



# Things That Go Bump in the Night

## A Frightening Year

By Ted Pease

By any measure, 2020 has been a very unsettling year. COVID-19. Social upheaval. Political divisiveness. Climate change. Economic collapse. November's presidential election.

Then came the fires, and another sharp uptick in anxiety levels.

"Today looks just like what we've been feeling for five months, living under COVID," one Humboldt woman posted to her friends on Facebook when thick smoke from wildfires blotted out the sun and blanketed the North Coast in early September.

"I believe that this is the most scared I have ever been," said Penny Whitehead on Sept. 10 as Rio Dell awoke under a smoky, fire-red sky. "This morning at 8:00, I walked outside and couldn't believe the horror that I was viewing."

Even before the latest fires, many Humboldters said they were experiencing high levels of anxiety in their day-to-day lives. Will life ever go back to normal?

"Americans are becoming more afraid," reported researchers at Chapman University in Orange, California. We're becoming more fearful of events out of our control in an increasingly scary world.

Chapman's Babbie Center has been surveying Americans about their fears since 2015. Its "America's Top Fears 2019" report lists 88 fears from crime to natural disasters to zombies that keep us awake nights.

Of these, the study said, "The fear that our government is corrupt far exceeds all others."

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**IT'S MASK SEASON** at the McKinleyville Barber Shop, and not only because of Halloween. Barbers Ken Murrell (right) and his nephew Junior Murrell, along with the bear and other stuffed trophies, make sure customers play it safe. Mark Larson photo.

## Nothing Scary About a Haircut

For 50 years, the McKinleyville Barber Shop has adapted. In these pandemic times, the jackalopes, bears and the barbers themselves remind customers to wear a mask.

The masked hunting trophies are a good conversation-starter, said barber Ken Murrell.

The family-owned shop is a McKinleyville tradition for retired military as well as current law enforcement, fire and Coast Guard personnel, who have donated scores of caps as wall decoration.

Grab a mask and stop in for a trim.

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ASK THE DOC

HSRC

OPINIONS

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## TEDtalks: Why Are You Afraid?

Mostly, I am a glass-half-full kind of guy (which sometimes annoys the heck out of my wife) — not a Pollyanna, you understand, but I'm pretty much always in a good mood.

So I know things must be getting a little tense in the cosmos when I notice that I'm anxious or in a funk.

There's a lot of that going around these days, plenty to worry about. It seems as if the bad news just piles on; the plague of locusts is due any day now.

This being the month that celebrates scary things and tooth decay, we thought now might be a good time to talk about some of the things that scare us.

Even in "normal" times, says the Geriatric Mental Health Foundation, older adults are particularly susceptible to anxiety. "Older adults often do not recognize or acknowledge their symptoms," they report. "When they do, they may be reluctant to discuss their feelings."

In putting this issue together, we also found that people don't really want to talk about what scares them. That, I think, is one measure of how frightened many people are.

A frequently offered "solution" to existential angst is "community" and connection to others. That's easy to say, but for people already isolated — first by aging and then by a pandemic — a supportive community or just someone to talk to can be hard to find.

Back in August 2019, Senior News asked, "How's Your Social Life?" and looked at how seniors build connections with others.

One obvious place, we found, was in our Senior Dining Centers [see "Food Tastes Better with Friends," August 2019]. "The main reason I come here is to get some company," said Martha Devine of Arcata. "Without it, I would be alone. It's not good."

This raises the question of how all those people have been coping since our congregating dining centers closed in March.

The recent days when smoke from wildfires blotted out the sun were a good excuse to let us admit to each other how worried we are. Worry begets fear. And fear, left unchecked, kills us a little bit every day.

Sharing worries can help ease them, but Pollyanna is not going to cut it. We have to help people who don't have connections to friends by figuring out ways to reach out to them.

Let's start with phone calls to everyone who used to eat at the Senior Center every day, and everyone signed up for those activities we haven't been able to list since March.

I'm making a resolution to pick up the phone more often and call people I haven't heard from since we all started self-distancing. Even if hearing from the glass-half-full guy is kind of annoying, at least it'll break up the day.

Give me a call at 707-443-9747, x1226, if you want to talk. I'll call you back.

—  
*Ted Pease is the obnoxiously cheerful editor of Senior News.*

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# Child's Trip to the Outhouse a Dazzling Experience

By Jan Ostrom

I spent part of my childhood during the 1950s in Alaska, a wild and beautiful place with potentially scary moose, bears, summer mosquitoes as big as Land Rovers, and winter blizzardy roads.

We lived in an isolated WWII-era Alaska Railroad house that did not have neighbors, electricity or a flush toilet. I felt adventurous. From our house we could see Denali, the tallest mountain in North America. A city girl, I was awed.

Then came the winter weather, and a different perspective on late-night trips to the outhouse. Two wooden planks led from our back door to the "honey shed," an old hut with a half-moon carved in the door. Quite rustic, it had over the years been papered inside with old Sears catalogue pages of farm implements and corsets, toys and flannel-lined jeans.

Dad said the time had come to set up our "honey pots" inside at night to avoid outside trips when the temps dropped and the snow flew. I was embarrassed and insisted I would be fine going to the outhouse if I had to. Dad gave me The Look and shook his head.

Only three nights later, I had to make my first night trip down the boards. Booted and jacketed, I



**MUSH! The author's father runs with his dogsled along Alaska Railroad tracks outside their house during a winter in the 1950s.** Photo courtesy of Jan Ostrom.

took my flashlight and confidently slipped out the back door. The frigid air was numbing.

In the darkness, I was immediately shocked by a flare of light and a loud bullwhip crack somewhere

near my head! Terrified, I squinched my eyes closed, threw up my hands, and lost my balance.

All 11 years of my life flashed before my eyes. I slid backward off the glassy boards into a snowbank, limbs flailing. Again, the whip crack split the air, and I forced my eyes to open.

As the snow seeped into my boots and soaked my butt, I gaped at the outhouse in wordless amazement. It was bathed in a lemon-lime color! And the sky all over my head was a combination of green and yellow waves of light, undulating over the landscape like huge ribbons of translucent Christmas candy. The air crackled with static bursts like our shortwave radio.

I watched dumbfounded as the northern lights show moved eerily through space and dissolved. The stars reappeared, and all was silent, as though I had dreamed it.

After that first winter, the Aurora Borealis became my friend, and it never scared me again.

—  
**Jan Ostrom, 74, a retired professor of film and television, enjoys indoor plumbing at her home in Eureka.**

# Terrified and Lost in the Mountains, 'I Sang Songs'

By Margot Genger

We went backpacking. My daughter, wild at 5, running. My son, hopping, singing. He is 8. My husband is carrying 50 pounds. I have 30.

There was ice. In June. Patches of it lay in shade where the granite had cracked and dropped a step and then another step some million years ago. Water melted over the smooth rock down to the edge, a drop-off where, miles below, treetops dotted the glistening white granite surrounding Sapphire Lake.

We'd lost the trail.

My son ran ahead and down the rounding wet edge. My daughter ran left, over wet icy steps to the shear drop-off. I swallowed my heart. Couldn't breathe. "Please! Come back! It's not safe!"

I followed my daughter. "Come this way!" I waved my baby toward her father, who was now

hand-in-hand with my son. I watched her slip, catch herself, jump to her feet, and run toward me while I side-stepped over the icy footing, held out my hand, and sucked in every molecule of my own fear before I felt her palm, her precious tiny fingers in my own hand.

Hoping to discover the trail, follow it safely back to level ground, we hiked straight up the rock face. Steeper, then too steep. No ridgeline, no switch-back. Trees. We rested against the biggest, strongest pine. Sap stuck to my children's hair, their t-shirts, their shorts.

I sang songs — "Stewball," "All My Trials." My warrior left to search for a way home.

Hours later, our side of the mountain in shade, he returned. "I've found the trail but we have to cross

some ice." Ten yards of ice. One six-foot pole. Children in the middle. Parents at either end. A first down if we made it. Death if anyone slipped.

At the top, I cried for 20 minutes. Sobbed, actually. Surprised too, that my tears could be real — that such weeping was not just made for TV.

We walked five miles back to the car. Wobbly legs, grateful heart, husband in the lead.

Drove all the way home, held each other after all was said and done...

A miracle that my children don't remember.

—  
**Margot Jarvis Genger, 68, is a retired teacher and author of "Shift Happens: Breakdowns During Life's Long Hauls."**

# My Scary Teachers Drove Me to Jazz and Show Tunes

By *Patty Holbrook*

The casual dress code of teachers today and their palsy-walsy relationship with students is a stark contrast with my teachers in the 1940s and '50s. I was frightened of mine.

My fear of teachers began in grade school. Mrs. Patterson drew a "9" on the blackboard. I giggled and blurted out, "It looks like a big belly." She whirled around and yelled, "Who said that?" Her anger froze me into silence in classrooms forever.

Junior high teachers ruled their classes with an iron hand. Sassing the teacher meant immediate banishment to the principal's office. Being late to class could ignite a teacher's wrath that could melt your braces.

Mrs. Ardis taught typing. Her meanness was legendary. We were given one sheet of paper to type something error-free. One typo meant

enduring the humiliation of a trip to the front of the class to ask Mrs. Ardis for another piece of paper, and her glower.

I was even afraid of Mrs. Cook, my piano teacher. Her large black eyes glittered when she scolded me for flubbing my lessons and scales. I grew to hate Mozart's Minuets.

"Wash the dishes or practice," my mother would say. Of course, I opted to practice, leaving my older sister to wash the dishes. She's yet to forgive me. But I also practiced because I was afraid of Mrs. Cook.

Mr. Shepro taught high school Civics, and was feared by all his students.

His cold, pale blue eyes pierced you like an icicle when you didn't know the answer to his questions on current events. He called us hooligans.

And then there was Mr. Harry, who taught Music Appreciation. Handsome, sophisticated and witty, he spoke to us like we were adults. He made up for the crabby teachers. I pictured him at home in a velvet smoking jacket with a cigarette holder and a martini. He was a jazz pianist.

Because of him I said "Nuts!" to Mozart and switched to jazz.

Admittedly, those snarly teachers gave me life skills. I became a whiz-bang typist/secretary, a professional

musician and an avid news buff. My knowledge of music led to jobs in the music industry working for RCA Records, Bobby Darin, Hugo Montenegro, Leonard Feather and even as a musician in the all-girl band in the movie, "Some Like It Hot."

However, these life skills have left me ill-prepared for the new world of high technology. Surrounded by people Zooming, texting, streaming, and Tweeting, I stare dumbly at my crashed computer and am told to reboot.

Say what?

Oh well. Would anyone care to hear a little Rodgers and Hammerstein?

—  
**Patty Holbrook** *reboots and serenades the cat with tunes from "Oklahoma!" in Eureka.*



Patty Holbrook illustration.

# Wonder Woman: Surviving Halloween and Other Life Frights

By *Wendy Pickett*

I was the youngest in our family and loved Halloween. I had responsibilities appropriate for my age and talents: I helped my brother hand out candy. Well, actually I hid behind the curtain in the garage and made cat sounds. Yes, that was my job.

As I grew, my tastes changed as to how to celebrate the scary holiday. One thing I was *not* a fan of was haunted houses. It turns out that when I am threatened, even in fun, I tend to attack back. That wasn't good for me or for the poor haunted house cast members working as ghouls and mummies. I tried to enjoy the fun but that's still a big NOPE for me.

Fear has many faces — stress,

anxiety, insecurities, loneliness, feeling abandoned, imposter syndrome, worry, doubt, procrastination, not feeling well, and oodles of phobias.

Fear isn't all bad. Looking both ways before crossing the street, running back inside to make sure the stove is off, and staying aware of surroundings is all good.

But what about when fear is unfounded or blown out of proportion? Making a presentation in front of a group, having a "talk" (aka, a confrontation) with someone about an important issue, or trying something new shouldn't put us in a tailspin of anxiety. But sometimes, they do. I remember once freaking out because

I had company coming over and had just run out of TP.

I learned from a neuroscientist that our brain's job is to protect us. The brain is an old stick-in-the-mud, really, because when we do something out of the ordinary, it puts on the breaks by switching to fight-or-flight mode. That's why new habits are so hard to keep and learning new technology makes us want to vacuum the floor or do *anything* else but that new thing.

Don't believe me? Flip the toilet paper roll from over to under or vice versa. You'll understand how much your brain hates change.

Don't let apparently irrational fear stop you. Slow your breathing or

chew gum. When you think you're in danger, you don't breathe slowly or stop to eat, so breathing or chewing gum tricks your brain to flip back to higher thinking, which reduces the feeling of fear.

Strike a power pose like Wonder Woman or Superman, which increases testosterone long enough to make risk-taking easier, or just stick with the new superhero behavior until it becomes normal for you.

P.S. I still like to dress up and let out a howl occasionally.

—  
**Wendy Pickett** *is a certified life vision and confidence coach for women at Willow In The Wood (willowinthewood.com) in Eureka.*

## ASK THE DOCTOR

# Fight or Flight

By Jennifer Heidmann, M.D.



Humans have the ability to respond to stressful situations with an instantaneous biological, hormonal cascade. This can be useful — when the proverbial tiger attacks, it allows us to react quickly and with agility, without overthinking our response.

It goes like this: the brain notices a threat, and even before we can put together a thought about it, a distress signal is sent through the autonomic nervous system that revs our engines, making our adrenal glands pump out epinephrine. The heart beats faster, getting good blood flow to muscles and organs. We breathe more rapidly. We become alert. Our senses are heightened. Basically, we become superheroes.

Unfortunately, this same system also responds to less immediate threats. It may not be as profound a response (sweating, heart racing, difficulty breathing), but it can lead to a low-level constant high-alert status.

Say, for instance, there were a pandemic that went on for months and months. We might always feel threatened. Or if the air became smoky, even if our own house were not in danger, we might feel threatened.

For sure, these situations do require attention, but we don't need a big dose of adrenaline to help us navigate day-to-day stress. Living in constant fear can lead to higher blood pressure, stress on our blood vessels, difficulty sleeping, anxiety

and depression. For some people, it might trigger self-medication with drugs or alcohol.

So how do we manage constant stressors without our brains calling in the physiological cavalry every minute of the day?

Some techniques can help, such as exercise, which not only helps release calming and mood-elevating hormones in the brain, but also distracts us from our worries. Try a walk, a run, a hike (if the air quality

index allows outdoor activity), yoga, dancing, tai chi or chair exercises.

Another technique is

relaxation or meditation. Many studies support the use of meditation to reduce stress, anxiety, blood pressure and pain. For those not interested in finding a teacher or online video to guide them through meditation, just stopping what you're doing and concentrating on breathing can have a real effect on calming the stress response, bringing down the heart rate, reducing blood pressure and short-circuiting a physiological over-response to perceived threat.

In this time of isolation, reaching out to others helps, too, and not just via social media (which can contribute to stress). Although we cannot socialize as we would like to, we can call each other, have face-to-face visits online, write letters or emails, and, when the air quality is good enough, meet outdoors for "porch

Continued on Page 19

# Short Leg Syndrome

By Jerry Jackson, D.C.

Man's (and woman's) right and left sides are not symmetrical. This is true of our faces and the length of our arms, feet and legs.

Of significant importance is leg length inequality, or short leg syndrome. Studies show that 60% to 90% of us have one leg shorter than the other. This most often is due to heredity, but also can be caused by leg fractures or hip and knee replacements.

When one leg is shorter than the other, the pelvis on the short leg side will be tilted downward, which can result in compensatory curves in the spine.

The negative effects of this can be profound. Short leg syndrome is a common cause of chronic back pain and premature spine and hip arthritis. It can also cause an altered gait and feeling of imbalance, which can lead to more frequent falls.

As common as the short leg syndrome is, most doctors are not diagnosing and treating it properly. This most likely is because they weren't taught about the short leg syndrome in school.

Diagnosing a short leg syndrome

usually is a simple process. After taking vital signs, it's the first thing I check for in examining a new patient.

I ask the patient to stand facing away from me, lock their knees and place their feet approximately 6 inches apart. I then place my hands on top of their iliac crests (the hips), and eyeball them to see if one is lower than the other.

If one side is low, I have the patient keep their knees locked and raise the heel on the short leg side to simulate lengthening that leg. While they do this, I observe the low back curvature to see if it straightens.

If it does, I place a 5mm vinyl heel lift in the heel of their short leg shoe. That is enough in most cases, but more can be added gradually.

After standing and walking with the new lift, most report less back pain and better balance.

Correcting a short leg can possibly prevent a life of chronic pain and premature arthritis.

**Dr. Jerry Jackson is a**  
*Eureka chiropractor.*

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## LIVE VIGOROUSLY

BY JOAN RAINWATER-GISH

# Bump in the Night

**T**his is a scary subject to write about, because for my generation, it was taboo to discuss anything having to do with one's "private areas."

But it's an important topic, especially for us seniors — it's about the pelvic floor.

These are muscles located in your pelvis that stretch like a hammock from the pubic bone (at the front) to the coccyx or tailbone (at the back), and from side to side. Together, they support your pelvic organs — the urinary tract, digestive tract and reproductive organs, including the

bladder, the uterus (or in men, the prostate) and the colon — thus affecting urinary and bowel activity.

If the pelvic muscles become weak, you may experience incontinence — urine and/or bowel leakage. Approximately 33 million Americans experience bladder leakage, which helps explain the exploding \$12 billion market for incontinence products. An overactive bladder may also get you to get up several times a night to pee, not only interfering with sleep, but posing risk of falling from bumping into things in the dark.

It's important to know that the

muscles that make up the pelvic floor are just like other muscles in the body that can weaken with age if we don't exercise them. So, to a great extent, bladder and bowel control, and pelvic organ prolapse are fitness issues.

Decades of research demonstrate that pelvic floor exercise is the optimal first-line treatment for urinary incontinence, yet few people participate in any kind of structured program of pelvic floor training to address this fitness problem.

It must be noted that pelvic floor weakness is not just a women's issue, but can be a problem for men as well.

Sixty percent of people with bladder or bowel control problems don't seek help from a health professional. This is a shame, as the right help can significantly improve and, in many

cases, cure their problems.

But this issue has remained pretty much not talked about, so many seniors are not aware that their conditions can be corrected through appropriate exercises, and that strengthening the pelvic floor can be accomplished at any age. Incontinence need not be an inevitable consequence of aging.

Not all bladder or bowel control problems are a result of pelvic floor weakness, of course. Other issues can cause these problems, so check with your health professional first before engaging in an exercise program.

**Joan Rainwater-Gish, 77, of Eureka is a personal trainer and senior group fitness instructor. Contact: [jrainwatergish@gmail.com](mailto:jrainwatergish@gmail.com).**

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# Things That Go BAM!

By Suzanne Simpson

My fear of snakes started when I was about 4.

My family lived in Pasadena in a house close to a field, and one day I came across a garter snake slithering across the patio. Curious about it, I called my mom to come see it. She came outside, looked and screamed. From then on, I was very wary of snakes.

My mother was never meant for country living. After my father died and she remarried, our family moved into a rundown cabin perched on a rocky hill in the lower Sierra. Far from neighbors, the property was home to rattlers, skunks and wild cats.

She lived in fear that we would die of snakebite, or would fall into the fast moving creek behind the cabin or be bitten by a black widow spider.

I, however, took to the countryside like a fish to water, and desperately wanted a horse. My father loved horses and would take me riding on full moon evenings on his Morgan mare.

One weekend, my mother needed to go to Los Angeles to visit relatives, and she had my Great-Aunt Bessie, an aged Southern belle, come to stay and take of us.

This was a woman who knew nothing about country living, was born during the Civil War, and, in her mind, still lived under the blooming magnolias drinking mint juleps.

She never inspired any feeling of protection in my sister and me. Late one night when Nancy and I

were asleep, I woke to loud clapping around on our rocky hilltop.

We had never heard anything like this before, and we were frightened. I heard Aunt Bessie struggle out of bed, put on her turban and robe, pick up my stepdad's shotgun and run out the back door.

The next thing, BAM! Loud blasts echoed up and down the river, and Bessie was screaming at the *GOD-DAMN YANKEES* who were trying to take the South back.

Nancy and I clutched each other, terrified that there were people out there coming to kill us.

When I woke in the early morning, everything seemed peaceful. I crept out of bed and peeked out the windows, but saw nothing.

Feeling brave, I went looking for dead Yankees. Heart thudding, I carefully opened the door and looked around. To my relief, all I found were a couple of piles of fresh horse manure around the side of the house where we heard the ruckus.

It wasn't the Army of Northern Aggression come to get us. Just the neighbor's old horse, which had gotten through the fence and was still enjoying snatching big, red apples off the trees and munching away in the lower orchard.

Reassured, I jumped back into bed.

*Suzanne Simpson, 79, still listens for Yankees outside her homes in Arcata.*

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—Eleanor Roosevelt (1884-1962)



## PAINTING THE OCEAN

BY MARGARET KELLERMANN

### Be Strong

My dad's great-grandfather (whom I won't name 'til I can document the following) died a century-and-a-half ago in Camp Sumter, better known as Andersonville, a notorious Confederate prison.

As a child I found it hard to grasp that someone only three generations away from my father was a grown man during the Civil War. But when I questioned my dad, "Are you sure it was your great-grandfather and not your great-great-grandfather at Andersonville?" he responded gruffly: "Yes."

No more than bare ground surrounded by staked posts, Andersonville became a notorious death camp in Georgia during the Civil War. It offered its prisoners no shelter and almost no food at all, except raw meat. Crowding, exposure, disease and starvation killed even the strongest.

Of course, they were mostly Union prisoners. So why was my ancestor, a Southerner, stolen at night from his farmhouse in the quiet Quaker village of Waterford, Virginia, and taken to a Confederate prison? No family history exists about the reason, or none I've been able to uncover.

But Waterford was on the Virginia state line bordering non-slave-state Maryland. Waterford Quakers were known dissidents against their own state's slavery. Also, I once read an early 1860s letter to this ancestor from his son, saying, apropos of nothing, "Father, the two horses are fine, thee will be relieved to know." No other family letters

mentioned animals, so "horses" may have been code. These details lead me to believe his farm may have been an Underground Railroad stop.

In 2018, I stood outside his huge farmhouse, seeing plenty of space for hiding. No one was home, though. I couldn't pry information from the local historical society representative. Instead of answering my questions, she set her lips firmly. She wouldn't tell.

How much fear can one body take? A lot, it seems. If my theory is right about the Underground Railroad stop, then he and his family must have decided together. It was a hard, necessary duty. They might not have slept well, fearing a knock at the door and a demand of the landowner's life. But maybe they didn't sleep well *before* their decision to give relief to migrants from the South, either.

My great-great-grandfather speaks to me through what I believe to be his life story. *Thee must be strong*, he tells me in his Quaker way. *It is not wrong to do the right thing. Engage in good with all thy heart. Love what is true. Thee may even hear of a surprise. Perhaps the whole structure will be overturned in a day, and the prisoners will be led forth with singing.*

**Margaret Kellermann's** *waterscapes* are on exhibit at U.S. Bank in Ferndale now through Oct. 30. For inquiries, contact Margaret at [bluelakestudio.net/contact](http://bluelakestudio.net/contact).

## Eviction Protection Programs

The California COVID-19 Tenant Relief Act protects many renters from eviction during the coronavirus pandemic, advises Legal Services of Northern California (LSNC).

Under the law, tenants who were unable to pay their rent between March 1 and Aug. 31 must be given 15-day notice from the landlord and a "declaration" form to fill out and return.

Tenants unable to pay their rent between Sept. 1 and Jan. 31, 2021, when the law is set to expire, must also pay at least 25% of their normal rent to be protected.

You don't have to wait to be evicted. Find the "Declaration of COVID-19 Related Financial Distress" form at [LSNC.net/coronavirus-covid-19](http://LSNC.net/coronavirus-covid-19) or call the Eureka Legal Services office at 707-445-0866 for

free consultation.

For renters and homeowners who have fallen behind on their payments because of income loss due to the pandemic, the Humboldt County Eviction Prevention Program has funding available to help bridge the gap.

The program is funded through the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES).

Through Dec. 30, or until funds are expended, the program pays up to \$5,000 directly to landlords and lenders to help qualified residents stay in their homes. Go to [Humboldt.gov.org/EvictionPreventionProgram](http://Humboldt.gov.org/EvictionPreventionProgram) for details.

Eureka residents may also qualify for the city's COVID-19 Assistance Fund.

—Ted Pease

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# Fruit Stickers & the Accidental Activist

By Cheryl Kelly

It was the last straw. Or, in this case, not a straw, but the annoying little fruit sticker I was struggling to peel from a Gala apple. Just a small thing, right?

After all, the death toll from the global pandemic increases daily, human rights violations abound, plastic pollution is overtaking the oceans, the planet is heating up, and the political divide is more like a seismic fault line. It would be easy to succumb to fear, anxiety and even depression, but these emotions suck the happiness out of life and can ruin your health.

They can also be a springboard that launches you into action.

For me, those pesky little plastic stickers were a catalyst. Like most single-use plastic, produce labels don't compost and are not recyclable. Millions of them enter landfill and sewage treatment facilities each day, where they're hauled away by the dumpster-load. They clog up composting facilities and pollute home gardens.

The tags have some benefits, of course. The Product Lookup Codes (PLU) numbers printed on the labels provide inventory information, product identification, and can speed up checkout. Growers like the fact that they can distinguish higher cost produce to maximize profits.

But eco-friendly alternatives exist, like compostable labels, fruit wash

stickers, or laser etching (think fruit tattoo) approved by the FDA in 2011.

I decided to take action with an online petition and letters to key influencers to ban fruit labels. In three weeks, I had 1,000 petition signatures and some productive connections. In-



stantly, I felt more happy and hopeful.

I'm not alone in that experience. According to the Journal of Health Psychology, volunteers live longer, have healthier brains and hearts, enjoy more social connections, and lower their anxiety levels.

To get started on the road to volunteer health, experts suggest following your passion. It could be anything from protecting a local plant species to teaching a child to read. For me, it was ridding the world of one small, annoying form of useless single-use plastic.

Next, set a goal. Without achieving targets, activism runs the risk of becoming "slacktivism," accomplishing only surface-level results. Real change takes time and effort, but small activities – done daily – can lead to great accomplishment.

Focus also helps. Instead of taking on too many projects at once, pick something specific where you can see your impact firsthand. And, while donating money is lovely, hands-on work often yields a greater sense of personal accomplishment. Consider doing both.

Once you've found an area of interest, look for opportunities with nonprofits via Google searches or hubs like volunteermatch.org or all-forgood.org. With existing organizations, you can leverage your valuable skills, and most groups will provide additional training as needed. Or you can always strike out on your own, start a nonprofit, or develop a coalition of like-minded charities to help them make more impact than they can do alone.

And, if you happen to be sick and tired of those pesky plastic produce labels, please consider signing my petition at [change.org/banproducetlabels](https://change.org/banproducetlabels).

*Cheryl Kelly, 63, a volunteer planning commissioner and an environmental activist, picks tags off her fruit in Trinidad.*

## Plastic Stats by the Numbers

**600 years:** Time for fishing line to decompose.

**450 years:** Plastic bottle, disposable diaper.

**419 tons:** Plastic produced/year.

**4 tons:** Biodegradable plastic produced/year.

**9%:** Plastic recycled, 1950-2015.

**268,000,000 tons:** U.S. trash/yr.

**13.2%:** Plastics as % of U.S. trash.

**5.25 trillion:** Macro/micro plastic in oceans.

**60-90%** . . . of marine trash is plastic.

**7.7 million sq. miles:** Size of North Pacific Garbage Patch.

**#1 Plastic Producer:** China (U.S. is #2)

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AGING IS AN ART — BY JOHN HECKEL

## Setting Boundaries

This past Labor Day, Janet and I drove down to Santa Rosa for a medical “procedure,” so termed by medical “authorities” (authorities being my term). I digress.

Janet has atrial fibrillation, or, as termed by those same authorities, A-Fib. So she was scheduled for a surgical ablation “procedure.”

Before this procedure could take place, she needed to get a CT scan and be tested for COVID-19. The CT scan went great: in and out in 35 minutes. The COVID-19 test: not so great.

Not knowing whether I would be allowed in the building, Janet and I agreed she would proceed to the testing lab and call me once she knew. I waited in the car with the dog and a good book. A short time later she rang. Through the static I was able to make out “come,” and so I went.

To suggest that the sight that greeted me once I found Janet was disconcerting would be a colossal understatement. What I saw were some 20 mostly elderly people waiting down a winding hallway, all masked and attempting to stand six feet apart. No medical “authorities” to help, reassure or offer assistance.

I found the head of the line and asked an elderly woman how long it had taken her to get there. “Over an hour,” was her response.

Janet has balance problem, and there was no way she was going to be able to stand in that line for an

hour. Along that winding hallway were medical offices. I went in one and attempted to explain Janet’s dilemma.

Sensing confusion on their part, I asked for a wheelchair. “Wheelchair” being a term they were familiar with, one quickly appeared. I got the wheelchair to Janet, gave her a few quick tips on wheelchair etiquette and decided it was time for me to get back to the dog and my book.

**‘She felt supported and encouraged. I felt gratified.’**

That decision was based on not wanting to cross the fine

line between helping and helping too much. I hoped, of course, that Janet would see it the same way.

An hour later, when Janet got back to the car, we took the all-important next step: we talked through our just-completed shared experience. To my great relief, we agreed — I had helped, saw a line and then appropriately backed off.

She felt supported, helped and encouraged. I felt gratified that I had made the right decision. Not bad for a very smoky morning in Santa Rosa!

P.S. Janet’s COVID-19 test came back negative and she did well with the “procedure.” —

**John Heckel, Ph.D., 73, a retired HSU theater and film professor with a doctorate in psychology, is at home in Eureka, awaiting the next adventure.**

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# HSRC News

## Senior Firewood Program Discontinued

After almost 30 years of operation, it is with heavy hearts that we announce 2020 as the last year of the Humboldt County Sheriff's Office Senior Wood Project, also known as the Humboldt Senior Resource Center (HSRC) Senior Firewood Program.

The Senior Wood Project is part of the Sheriff's Work Alternative Program (SWAP) through the Humboldt County Correctional Facility. As part of this project, low-level offenders have had the opportunity to work off their court sentence by splitting wood. Cords of wood are then provided to seniors in our community at a discounted rate through HSRC.

"This project has touched the lives of many through the years, and its positive impact on

our senior community has not gone unnoticed," SWAP Sergeant Lee Myers said. "The decision to discontinue the program was extremely difficult for our staff, but we believe this is the best course of action as our department moves toward sustainable and environmentally conscious programming."

The discontinuation of the Senior Wood Project comes for a variety of reasons, including decreased availability and costs associated with procuring resources and overall sustainability of the program. Despite the discontinuation of the project, the Sheriff's Office will continue its partnership with HSRC and is exploring new programs benefitting local seniors through our SWAP Farm, including providing fresh produce cultivated

at the farm to senior community members.

"This has been such a successful partnership over the years," Tasha Romo, HSRC Nutrition & Activities Program Manager, said. "So many seniors benefitted from the low-cost firewood. There is still a significant number of older adults in our community who heat their homes with wood. For them we are sorry to see this program end, but completely understand the changes. We look forward to developing new ways to partner with SWAP to benefit seniors in our community."

For more information about the Sheriff's Work Alternative Program, visit [humboldtsheriff.org](http://humboldtsheriff.org).

For more information about the Humboldt Senior Resource Center, call 707-443-9747 or visit [www.humsenior.org](http://www.humsenior.org).

## Fall Is in the Air! But YOU Should Not Be Falling

*By Bart Rankin*

Just in time for slick sidewalks, icy stairs and darker mornings, the physical and occupational therapy team at Humboldt Senior Resource Center has some advice to help you stay safe.

Begin your fall-prevention plan by making an appointment with your doctor. Be prepared to answer questions such as:

### **What medications are you taking?**

Make a list of your prescription and over-the-counter medications and supplements, or bring them with you to the appointment. Your doctor

can review your medications for side effects and interactions that may cause balance problems and increase your risk of falling.

### **Have you fallen before?**

If you have, write down the details, including when, where and how you fell. Include instances when you almost fell but were caught by someone or managed to grab hold of something just in time. These details can help your doctor identify specific fall-prevention strategies.

### **Could your health conditions cause a fall?**

Certain eye and ear disorders may increase risk of falls. Discuss your health conditions and how comfortable you are when walking: do you feel dizziness, joint pain, shortness of breath or numbness in your feet and legs?

Your doctor may also evaluate your muscle strength, balance and walking style (gait).

—  
**Bart Rankin, 54, of Arcata is a physical therapist with Redwood Coast PACE and Adult Day Health at the Humboldt Senior Resource Center.**



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# What a Great Prank It Would Have Been

By John Meyers

Living in an extremely rural location (in Plumas County) as a kid, we didn't really participate in Halloween activities. It was too far between houses to go trick or treating, but that didn't stop us kids from planning great scary adventures.

On one Halloween in about 1957, we finally put one of our scariest plans into action.

My older brother and I and the Toscani brothers secretly gathered clothing from our parents' closets and proceeded to make the most realistic, lifelike body imaginable... shirt, pants, boots, burlap bag head... It hardly looked like a scarecrow stuffed with hay at all.

Then on Halloween night, we carefully laid the body in the middle of the paved county road about a half-mile from Toscani's ranch. It was perfect! It looked exactly like someone had been hit by a car.

We hid in the bushes off the side of the road and waited for our first victim to stop, whereupon we were ready to leap from the bushes, screaming like banshees. This was gonna be great!

We hid there for half an hour or so, laughing with anticipation for that first car. The next half-hour we spent listening to crickets in the field across the road — still no sign of a car.

During the second full hour, our anticipation began to flag. Then it started to get dark and our attention span began to flag. We finally came to the realization that no cars were going to be out tonight. All the neighboring ranchers were already home in bed.

We gathered our fake man and drug it home, laughing all the way about what a great trick we had planned. We knew in our hearts that if someone had come by, we would have scared the heck out of them. Next year, we said, just wait 'til next year!

**John Meyers, 71, makes scary plans at home in Trinidad.**  
*His wife, Sheryl, rolls her eyes and says, "Oh yes, he is a very scary guy."*



# Beneficial Bats, Good in the

By Sheri



When I think of Halloween, bats always come to mind. No doubt it's because of vampire bats and Dracula, both of which have a common diet of blood.

Thankfully, vampire bats are not found in North America, and Dracula is fictional. Even so, bats are still a bit scary to me and others.

Bats are flying mammals from the order Chiroptera (meaning "hand-winged"). They are the only mammal capable of true flight. Some 25 species of bats live in California, and it is estimated there are around 13 species found in Humboldt and Del Norte counties.

Depending on their species, bats can live five to 30 years. The little brown bat, the most common in California, generally lives 30 years, with the female giving birth to one pup per year. Fe-

males form colonies in the spring to give birth and raise their pups.

Bat populations are threatened by a highly contagious disease called White Nose Syndrome, which leaves many species threatened or endangered.

A few years back, my niece was bitten by a bat when entering an outbuilding. Although only a small percentage of bats carry rabies, she could not take the chance, and received the series of treatments. Once symptoms appear, rabies is most always fatal.

Rabies exposure occurs from the saliva of an infected mammal through an open wound, abrasion, eyes, nose or mouth. Bats carry various

# Tales from the Heartland: My Dad,

By Sheila Donnelly

After my dad, Robert O'Leary, retired as a road department maintenance foreman for Freeborn County in southern Minnesota in the 1970s, he began digging graves. Dad liked manual labor and being in the presence of his deceased ancestors.

On October 31, 1978, he was digging a grave, and was halfway through when his foot crashed through the top of a wooden coffin. Dad quickly lifted his foot out of the broken coffin and saw the remains of a woman with long, flowing white hair, wrapped in a tattered white shroud.

Shaking, he climbed out of the grave as fast as he could.

Unsure what to do, he covered the open grave with a blue tarp, weighed down with rocks and plywood. Shaking from head to toe, he limped to his truck and sped 10 miles to the mortuary.

The graveyard's board was contacted, and it was discovered that the grave plot was not listed on the cemetery's grid map.

It was late afternoon with the sun setting when dad drove home. His face was ashen and he was still shaken up.

"What's wrong?" mom asked.

He told her about falling into the grave and seeing the corpse with flowing white hair.

Mom chuckled, because dad always acted macho. He wasn't afraid of anything, and barked



**6 FEET UNDER** — In his retirement, Robert O'Leary took up shovel work back in Minnesota in the 1970s. Photos courtesy of Sheila Donnelly.

# the Garden, Get a Bad Rap

Sherida Phibbs



diseases to humans and other mammals.

We can minimize the risks by not handling bats, not breathing their droppings and, most importantly, vaccinating our dogs and cats for rabies.

Bats also create unsanitary conditions where they roost. Their droppings (guano) and urine attract insects and create odors.

In most cases, bats do not create problems. In fact, they are beneficial predators and pollinators for our farms and gardens. Being nocturnal, they play an important part in our ecosystem by consuming large quantities of night-flying insects, including mosquitoes. Farms and gardens often feature bat houses to encourage bat populations.

Finding a bat on the ground or out in the open does not mean it is sick. It might be tired and resting. It is best to leave it if it is out of the way. If it is an area where children or pets might find it, gently scoop it into an open box while wearing leather gloves, and place the box out of reach. But if the bat has been in contact with animals or people, contact the health department for testing.

For more information, the University of California IPM Publication 74150 is a great free resource, available at [ipm.ucanr.edu/PDF/PEST-NOTES/pnbats.pdf](http://ipm.ucanr.edu/PDF/PEST-NOTES/pnbats.pdf).

*Sherida Phibbs of Fortuna is coordinator of the UCCE Master Gardener Program for Humboldt & Del Norte counties. Website: [ucanr.edu/sites/hdnmastergardeners/](http://ucanr.edu/sites/hdnmastergardeners/).*

## the Gravedigger

orders to his 11 children like a drill sergeant.

But unearthing a corpse and disturbing a grave was different. Mom saw how vulnerable dad actually was.

That night, as dad was drifting off to sleep, mom floated into the bedroom in a billowing white nightgown, holding a lit candle.

“Who disturbed my grave?” she moaned.

Dad sat straight up and yelled, “Ahhhhh! That’s not funny!”

Mom laughed.

The next day, dad returned to the cemetery and repaired the grave he had disturbed. The cemetery board had measured out a new gravesite, and probed this section of the graveyard, discovering other unmarked graves.

The deceased, it was deduced, were unknown victims of the flu epidemic at the turn of the 20th century.

—

*Sheila Donnelly, 64, a writer and artist, remembers the scary Minnesota days from her home in Manila.*



**LIKE ALL GRAVEYARDS**, Trinidad’s cemetery is full of history and untold stories of residents dating back to the 1800s. This is Lorenzo S. Sadler’s grave, a native of Washington County, Maine, who died Feb. 4, 1874, at age 34. Nearby is H.G.W Jordan, “Native of Prussia,” who died at 39 a year later. Down the hill is a small wooden marker for the notorious “Cockeyed Florence,” a famed 1800s lady of the evening. If these gravestones could talk. . . Ted Pease photo.

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## HSRC PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

**Administrative Services** and main phone line: Open as usual, but please call before coming to our Eureka campus and we will assist you remotely if possible. In an abundance of caution, we have locked the doors of our buildings. Staff are available to answer the doors for those who need on-site assistance.

**Activities Program:** Senior Home Repair is now open for Eureka residents. For information about Dial-a-Ride tickets, call the Senior Services Office at 707-443-9747, x1240. All other activities are temporarily suspended until further notice.

**Adult Day Health & Alzheimer's Services:** Modified services are now offered. Staff can be contacted by phone if needed.

**MSSP (Multipurpose Senior Services Program):** Services continue, but contact with clients is primarily via phone. Staff are available during normally scheduled hours.

**Redwood Coast PACE:** The program is open, but the Day Center is providing limited services to support physical distancing. Staff are available by phone.

**Senior News:** Open as usual. Free copies available at limited area groceries and businesses, as many regular distribution sites are closed. Available online at humsenior.org. For home delivery, consider a one-year subscription for \$20. Call 707-443-9747 with credit card info, or mail a check to 1910 California St., Eureka CA 95501.

**Nutrition Program:** Please note the following status of HSRC Nutrition services:

**Home Delivered Meals** service continues. Delivery days have been adjusted.

**Senior Dining Centers** continue to provide take-out meals via weekly drive-by pickup only. Meals are available for those 60 and older and their spouse. Reservations must be made no later than seven days prior to pick-up day. Call the Senior Dining Center of your choice below to make your reservations or for questions about the week's menus. Each takeout package will include a variety of five meals. Pick-up schedules are as follows:

**Arcata:** Arcata Community Center, 321 Martin Luther King Parkway. Pick-up on Wednesdays 11:30 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. Drive to the main entrance on the north side of the building; an Arcata city staff person will direct traffic, and provide directions for those on foot. Reservations: 707-825-2027.

**Eureka:** 1910 California St. Pick-up on Tuesdays from 11:30 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. Park in the parking lot near the back door; staff will bring the meals to you. Reservations: 707-442-1181.

**Fortuna:** Gene Lucas Community Center, 3000 Newburg Road. Pick-up on Thursdays from 12 to 12:30 p.m. Park in front of the Fortuna Senior Center wing; staff will bring the meals to you. Reservations: 707-725-6245.

Information may change without notice.

For questions regarding any Humboldt Senior Resource Center program, call 707-443-9747.

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# Downsizing as Therapy

By Annie Kassof

I've always had a modicum of fear of the unknown, like when I left for college or bought my first house.

But now there's an undercurrent of fear everywhere. The pandemic is old news, but today West Coast skies are filled with ash. It's as if we're all collectively holding our breath, but if we allow ourselves to breathe, our lungs seem to fill with smoke! At least, as I write this on a September day under an ominous, hazy sky.

With so many people struggling with loss and worse, I find I think about death rather a lot lately. It isn't something I'm likely to bring up in casual conversation, but in my own way, I've been preparing for it — not only psychologically, but because I've been doing quite a bit of “death cleaning.”

The concept of death cleaning comes from the Swedish word *döstädning*. In her book, “The Gentle Art of Swedish Death Cleaning,” author Margareta Magnusson suggests steps that people can take in preparation for their leave-taking from this planet, culling possessions so that the job of cleaning up after they're gone is simplified for those they leave behind.

What I've realized is that even before I ever heard of *döstädning*, let alone learned how to pronounce it, I'd already spent months downsizing, beginning when I moved earlier this year [See “New House, Unsettling Times,” April 2020].

Sifting through possessions repre-

senting different periods of my life became strangely uplifting as I sorted through stuff that had outlived its usefulness, from a ratty old dresser to rarely worn clothes; from too many forks to that blanket I never liked. Personal items like my journals and artwork create their own set of challenges, and I find myself wondering how it feels to lose everything in a fire with no chance to save anything.

In some ways, even when we're not in the midst of a pandemic or have anxious friends and relatives calling to ask us about the fires, I think we all live with various manifestations of fear. For me, I cope with my own fears by preparing, as best I can, for something I have no control over: the aftermath of my demise.

Perhaps all this methodical culling helps quell the fear of a more profound kind of death, which is the end of life on Earth as we've known it. I know that sounds terrifying, but it's hard to feel hopeful these days.

So I downsize. Of course, that's not all I do. I play my ukulele and paint pictures; I bake, garden, walk, ride my horse and Zoom with loved ones. These things help keep me grounded, and hold my fears at bay.

Of course writing stories for Senior News helps, too.

—  
**Annie Kassof, 63, lives in Fortuna with exactly what she needs.**



Kassof illustration.

# What Do We Keep?

By Dave Rosso

Recently, my siblings and I went through our mother's house and found mountains of things she had collected over the decades.

There were full editions of newspapers about the San Francisco earthquake and the Moon landing, many copies of the newspaper our father put out when he was 17 in Princeton, N.J., and letters we had written — including one I wrote when I must have been 5, 72 years ago.

Then I came home and went into our own closets. Oh, yes. It runs in the family.

I have collections of Herb Caen newspaper columns, full editions of two issues of the San Francisco Chronicle honoring Caen when he died in 1997, and a box of music scores — jazz, pop, musicals and operas — plus a collection of about 200 LPs.

Who wants any of it? I held onto most of the stuff because of their memories, but when I die, they won't be anybody else's memories. But do I really want to get rid of it?

One item came back to life in an enjoyable way. Among my books of music was a 198-page set of music

of Felix Mendelssohn's “Elijah.” It is the entire oratorio, and includes the notes I wrote in it to help me follow the music as I was supposed to sing it as a member of the College of Marin choir.

Under the direction of the wonderful Dr. Drummond S. Wolff, the choir sang “Elijah” on Jan. 19, 1963. It was a two-hour concert and, after the performance, the choir had a party. Believe it or not, we sang at our own party.

All these years later, the score has browned. The front page is separated. But the music and words are all there. I had not heard “Elijah” since that concert, so I Googled it and found a video performance of the entire piece. I called it up on my computer, opened my music and watched, listened, followed the score and even sang “Elijah” for the first time in 57 years.

Yes, I am keeping this beat-up book.

—

**Dave Rosso, 77, a longtime member of the Arcata Interfaith Gospel Choir, inventories his stuff and sings the old songs at home in Eureka.**



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# What's That Noise?

*By Doug Vieyra*

For many of us, "things that go 'bump' in the night" can be a total and mysterious . . . well, mystery. We are totally uncertain just what it is that is going "bump" — just what is bumping?

I suspect that bumps can consist of a whole range of things and events. Some can be frightening and others just curious. Sometimes the event can be triggered by a special time of year — say, Halloween. Or perhaps a "dark and stormy night." Or a strange new place or sleeping quarters.

For me, I need none of those things to give me an ongoing plethora of "things that go 'bump' in the night." Living as I do in the midst of the open and natural wilderness of Humboldt's outback, all of God's creatures live not only outside my small cabin, but inside as well. Some are quite casual and innocuous, others more uncertain.

At night, I am sometimes awakened by some sound in the other room. Not knowing what it might be, I listen . . . and listen . . . hoping to hear some clues of what nocturnal creature is moving my furniture around.

Well, perhaps "moving furniture" is a bit of an overstatement. But the ex-

perience does provide me with some additional mental curiosity. The trick is to feel comfortable with a conclusion that is satisfying enough to allow me to continue with my night's sleep.

After 70 years of living in the wilderness, very little stirs me into action. A 70-mph ridgetop wind sometimes gets me up, as I fear that my cabin roof will fly away and I would like to be dressed for that occasion.

But for the overwhelming number of nights that I listen to "things that go bump in the night," it is the much more innocuous, but unknown, fellow creatures that inhabit my home who are making noise. A mouse or a lizard here, a bat or a squirrel there. And then there is always the wind to blow and knock things about.

Usually there is nothing sinister about it, or even particularly disturbing. Sometimes I wish I had left a broom and dust rag out so that the "things" might do some housecleaning while they are at it. At least the high spots, which I usually get to only during spring cleaning.

**Doug Vieyra, 78, listens for nighttime noises at his cabin off the grid in Iqua, high in the eastern Humboldt hills.**



**HIER LEBT GEMÜTLICHKEIT, says the sign in the author's Iqua chalet — "Here lives warmth and good cheer" — to welcome human and other guests.** Courtesy of Doug Vieyra.



**LOYAL READER** Virginia Burdick enjoys a recent issue of Senior News at her care facility in Fayetteville, Arkansas. Virginia, 103 on Oct. 1, became a fan and regular reader of our newspaper (which admittedly includes little Arkansas news) when her friend Shelly Moran started clipping articles from the online edition and sharing them during their regular visits. Virginia lived in Los Angeles during World War II and remembers traveling in Humboldt County. Even from far-away Arkansas, she likes the feeling of connection Senior News gives her each month. Happy Birthday, Virginia. Shelly Moran photo.

## Care Facilities to Allow Visits

If you have a family member or friend in a senior care facility and have been frustrated not to be able to visit since the pandemic started, good news!

State restrictions concerning family visits with residents of skilled nursing and residential care facilities have been eased to permit safe outdoor visitation at many care facilities, said Leann Langston of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Office at the Area 1 Agency on Aging.

Senior care home populations are especially vulnerable to COVID-19, and care facilities have not permitted visitors since the start of the pandemic.

Dr. Josh Ennis, assistant county public health officer, said the restrictions have been relaxed, but each care facility makes its own rules regarding visitation. This means that senior residents may be able to meet — at a distance! — with family and friends in outdoor visits, masked and without physical contact.

Contact care facilities directly to see if visits are permitted, and to schedule visits and receive infection-control guidelines.

For information or assistance, call the Long-Term Care Ombudsman Office at 707-269-1330.



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## A SCARY YEAR . . . From Page 1

That was before the coronavirus, which undoubtedly will change the 2020 fear survey results.

Dr. Gina Belton, an Arcata psychologist who specializes in counseling around death and dying, says troubled times naturally breed fear in greater intensity. The last six months of the pandemic, which in mid-September was reported responsible for almost 200,000 U.S. deaths so far, has greatly amplified our existential uneasiness, she said. And the wildfires increased that anxiety.

“Any kind of uncertainty increases anxiety, and, of course the greatest anxiety is death,” Belton said. “We don’t know when it’s going to happen, how it’s going to happen and we don’t know what’s going to happen when it does occur.”

There’s plenty of uncertainty these days to feed those anxieties, and it’s fundamentally more profound than “just” smoke and pandemic social isolation.

Belton points to Linda Buzzell-Saltzman, an ecopsychologist at Pacifica Graduate Institute in Carpinteria, who summed up our societal angst this way: “We find ourselves in the middle of a huge social, psychological, ecological, cultural and spiritual revolution,” she wrote in an online post.

“For 2,000+ years, Western culture has been focused on dominion over the rest of nature, over other lands, nations and peoples, over women and children and all non-binary or non-conforming people,” she said. “Now the forests, towns, streets are burning. The storms and floods are battering our homes physically and metaphorically. The seas and people are uprising.”

“It feels apocalyptic,” she concluded. “It’s the end of the world, isn’t it?”

No, it’s not, Belton says, even though it can feel like it. Pushing back against that kind of despair is difficult, she said.

So what about hope? Belton says blind faith that things will get better in the midst of calamity is delusional, but there are ways to build confidence in the future by connecting to others.

“We can keep asking the question in whatever form we want,” Belton said, “but the response is always going to be community, connection with other people. There’s no other way around it.”

Community — the company of others — makes us less fearful, she said. Whether we fear zombies or fire or social meltdown, sharing our fears and our lives with others makes it less frightening, because in the company of others, we can find reason to hope.

Writer Barbara Kingsolver says she is a hopeful person, but not an optimist. The optimist is sure things will work out, Kingsolver said. The hopeful person isn’t so sure. “The hopeful person would say, ‘Maybe someone will still be alive in February, so I’m going to put some potatoes in the root cellar just in case,’” Kingsolver said.

Belton also makes a distinction between blind hope and “wise hope.”

“Blind hope is not really based in reality,” Belton said. “‘Hope’ really is shorthand for confidence: We cultivate confidence in each other every time we show up for each other, because it shows us that this person is reliable.”

“‘Putting potatoes in the cellar’ means that others can count on me,” Belton said. “That’s an optimistic and practical thing. It is an act of faith and community to put something aside for someone you may not even know. It’s an ultimate act of giving.”

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

## ASK THE DOCTOR . . . From Page 5

visits” with masks on and physically separated.

Fear is prevalent right now, and for good reason. We should be aware of the risks of coronavirus to make appropriate decisions to protect ourselves and others. We should be aware of poor air quality from wildfires, and the bigger question of climate change and what we might expect in the future.

But I believe that society is experiencing an epidemic of fear that is not helping our health and well-being, nor the future of our planet. Perhaps instead of fear, we should focus on being more awake and aware. Instead of sending each other messages of anger and divisiveness, we should find common ground as a nation that has so often shown such capacity for compassion and empathy during hard times.

We should not let others feed our brains with alarming information. The brain knows what to do when a tiger attacks; it does not need social media to alert it to danger.

We can control our responses to what is happening around us. We can choose to acknowledge what is scary, decide what to do to calm our brains and bodies, and be awake and aware of what things we might do to protect ourselves and our community.

Who makes the best leader during a scary situation? It is not the one who panics, who spreads fear, predicts the worst or withholds information to protect their own public image. A good leader is one who

draws upon resources to calmly take steps to make whatever is happening less of a threat.

I had the wonderful opportunity some years ago to hear Capt. “Sully” Sullenburger speak about landing US Airways Flight 1549 safely on the Hudson River. What was so remarkable on the black box tape was his absolute calm in leading his crew and the flight controllers through a situation that was most likely to end up in tragedy. His voice was level, his reasoning clear and his plan made sense even though it was definitely “out of the box” thinking.

We all need to channel our inner Sully right now. We can make it through these times, and I believe we can be better for it. Exercise, connect with those you care about, avoid toxic social media exposure, seek information from trusted sources, vote for local, state and national leaders who are calm, capable and honest, and as much as possible in these times, remember to breathe, with attention to the marvel of the mind and body’s ability to weather almost any storm.

**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@hum senior.org](mailto:seniornewseditor@hum senior.org).

“There’s no shame in fear, my father told me, what matters is how we face it.”

—George R.R. Martin, writer

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# Letters to the Editor

## Selective Outrage

To the Editor:

A letter writer who ruminated on the anniversary of the atomic bombing of Japan in the September issue of Senior News [Jack Nounnan, “Mistakes of the Past,” page 21] seemed to have selective outrage.

I am not saying the bombings were a good thing, or that innocent civilians weren’t killed. But it is revisionist history to suggest that President Truman knew “full well the Japanese were ready to surrender.” Estimated American casualties of an Allied invasion of Japan were up to 1 million killed and injured.

My father, a captain in the U.S. Army Field Artillery (and veteran of Guadalcanal), was one of the GIs dreading the invasion, having seen the

fierce resistance at Iwo Jima, Saipan and Okinawa. The Japanese figured they would make the invasion so painful that they could sue for peace terms more favorable than unconditional surrender.

The Japanese Army atrocities are well documented for those who are students of history. The Japanese murdered 3 million to 10 million Chinese, Indonesians, Koreans, Filipinos and Western POWs.

Political scientist R.J. Rummels wrote, “This democide was due to a morally bankrupt political and military strategy, military expediency and custom, and national culture, such as the view that those enemy soldiers who surrender while still able to resist

were criminals.”

It is disappointing that those without historical perspective seem to indict U.S. military actions without taking into consideration the truly evil nature of the Empire of Japan and the Nazis. If you’re going to wring your hands about injustices imposed on civilian populations, be sure to paint the whole picture and remember the much greater numbers of civilian murders by the Japanese Army.

I do understand the letter writer’s instinct to self-flagellate, given his apparent lack of historical knowledge and context leading up to the bombings.

**John Dillon, Eureka**

## The A-Bomb in Hindsight

To the Editor:

I take exception to Jack Nounnan’s letter [Mistakes of the Past, September, page 21] that Truman should not have bombed Japan.

There is a book out now by journalist Chris Wallace of Fox News that speaks to this event. In the first place, even before he died, FDR condoned the use of the Bomb if it would end the war and prevent further war casualties.

U.S. generals and advisers estimated that if we invaded Japan, there would be more than 1.7 million American casualties, plus Japanese casualties.

Furthermore, it was well known

that, if invaded, the Japanese powers had told their people that every man, woman and child was a soldier — as I am sure we would be if we were ever invaded. But that meant maybe even more people would die or be maimed for life.

The Japanese Cabinet had told the emperor not to capitulate to the Americans. Japan had been warned of the bombing, but they ignored the warning. The emperor went over his cabinet heads to surrender, but there was never an unconditional surrender signed, as the emperor would not agree to it.

A land invasion would have meant

maybe another year of fighting to subdue the country island by island. Conventional bombing would have destroyed Japan as it did Europe and England. President Truman did what was necessary, as horrible as it was.

Some Americans have for years felt guilty over the bombings, but we need to ask those who were soldiers at the time if it was the correct decision. The radiation deaths and illnesses suffered by Japanese citizens and their descendants were a terrible result that hopefully should never happen again. But I am not sure it won’t. And the target now is anywhere in the world.

**Deldean Lamb, Eureka**

## A Fresh Breath

To the Editor:

What a difference a county makes! My sister and I finally got moved to Eureka after months of delays due to the pandemic.

We spent four months under house arrest — sorry, I mean sheltering in place in San Jose.

What a breath of fresh air for us to be here, both literally and figuratively! We can go out to eat if we want to. We can go shopping if we want to. We can get our hair done if we want to. None of that is possible in Santa Clara County, even yet.

We haven’t tried to find a doctor yet — that’s next, and will probably be an interesting search. Kathy has asthma, so this smoke isn’t much fun for her, but it was even worse in San Jose. My other sister still lives there, and she’s put up with record-breaking heat and horrid air quality for weeks. So I sure am glad to be here even though I sometimes feel like I’m in a different dimension.

We’re still being very cautious as to where we go and what we do — always masked, usually gloved and with hand sanitizer nearby. But at least we have the freedom here to do so.

The rise in COVID-19 cases here is concerning, and we fervently hope our newfound freedom is not short-lived. Stay vigilant Humboldt County, and we’ll get through this, hopefully sooner rather than later.

Thank you, from two happy and healthy new residents! PS: We went to the zoo today . . . what a treat!

**Barbara Rebillot, Eureka**

## OPINION

# OPINION: Use Your Expertise to Support Good Causes

*By Joyce Plath*

When I walked with seven members of my Iowa family at the D.C. Women's March, just after Donald Trump took office in 2016, I had no idea how selfish, greedy and downright mean these guys could be.

I became overwhelmed, watching as over 40% of my fellow citizens were apparently brain-washed cult followers. I felt shame and impotence when children were put in cages, when racism and violence were encouraged.

Then when the virus was so mismanaged, paid guys with AK47s started beating Black Lives Matter (BLM) protesters, and the forest fires made much of the West Coast a sea of smoke. I began feeling an overwhelming need to take positive action.

I do not feel safe protesting and my adequate but limited income made my tiny political contributions symbolic. Many friends were making phone calls and writing letters, not activities I enjoy.

Back when I was practicing architecture full-time, one of my favorite gigs was spending a few

hours sketching remodel ideas. So I started sticking my foot back in the door of the architecture world again by doing some volunteer site design for the new senior living project. That process reminded me that there is nothing I look forward to more than a good design challenge.

So I began posting on social media, offering a design consultation (with mask and face shield) at a client's home or business. After a quick look inside we sit outside at a safe distance to discuss their hopes for a revised space that works better — more natural light, improved circulation patterns, kitchens that make cooking a pleasure, more storage, and sustainable/green material choices, and so much more.

My offer is to spend a couple of hours at \$100 an hour on the project, to be sent to the client's Democrat of choice.

I have been having a great time meeting interesting people while supporting candidates with more than I could have managed on my own. So far, over \$2,000 has gone largely to candidates whose win in November will help the Democrats take back the Senate.

When this election crisis is over, I am planning to carry on, sending my design fees to BLM, Planned Parenthood, our local food bank, various environmental organizations, and any other group supporting a healthy, inclusive society.

I am sharing this idea with Senior News because I feel certain that others in our community would like to join me by sharing their hard-earned expertise to do good in similar ways.

If you're interested, I am happy to share my experience. It would be great fun to hear of innovative ways that computer experts with lots of patience, therapists, landscape architects, lawyers, real estate agents, bankers, mechanics and so many retired seniors can find ways to contribute while reaping the pleasures of utilizing skills that help keep life interesting as we age.

—  
**Joyce Plath** of Arcata likes translating her expertise from years as an architectural designer into support for causes she believes in. Contact her at [joyceplath@gmail.com](mailto:joyceplath@gmail.com).

# LightHouse Offering 'Virtual' Services for the Blind

*By Janet Pomerantz*

The LightHouse of the North Coast wants area blind and visually impaired individuals to know that, despite the continuing pandemic, the agency is virtually open for business.

Housed in the Humboldt Senior Resource Center in Eureka, the LightHouse provides services via Zoom and over the phone. The staff has created new support groups and orientation meetings, and we welcome the chance to reach out to people who might become future LightHouse students.

The LightHouse provides vision rehabilitation services in Humboldt, Del Norte and Trinity coun-

ties, including information and referral, support services, vision loss workshops, orientation and mobility, and computer and technology training.

The LightHouse works with individuals with vision loss to find solutions to living life independently. Founded in 2001 with a grant from the California Department of Rehabilitation and the encouragement of the Humboldt Council of the Blind, the LightHouse works to address the North Coast's lack of services for people who are blind, low-vision or are experiencing changing vision.

The agency is a satellite program of the Light-

House for the Blind and Visually Impaired in San Francisco, which underwrites all administrative costs, guaranteeing that all service dollars remain in the community in which they are raised.

For information about LightHouse services and programs during or after the pandemic, call 707-268-5646, email [JPomerantz@lighthouse-sf.org](mailto:JPomerantz@lighthouse-sf.org), or visit us online at [lighthouse-sf.org](http://lighthouse-sf.org).

—  
**Janet Pomerantz** is a social worker and office director and of the LightHouse of the North Coast in Eureka.

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- **NOVEMBER** launches the food season, so it's our annual Food Issue! We're looking for stories about your favorite food memories, foods of different cultures, tales from your fridge.
- **DECEMBER** will be different this year. Just like Jacob Marley's ghost, tell us about your Holidays Past & Future, and how you will celebrate a festive pandemic season.

Contact SN editor Ted Pease: tpease@humsenior.org, or 707-443-9747, x1226.

## Senior News

HSRC

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