



FREE!

Successful Aging

SPRING 2023



Vol. 13, No. 1 6,000 copies circulated to seniors, businesses and community residents in greater Santa Barbara

Places to Go... Things to Do!

As we move toward Spring, does it feel like the four walls of your home are starting to close in on you? Do you feel an itch to get out into the world or at least make contact with some other humans? Here are some possibilities if you're interested in a change to your routine and perhaps an increased connection with others.



The **Center for Successful Aging** offers free daily phone calls to seniors through its **Telephone Reassurance Program**. Sign up by calling **805-898-8080**.



Jewish Family Services offers **Friendly Visitors**, a free program where a volunteer can come to your home and meet with you each week.

It also offers the **Schmooze Curbside** every Tuesday, 11:30 to 12:30, where seniors can pick up a free nutritious lunch at 423 Chapala Street. Open to the public. Call **805-957-1116** for more details.



The **Cliff Drive Senior Center** in the Free Methodist Church at 1435 Cliff Drive has a senior lunch on the 1st and 3rd Thursdays, 11am-1pm, with a speaker or activity for a small fee. For more information, call **805-965-1338**.



The **Santa Barbara YMCA** at 36 Hitchcock Way offers a variety of classes for seniors, including Better Balance, AOA Fitness, Cardio Dance, Chair Yoga, Tai Chi, Let it Go Yoga, Shallow Water Aerobics and Aqua-Fit classes. For membership and class information, call **805-687-7727**.



The **Westside Community Center** at 423 W. Victoria offers 3 free senior activities:

Monday 1pm – Scrabble

Tuesday 12:30 – Bridge Class

Wednesday 9am – Knitting Class

Call **805-897-2560** for more information.



The following agencies are now offering **free caregiver support groups**. Contact them for meeting times and locations, whether in-person or virtual.

Center for Successful Aging **805-898-8080**

Vista del Monte with CSA **805-898-8080**

The Alzheimer's Association **805-892-4259**

Family Service Agency **805-965-1001**

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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK



By Justine Sutton

Welcome to our Spring issue, just in time for Valentine's Day! As I'm sure we all know by now, love goes way beyond this Hallmark hearts-and-flowers

celebration. There are so many different kinds of love! The love we share with romantic partners is glorious, but our love for family, friends, our pets, nature, and art are all deep and valid forms of this emotion.

A special form of creative and loving expression, I believe, is humor. There's a connection of our spirits that happens when we laugh together... an expression of our deepest humanity.

In addition to the benefits of laughter—physical, psychological, emotional—I believe there's a commingling of our spirits that takes place when we laugh together. I picture sparkly little bits of our spirits bursting forth, like confetti or fireworks. And when the laughter dies down, some of those sparkly bits are exchanged and we forever have a little of that person's spirit with us.

With family and old friends, there's often such rich material...the longstanding jokes and "do you remember the time?"—those funny stories we delight in hearing over and over. And sharing a good laugh with a new friend is like a recognition of each other's spirits.

My mom and I always loved to laugh together, and as I grew up our humor developed to be more sophisticated and complex. Of course, there were also the added years of common history to draw from.

During our last holiday season together, in 2009, my mom said the most wonderful thing to me, "Nobody makes me laugh like you do."

See if you can share a laugh with someone today and feel how your spirits light up when you do.

Love and laughter to all!

Love Is a Many-Splendored Thing

By Gary Linker, Ph.D., Clinical Director, CSA

When I spoke to our editor about a theme for this issue, she noted that our publishing date was February 14th and suggested that love be our focus. What a great idea! As a therapist, I find the issue of love and people feeling unloved comes up all the time. So, while there are many angles I could take on this topic, I find this perspective intriguing and hope you will too.

Gary Chapman's 1992 book, *The Five Love Languages*, broke new ground on the topic of couples and love. His research showed there are five love languages, with people primarily expressing love for others in one of five ways.

First, take a moment and think about your preferred mode for receiving love. And consider the main way you express love. Are they different or similar?

- 1. Words of affection** ~ By this, Chapman means compliments, appreciation, and verbal recognition of worth. It is difficult for some people to come right out and say, "I love you." But being recognized and seen for who we are, our loved ones putting into words what we mean to them, is important. Showing appreciation and sharing compliments is an important way to express love and feel loved.
- 2. Quality time** ~ Many people feel loved when they spend quality time with others. Notice the word "quality." Does the time you spend with loved ones include really feeling heard? Does it include eye contact, active listening, and the other's full presence? Do you incorporate these qualities when you spend time with others? These ingredients are the essence of quality time.
- 3. Acts of service** are what others do for you and vice versa. Do you go out of your way to meet the needs of others? Do they reciprocate? For people who thrive in this

arena, actions speak louder than words. They shine when they feel people care enough to do little things (or even big things) to make their life better. They also feel better about themselves when they can be of service to others.

- 4. Gift-giving** is pretty big in our society — most people love receiving gifts on their birthdays, anniversaries, and of course at holiday time. People who enjoy giving and receiving gifts see them as visual symbols of their care for others and others' care for them. A meaningful gift says you thought about that person and found something you knew they would enjoy. It reflects how you really feel about them.

- 5. Physical Contact** ~ Then there are those who really enjoy touch and physical contact — cuddling, kissing, holding hands, or even a jovial slap on the back. For some in close relationships, touch is connected to sexual intimacy, while others desire physical connection but don't find it as important to consummate the relationship.

So where do you find yourself in all of this? Do you feel loved by the important people in your life, and how do you express your love to them? Do they know your love language? If you don't feel sufficiently loved, maybe you haven't communicated your preferences clearly or maybe you have not sufficiently expressed your feelings of love to them. Either way, give it a try. Show love to the people you care for and let them know how to help you feel loved, then see if it makes a difference. I bet it will.

Gary Linker, Ph.D. has worked for the past 40+ years as a Marriage, Family Therapist. Contact Dr. Linker at (805) 898-8080 or by e-mail at info@csasb.org



Empowerment and Self-Advocacy

By Bonnie Elliot, with Justine Sutton

BONNIE:

When writing this, I never considered the word “empowerment.” Growing up in a small San Joaquin Valley town, I was the furthest thing from empowered, never allowed to have an opinion that was taken seriously. I was careful not to rock the boat, as they say, pleasing as many people as possible so I wouldn’t get yelled at.

As one who uses a wheelchair, I realize there are those who want people with disabilities to go away. This makes it even more important that we become empowered to advocate for ourselves. I realized to be heard I had to make waves, and I learned to pick my battles. I am always vigilant when in public.

Empowerment was not top of mind when I decided to take action after being treated so disrespectfully at the Santa Barbara County Courthouse last August. I was just furious, so shocked and angry that all the work done in 2015 to make the courthouse accessible to the thousands of tourists who visit annually had been undone.

On this particular occasion, the docent freaked out when she saw me and yelled, “We have a situation!” Then she started to tap on my wheelchair. I was never spoken to directly but treated like a child. The entrance to pass through the security check was inaccessible, so they ignored me and I was immediately separated from the group I came with.

My friend and I took the elevator to the second floor to rejoin the group. It was a very long way down a hallway, then we had to catch up and go in the other direction, finally able then to see the magnificent view from the clock tower after the tour.

When we got back in the elevator, we ended up at the kiosk area, which had two steps to exit. The international handicapped access symbol that used to be by the right elevator button was

gone. I have no idea why it was removed or when. The man at the window was very curt to us. We ended up exiting by the only accessible door, on the west side.

In 2015, the elevator was put in so everyone could go to the top of the tower and see the incredible city view. I was at the ribbon cutting. To find all that work was shoved aside for any reason is inexcusable! I realize the pandemic shut everything down. But when the tours started back up, so should the training of the docents, etc. Obviously, this was not done. With the closing of State Street, it was obvious to me that access to all was the last thing people thought of. Disabled people are always considered last. The pandemic has made people very paranoid. People seem to think I am contagious by my very being.

Since that incident in August, a person from a local disability organization and I have met twice with people from the docent committee and the courthouse. The guards are clearly biased and need a lot of training. It’s an ongoing process.

Empowerment to me now means making changes to improve my life and the lives of those around me in the same situation. Now that I live in a senior complex, I see so many little things that could make huge differences for the other residents. I tell neighbors it is okay to ask for needed modifications in their apartments. Sometimes things will change, sometimes not. It never hurts to ask respectfully, to advocate for ourselves.

In closing I would like to say: I don’t hold out much hope for proper change. I doubt that my friend and I will be invited back to see any changes made at the courthouse.

So many attitudes need to change before there is real acceptance of people in my position.

JUSTINE:

I have had my own difficult experience at the courthouse, having to visit the County Clerk’s office to submit some paperwork in 2019. I am partially disabled and use a cane while walking. Due to advanced arthritis in my knees, I can only walk short distances and stand for short periods of time before needing to sit down, and due to neuropathy in my feet, my balance is impaired.

After identifying the closest handicapped spot, I parked there and then saw there were a number of stairs to climb to get to the door. Fortunately, I was able to navigate the stairs, but had I been in a wheelchair I would have had to park elsewhere and find an entrance with a ramp. I took the elevator to the second floor and found my way to the Clerk’s office, which involved walking some distance.

By the time I arrived, I was shaking and in distress, needing to get off my feet. I leaned my elbows on the counter and told the person there I needed to sit down. She just waved a hand at the waiting area and said, “We don’t have any chairs here.”

I said, “Yes, that’s the problem. I really need to sit down.”

She just said, “Oh, this won’t take long...” as she pointed out the forms I needed to fill out — in other words, completely disregarding my request. I finally took the forms down the hallway where there was a bench I could sit on while filling them out.

A friend recently suggested I might be taken more seriously if instead of saying, “I need to sit down,” I say, “The longer I stand, the more I am in danger of falling.” People hear this and they get worried about lawsuits.

I will say, the more I consider it, the more I believe that being empowered to advocate for ourselves is a form of self-love we can all practice. This way, I always know I have someone in my corner who cares about me — me.



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The Patience of Ordinary Things

By Pat Schneider

From her poetry book *The Patience of Ordinary Things*, 2003

It is a kind of love, is it not?
How the cup holds the tea,
How the chair stands sturdy and foursquare,
How the floor receives the bottoms of shoes
Or toes. How the soles of feet know
Where they're supposed to be.
I've been thinking about the patience
Of ordinary things, how clothes
Wait respectfully in closets
And soap dries quietly in the dish,
And towels drink the wet
From the skin of the back.
And the lovely repetition of stairs.
And what is more generous than a window?



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Rope Without End — From Wife to Caregiver

By Heidi Hutton Rigoli

I wake up in the middle of the night and my husband is not in bed beside me.

He must be in the bathroom.

I go into the bathroom, and there he is, on 90-year-old knees, trying to clean up urine that accidentally dripped onto the floor when he tried to use the toilet.

He's a proud man, despite his age and faltering body. He doesn't want to wake me, so there he is, trying to clean it up himself. It's not a pretty picture. Being a caregiver is often messy. It's also tiring, frustrating, and heartbreaking.

I often get to the end of my rope, only to find there's more rope there.

You never know how long and sturdy your rope is until life brings you to places you'd never choose to go.

It can be messy, but it can also be illuminating.

I used to think a relationship was a 50-50 thing. Thinking that way now will only lead to resentment.

My husband cannot meet my needs the way he once did. He can still love me, thank goodness. And he does. But memory loss, Parkinson's symptoms, a weakened body, and extreme fatigue have made him incapable of supporting me as he once did.

This isn't easy. Not for me. Not for him.

Life, death, aging. It's all right there in my face. I can't control it, but I can resist it. However, when I resist it I become miserable and I make those around me miserable too.

I have no control over what's happening to my husband. But I do have control over my perceptions. When I turn off the expectations of how life is supposed to be, how my husband is supposed to be, I find there is love inside me I never knew was there!

Nothing is more intimate than helping another person with almost every need. You become their hands, their feet, their memory.

My husband needs me to help orient him to the day. If I'm stressed or resentful, he feels it. He may not be able to tell me what day it is, but he can feel the stress.

It's up to me to help him have a good day, a day of being loved, of mattering.

What a beautiful gift for me!

All the ideas about being co-dependent become nil when you're a caregiver for your husband. As a psychiatric nurse, I've learned a lot about codependency, and it doesn't matter a bit when it comes to caregiving.

To heck with that! I am responsible for how he experiences his day. Am I giving him an environment of stress and angst, or am I helping him to know dignity, comfort, care, and deep love?

Of course, sometimes that love is replaced with selfish thoughts. Thoughts of the freedom I might have if I wasn't here, doing this.

I can't think that way... that means he'd be dead!

Then I feel guilty and try to dismiss the thought. I can't spend much time there. I have someone to take care of.

He needs me.

And he needs to know he is loved. He may not have clear thoughts, but he can certainly feel love.

When my love falters, I ask the universe for more. When I get frustrated, I've learned to forgive myself.

Then I wrap my arms around my husband and hold him. I cherish his broken body. I let him know he is loved. I try to give some of that to myself too.

I hold him tight. I let him hold me.

After all, he may be gone tomorrow.

Heidi Hutton Rigoli is a freelance writer. Having recently retired from psychiatric nursing, her interests now are writing, people, psychology and spirituality. She lives in Santa Barbara with her husband, Francis. She is currently enrolled in writing classes at Santa Barbara City College.



New Support Group for Caregivers at Vista Del Monte!



The Center for Successful Aging (CSA) is pleased to announce its collaboration with Vista Del Monte in offering a caregivers' support group. This group is open to any senior caring for a partner, family member, or loved one. Sara Murdoch and Jordan Robinson, Marriage & Family Counseling interns, will lead the group, which meets each Tuesday from 10:00 to 11:30am on the VDM campus and is free of charge. Registration is required prior to attendance, and participants must be vaccinated and masked while on the campus.

Please call CSA at 805 898-8080 for more information or to register.

Places to Go...Things to Do

Continued from page 1



LAWN BOWLING

- **Santa Barbara Lawn Bowls Club** operates Tuesdays, Thursdays, and weekends
www.santabarbaralbc.org
- **MacKenzie Park Lawn Bowls Club** operates Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays and weekends
www.mplbc.com

Available through the City of Santa Barbara Parks & Recreation Department:

CARRILLO RECREATION CENTER PROGRAMS Call 805-897-2519 for information:

- **Stretch & Tone Senior Fitness** – every Tues/Thurs/Sat, 10 - 11am
- **Jazzercise** – Tuesdays, 5:30 - 6:30pm and Saturdays, 8:30 - 9:30am
<https://www.jazzercise.com/location/jazzercise-santa-barabara-carrillo-recreation-center>
- **Free Ballroom Tea Dance** – 1st Sunday/month, 2 - 5pm in the Ballroom with recorded music
- **Free Weeknight Swing Dance** – Wednesdays, 8:30 - 9:30pm in the Ballroom with recorded music
- **Swing Dance with Live Bands** – 3rd Friday/month, 8pm in the Ballroom, but check for schedule updates: www.sylviasykes.com; \$20 per person
- **Swing Dance Lessons** – Tuesdays, 7-8pm and Wednesdays, 6:45 - 7:45pm in the Ballroom, but check for schedule updates: www.sylviasykes.com; \$60 for 4-week session
- **Ballroom Dance Lessons with Kookie** – Beginners Tuesdays, 7 - 8pm; Pre-Intermediate Thursdays, 7-8pm in the Ballroom; \$67 for 5-week session; New instructor for International Ballroom coming soon! Tuesdays, 8:15 - 9:15pm
- **Two-Step Dance Lessons** – Beginners Wednesdays, 6:30 - 7:30pm and Intermediate Wednesdays 7:30 - 8:30pm; \$70 for 6-week session
- **Argentine Tango Lessons** – Mondays, 7 - 9pm; for information, email Alejandra.folguera@gmail.com (registrations handled directly through the instructor)
- **Contra Dance** – Similar to square dance, with live bands and callers! Select Sundays, 6:30 - 9:30pm in the Ballroom; \$15 per person www.sbcds.org

BOOK CLUBS

Available through the Santa Barbara Public Library

For more information, call 805-962-7653

<https://library.santabarbaraca.gov/classes-events/library-book-clubs>



OUR MISSION:

The mission of the Center for Successful Aging is to promote the physical, emotional, psychological and spiritual needs of seniors and their families.

Successful Aging

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(805) 898-8080
info@csasb.org
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Successful Aging Editor
Justine Sutton
editor@csasb.org

Advertising
info@csasb.org
(805) 898-8080

Design / Production Coordinator
Susan Rees

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- IF the stairs in your home have become public enemy #1.

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