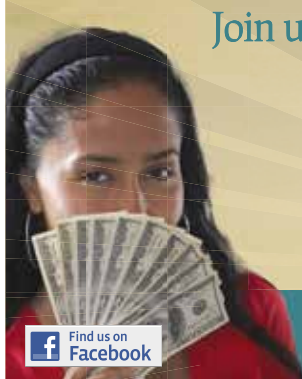
"There are a million people in this country with Parkinson's," he said. "They can't just sit at home, they have to get out and fight back."

—

**Carol McFarland, 79,**  
*of Arcata is a retired journalist and English teacher.*

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## Coming in Senior News

• **OCTOBER:** Let's go "**Back to Nature**" with an issue celebrating the changing seasons in Humboldt. What's your favorite part of living on the Redwood Coast?

• **NOVEMBER:** *Do you remember the time . . . ?* We'll be sharing stories in "**Family Stories**" are a way of preserving the past. Share yours. Contact editor Ted Pease: tpease@hum senior.org; 443-9747, x1226.

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