

Seniors Living Well

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What's going on at Senior Support Program of the Tri-Valley?

Nonprofit quietly eliminates key services, staff as questions mount about leadership and the future

By NICOLE GONZALES

Seniors in and around Pleasanton will no longer have access to select cornerstone services after the recent elimination of a key initiative at the Senior Support Program of the Tri-Valley — the Friendly Visiting Program.

The discontinuation of the popular volunteer service came as a shock to many and raised more questions about the organization as a whole, its leaders and their motives, and funding at this point of the pandemic.

Community members, as well as former SSPTV staff, have expressed concern over the visitor program's closure and leadership decisions from both the acting and former executive directors, as the Pleasanton-based nonprofit has now initiated the termination of several programs and positions, despite records seemingly confirming adequate funding for payroll and other services.

"I was told that my position as Friendly Visiting Program coordinator was eliminated due to restructuring in the nonprofit and I was to be laid off," said Pam Silliman, a former employee as of three weeks ago. "I have over 100 seniors in this program and dozens of volunteers; what's going to happen to them?"

Senior Support Program of the Tri-Valley is a registered nonprofit that aims to assist seniors in the community with various programs and resources, from counseling services to medication assistance to case management, according to its mission statement. The operation is run out of the Pleasanton Senior Center, but independent from the city government.

According to the organization's website, SSPTV is primarily funded through several Alameda County initiatives, including Area Agency on Aging, Public Health and Nutrition Services Department, and Behavioral Health Department. They also receive supportive

funding from the cities of Dublin, Pleasanton and Livermore.

Silliman recalled her and several other employees being requested for separate phone reviews with SSPTV's current interim executive director, Mercel Amin, on July 22. It was during that call Silliman was informed her position, along with the Friendly Visiting Program and Caregiver Referral Program, were to be eliminated.

The Friendly Visiting Program connected volunteers with seniors who would spend time socializing or engaging in activities together. It was among the most-popular SSPTV programs, until it abruptly went away last month with little explanation to staff and volunteers involved and the public at-large.

Amin, as well as SSPTV board members contacted by the Weekly in recent weeks, did not answer questions about the Friendly Visiting Program's elimination nor the nonprofit overall. "SSPTV is undergoing a transition and I'd be happy to connect in the weeks to come as things become official," Amin said in a brief email response to inquiries.

Silliman served as the Friendly Visiting Program coordinator for three years, a service that existed for over 40 years since the organization was founded.

"The seniors that are in this program, a lot of them have been in it for years and years and years," Silliman said. "They have a friendly visitor that used to come to their home; some would take them out for coffee, some would go to a movie once a week. It's amazing what the volunteers in this community do for their seniors."

After the COVID-19 pandemic forced the nonprofit to operate largely remotely, volunteers of the program adapted their work to continue services for the seniors. They began



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Senior Support Program of the Tri-Valley, a long-popular nonprofit in the area, operates out of the Pleasanton Senior Center.

phone visitations and sent handmade cards to the seniors every month.

"It was a huge lift for the seniors to know that the community hadn't forgotten about them," Silliman said. "Now they have totally abandoned all of the seniors that have been in this program and are dependent on it."

At the time of Silliman's interview last week, senior clients of the Friendly Visiting Program had not been made aware of its termination — almost 14 days after she was informed.

Volunteers of the program were also left confused amid word of its closure.

"After I retired from PUSD, I was looking for a way to volunteer," Pam Grove said.

In 2020, Grove reached out to Silliman who educated her on the Friendly Visiting Program and connected her with two seniors to visit with. Grove had been involved with the program ever since.

"This program has been so valuable to the isolated seniors in our community especially during the current pandemic," Grove said. "It's hard to believe that this program has abandoned vulnerable seniors who I'm sure looked forward to weekly interaction with their volunteers."

Grove also attested to the significance of the Friendly Visiting Program and its impact on seniors in the area.

"The program offered foot care, info about vaccines, made sure every senior in the program received holiday gifts and even coordinated with the Valley Quilters to provide every senior with a beautiful handmade quilt last December," she said.

Silliman questioned whether funding was the problem for the Friendly Visiting Program, saying she asked directly about that while on the phone call with Amin. "We've been told for

months that all our contracts have been accepted again for this fiscal year," Silliman said. "I was told, 'No, the funding didn't get pulled back.'"

The visitor program's surprise elimination is the latest example of recent dysfunction within the longtime nonprofit.

Previous executive director Robert Taylor resigned last November after four years at the helm, with little to no notice provided publicly by the nonprofit upon his departure. Taylor now works as the chief revenue officer for an information-technology services and consulting operation, according to his LinkedIn profile.

After Taylor's exit, the SSPTV board appointed previous administrator Amin as the interim executive director while they undertook recruitment for a new leader.

But multiple staff members told the Weekly that the nonprofit has made no attempt at permanently filling the executive director position, despite it being a requirement for the agency's status.

Public records obtained by the Weekly show during his time as executive director, Taylor applied for and received almost half a million dollars of Paycheck Protection Program loans from the U.S. Small Business Administration earlier in the COVID-19 pandemic.

The loans were received by the SSPTV from April 2020 to February 2021 — and amounted to \$221,200 each. According to the U.S. Small Business Administration, Taylor cited the money would go toward payroll gaps. However, several sources confirmed the organization had already secured full funding for payroll by grants received from the county at



CHUCK DECKERT

Questions abound as Senior Support recently discontinued the Friendly Visiting Program, one of its most well-known services.

See **SENIOR SUPPORT** on Page 18

The aviation experience of a lifetime

Longtime friends cross AirVenture Oshkosh off bucket list

By JEREMY WALSH

It may have taken until retirement, but Pleasanton's T.J. McGrath finally knocked one long-standing item off his bucket list last month.

The Foothill Knolls resident, joined by his college dorm-mate Wayne Myers, himself a former Pleasanton man, attended the famed EAA AirVenture Oshkosh — fulfilling a promise they made to each other some 50 years earlier. And what a trip it was.

"When was the last time you had an expectation and the event exceeded them?" McGrath told the Weekly on Aug. 4. "We all go through life looking forward to doing things and hoping those events meet our expectations. Well, Oshkosh last week exceeded mine."

The duo, aviation aficionados who meet up annually for the Reno Air Races, spent four days exploring the expansive AirVenture grounds at Wittman Regional Airport in Wisconsin -- 12 hours and 15,000 to 18,000 steps per day, and still not enough to see everything there, McGrath recalled.

Highlights from their experience

at the event, organized by the Experimental Aircraft Association, included exploring a range of aircraft from across generations, the NASA area and even the kids' zone in outdoor hangers, watching air shows, learning inside the EAA museum and at historical talks and connecting with American military heroes including 100-year-old pilot and World War II triple ace Col. Bud Anderson.

That's just a snapshot of their AirVenture.

"To attend Oshkosh, you must be patriotic since the military top pilots perform, you must have good comfortable shoes since you are going to walk your tail off, you must be willing to dedicate a whole week to see everything, you must attend with someone who shares your passion and you must be ready for the sound and smell of aircraft," McGrath recalled.

Their friendship has deep roots in each man's love for aviation, McGrath a skydiver and Myers a pilot — even back to their days meeting as dorm neighbors at California State University, Chico, back in 1971. One year later, they vowed to travel someday together

to the Oshkosh air exposition.

"As luck would have it, Wayne and I settled in Pleasanton 37 years ago and raised our families here," McGrath said, noting that Myers recently moved out to Carson City, Nevada. "Now that we are both retired and the kids are gone, it was time to execute on the promise."

To mark the once-in-a-lifetime experience in Wisconsin, McGrath said he took hundreds of photographs. Among the collection were several "Take Us Along" pictures of the pair with the Pleasanton Weekly.

But it wasn't just any archive edition McGrath brought to Oshkosh: He and Myers posed with the June 2, 2006, paper that featured McGrath on the cover.

The article "Jumping for joy: Neighbors kiss at 14,000 feet" recounted McGrath, then a working sales executive, midair alongside his close friend Cis Puricelli (and her instructor) for her first skydiving jump in honor of her 65th birthday. They shared an aerial friendly peck over Byron, which appeared on the Weekly's front page. ■



T.J. MCGRATH
Foothill Knolls resident T.J. McGrath, holding the 2006 Pleasanton Weekly in which appeared on the cover, poses with longtime friend Wayne Myers for a "Take Us Along" at the EAA AirVenture Oshkosh last month.



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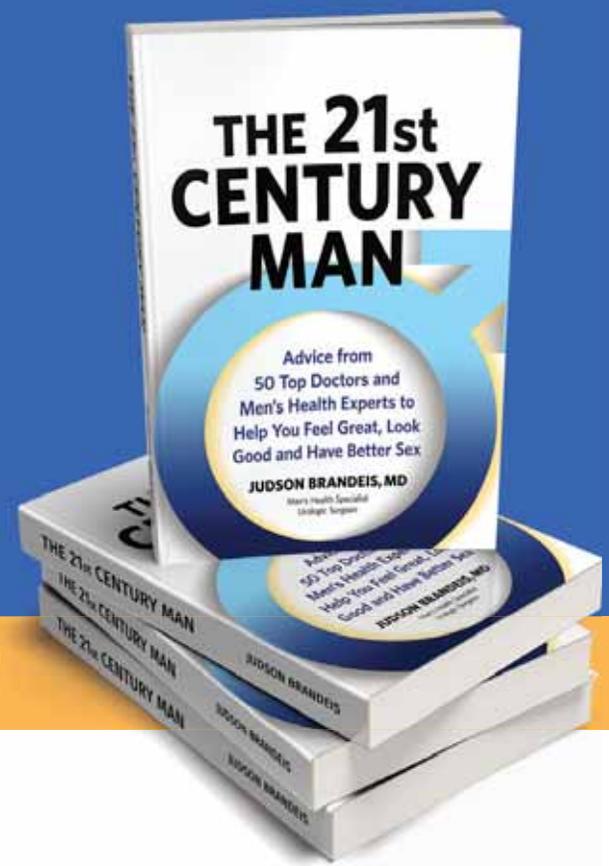


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Challenges and opportunities for senior homebuyers

Despite real estate market shift, this remains ‘a really good time to sell’

BY DAVID STARK

Shifting real estate markets in the Bay Area and in Pleasanton and recent state legislation are creating opportunities for seniors who want to buy or sell a home.

“It’s a good opportunity to sell. You may not have as many multiple offers as you would have last year, but it is a really good time to sell,” said Sheila Cunha, 2022 president of the Bay East Association of Realtors.

Compared with both 2020 and 2021, the number of homes on the market has increased significantly. There were 86 single-family detached homes for sale in Pleasanton during last month, compared with 40 during July 2021 and 51 during July 2020.

More choices for homebuyers, along with buyer concerns about rising interest rates, have led to homes staying on the market longer and sellers adjusting their expectations about how much buyers are willing to pay. However, while sales prices have dropped since March, they are still at record-setting levels. This has led some buyers to back off on purchasing a home.

Cunha said, “While it might take you a bit longer to sell your house today, you can still get a lot more for it than compared with a few years back.”

For seniors in Pleasanton who haven’t been in a real estate transaction recently, Cunha said selling a home now may be a different experience.

“The selling process is so different than 20 years ago,” Cunha said. “You definitely want to get a qualified agent that knows the area, get a pest inspection and a home inspection because that tells you about the condition of your house and lets you know if you need to address any issues while you’ve been in your home.”

Cunha said the more paperwork a seller needs to review also means there’s more protection against potential liability. “There’s a lot more to selling real estate than putting up a for-sale sign in front of your house. You have to make sure that you’re protected and dealing with an ethical Realtor.”

Because buyers now have a few more choices, selling a home as-is, especially if the seller is the original owner, may not be the best strategy.

“You need to do a little something to it if you can because people have choices, and if you’re going to sell your home as-is, you may not get top dollar,” Cunha said. “If you’re working with a Realtor who has access to contractors, there are ways to update your home economically. It does make a difference. Decluttering is a great place to start, painting the home and taking a look at the flooring.”

Seniors in the market to purchase a home may have an edge on other buyers. California voters approved Proposition 19 in 2020 to allow homeowners aged 55 and older to transfer their property tax rate to another home



BAY EAST

David Stark, the chief public affairs and communications officer for the Bay East Association of Realtors, shares some insights about the current housing market for seniors.

anywhere in California.

“The fact that you can move anywhere you like now and not take a property tax penalty is good,” said Jordan Levine, vice president and chief economist of the California Association of Realtors.

Levine said that senior homebuyers may have other advantages over buyers.

“They have probably accumulated more

wealth, have more home equity, and even though inventory has risen, and the market isn’t quite as competitive as it was — it’s still pretty competitive.” Levine said, adding that seniors may be able to make a larger, more competitive down payment. ■

Editor’s note: David Stark is chief public affairs and communications officer for the Bay East Association of Realtors, based in Pleasanton.

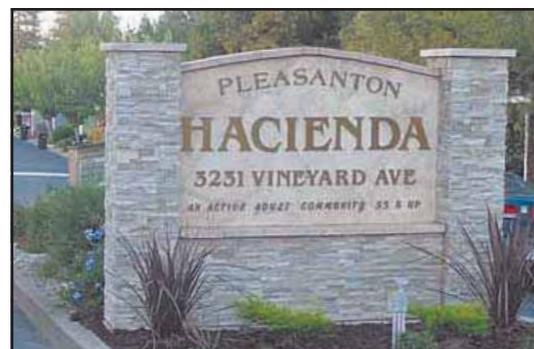


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Spotting elder abuse, and how to better protect seniors

County, nonprofit officials highlight strategies to address growing area of concern

BY CHRISTIAN TRUJANO

In California, the elderly population is expected to grow more than three times as fast as the total population, according to the state's Department of Aging. Alameda County is projected to see an almost 200% population increase of people over the age of 60 by 2060.

The U.S. Administration on Aging also expects that by 2034, older Americans will outnumber children.

But as we see more and more seniors in our communities, one thing that seems to remain unchanged is older residents being targeted by elder abuse.

"In the last decade or so, elder abuse reports investigated by the adult protective services have increased by more than 150%," Alameda County District Attorney Nancy O'Malley said in a Justice for All video.

The video came out in June during Elder Abuse Awareness Month, which was recognized by the Pleasanton City Council in light of the continued stress of the pandemic and higher cases of elder abuse.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention defines elder abuse as "an intentional act or failure to act by a caregiver or another person in a relationship involving an expectation of trust that causes or creates a risk of harm to an older adult." According to figures by the U.S. Department of Justice, at least 10% of adults age 65 and older will be

a victim of elder abuse in a given year.

In the video, O'Malley spoke with Brigitte Lowe, head of the DA's Elder Adult Protection Unit, about what elder abuse is, ways to spot different forms of abuse and what families can do to protect their older relatives.

"There's a misconception that a lot of this type of abuse occurs in facilities like retirement homes and while it is true, 95% of abuse occurs in victims' homes by people who develop trusting relationships," Lowe said in the video. She said abusers can be anyone from the elder person's family, caregivers or scammers on the internet.

According to a monthly report from the Alameda County Social Services Agency, 1,446 individual cases were filed by the Adult Protective Services Agency in June. Pleasanton had the most cases with 59 followed by Livermore with 50 and Dublin with 29.

As of June 22, there are 80 pending felony and misdemeanor elder abuse cases with a future court date, according to the Alameda County DA's Office.

The office told the Weekly that reporting generally has gone down because of the pandemic because people have been stuck at home. But unlike domestic violence victims, elders typically don't leave the house, which means they're likely with their abusers at home and are less likely to report it.

"A lot of times it has a lot to do with the

familiarity that the elder has with the person ... that's why isolation is such an important part of abuse," Lowe said. "The more an elder either feels isolated already or the more a perpetrator can isolate an elder, the more vulnerable they become to being the victim of abuse."

She said that abuse isn't usually obvious to spot and can start with subtle things like a caregiver offering to take care of minute things such as going to the bank.

"I've had cases where the caregiver says to the family member, 'I will handle that, I will take them to the bank' and then they start becoming that person that the banking institution is used to seeing at the bank so they at some point no longer question that person," Lowe said.

So what can older residents and their families in Alameda County do to protect themselves?

Jennifer Pardini, a community education advocate at Legal Assistance for Seniors, told the Weekly that her organization is one of many in the county that provides support for these types of victims. The Oakland-based organization provides community education programs, legal support and representation to seniors and dependent adults across the county.

She said that the key is educating the older communities about the resources available.

"I wish we could come up at work one

day and be, like, 'Great, we solved elder abuse.' It's just not how it is and I don't see it stopping," Pardini said. "So we want to be here and let people know and be available to anyone that wants to ask those questions or get referrals or use our services."

But she also said that seeking help can sometimes be hard because of many reasons like feeling embarrassed that they fell for a scam, living with their abuser, or because their abuser is a family member that the elder doesn't want to be seen locked up in jail.

"Sadly, whether it's due to fear of retaliation, or worse, many of our elders don't talk about the abuse they've endured," California Attorney General Rob Bonta said in a June 15 news release addressing Elder Abuse Awareness Day.

"Elder abuse can take many insidious forms, including the neglect of a caregiver, financial exploitation and sexual, physical and mental abuse," Bonta added. "Too often, the perpetrators of these egregious actions are those we trust the most to take care of our loved ones. Our elders should never suffer, especially in silence."

Pardini said that while she understands why some elderly people wouldn't want to incarcerate their family members who might be abusing them, Legal Assistance

See **ELDER ABUSE** on Page 18

What Type of Home Matches Your Vision of Retirement?

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- 1. FOCUS ON FAMILY**
If family plays an extensive role in your life, you'll probably need space to accommodate them. That might mean an extra bedroom or a play area for weekly grandchild visits. Or a multi-generational floor plan that carves out a living suite for an adult child's family—or yourself.
- 2. TRAVEL AND TAKING IT EASY**
Perhaps home is where relaxation is the name of the game, and it's easy to travel because the property "takes care of itself." In this case, look for a home that minimizes maintenance and landscaping chores, perhaps focusing on townhomes or condos with homeowners' associations.
- 3. SOCIAL BUTTERFLY**
If you thrive on social interactions, an age restricted community may be an excellent fit. Often, they offer a full schedule of activities and events where residents can easily make new acquaintances and build relationships.
- 4. STAYING PUT**
Moving is hard work! If you want to minimize moves, focus on finding a "forever" home that will continue serving your needs if your health and mobility falter. Many buyers age 50+ prioritize one-floor living and aging in-place amenities.
- 5. EATING AND ENTERTAINING**
Maybe you love cooking or hosting gatherings. In this case, prioritize a home with adequate entertaining space indoors and outside. And if you view retirement as a time to let your culinary skills shine, make sure your next home also includes the kitchen of your dreams.
- 6. STILL WORKING**
If you aren't ready to relax into full retirement or need to continue working for financial reasons, make sure your next home can accommodate remote work (a dedicated office, quiet location, etc.) or is near appealing, in person job opportunities.
- 7. HAPPY HOBBYIST**
Will retirement provide more time to devote to a favorite hobby—or to tackle new skills? Make sure your home includes space for your pursuits, such as a woodworking shop, a painting studio, or a crafts room. Outdoor enthusiasts may need room to store large equipment, like a fishing boat.

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New prostate treatment technology debuts in Tri-Valley

Aquablation therapy offers hospital additional precision in treating enlarged prostates

By JEANITA LYMAN

San Ramon Regional Medical Center is one of the first in the area to offer a robot-assisted treatment for an enlarged prostate condition that is most common in men over 50 years old.

Aquablation therapy is aimed at providing urologists a new tool that offers increased precision and other benefits in the treatment of benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH), a non-cancerous condition in which the prostate enlarges and creates complications in the lower urinary tract.

“We are proud to offer a solution for men with BPH that can provide relief without compromise,” said Ann Lucena, CEO of San Ramon Regional. “Aquablation therapy is the next step in expanding our robotic surgical services and furthering our commitment to men’s health.”

According to SRRMC urologist Dr. Christopher Welty, the technology is new to the Bay Area, with only one or two other setups in hospitals throughout the East Bay. But while the technology is still newer than other treatment options, Welty noted that it has been

around long enough for five-year followup data to be available.

Compared with what is considered the “gold standard” — transurethral resection of the prostate, or TURP — Welty said that a recent study showed aquablation to offer equal or lower rates of retreatment, and that it was generally better at offering relief from symptoms.

“There’s a lot of treatments right now for BPH,” Welty said. “TURP was the gold standard, though a lot of us don’t use that very much any more because there’s a lot of options and having aquablation available gives us another tool.”

Welty said that in particular, aquablation therapy has the benefit of being able to treat all prostate sizes, while some other treatment options are less effective for larger prostates.

When left untreated, BPH can lead to increasingly severe complications in the urinary tract, with the enlarged prostate obstructing the flow of urine, leading to the inability to pass urine and kidney dysfunction in severe cases.

“Not all men, but a lot of men as they get older, their prostates get larger, and sometimes when

their prostates get larger it blocks the urethra,” Welty said. “So they can have a harder time emptying the bladder, and it also can lead to some bladder dysfunction because the bladder is working harder to get the urine out so they have to go more frequently or more urgently.”

Welty said that most of his patients come to SRRMC at the advice of their primary care doctors, or in some cases, when the condition has gone untreated to the point where they can’t urinate at all.

“For an enlarged prostate, the main goal here is quality of life, but a lot of men tend to postpone looking for treatment thinking either that medications are going to have lots of side effects, or treatments are going to have lots of side effects,” Welty said. “Sometimes men have heard about their friends getting treated for prostate cancer, and this is very different.”

While the risk of BPH is generally higher in men over the age of 50, Welty said that this can vary widely, with patients experiencing their first symptoms anywhere between the ages of 40 and 70. He noted that primary care doctors will generally start asking screening



SRRMC

San Ramon Regional Medical Center is one of the first in the area to acquire robot-assisted aquablation therapy equipment.

questions about prostate health as men enter their 40s.

“The main risk factor is age and just being a man,” Welty said.

While genetics can play a role in prostate health, Welty said that for BPH, diagnosis and treatment were based on symptoms reported by patients, with no blood or genetic screenings for the disease.

“Family history is definitely a risk factor,” Welty said. “It just tends to run in families. But just because someone’s dad had their

prostate operated on for an enlarged prostate, if they don’t have any symptoms, there’s no extra screening to do.”

Welty noted that while aquablation offers advantages, including increased precision from real-time imaging and the ability to treat a wide range of patients, it is one of many treatment options for BPH.

“You have to talk to a urologist to find out if it’s going to be the right thing, but even then there’s a lot of options,” Welty said. ■



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*Data collection period: 10/2018 - 12/2019 and 7/2020 - 3/2021

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Senior Center

PLEASANTON SENIOR CENTER The Pleasanton Senior Center is open Mondays through Fridays from 8:30 a.m.-4 p.m. and continues to facilitate opportunities to discover new hobbies and skills and to connect with resources and friends.

SHOP FOR GIFTS AT THE SENIOR CENTER Shop for one-of-a-kind gifts crafted by local seniors at the Pleasanton Senior Center Peddler Shoppe. 10 a.m.-2 p.m., Mondays to Fridays.

Talks

IF THESE WALLS COULD TALK Pleasanton's history is more than dates and historical time periods, it's about the everyday people that helped build the town. On this walking tour with Museum on Main, explore the many beautiful historic homes along St. Mary Street, Division Street and Rose Avenue. 10 a.m., Aug. 13.

WEBINAR: LIVING WITH DEMENTIA, DEMENTIA BASICS In this free webinar, Hope Hospice's dementia specialists will discuss the nature and progression of dementia and the various diseases and conditions that can produce its symptoms. Participants will gain a basic

understanding of the ways in which dementia can impact the brain and behavior. 10-11:30 a.m., Sept. 8. Visit hopehospice.com.

VA Outreach

VA PALO ALTO MOBILE MEDICAL OUTREACH Pleasanton Library will host the VA Palo Alto Mobile Medical Outreach team to facilitate examinations, consultations and referrals for enrolled veterans. 10 a.m.-1 p.m., Aug. 22. 400 Old Bernal Ave.

Assistance

ESTATE PLANNING WITH SHIRLEY WHITE 20 minute in-person appointments at the Pleasanton Senior Center, the second Thursday of the month at no charge. A consultation or review only of estate planning, including advice on trusts, wills, power of attorney and health care directives. No on the spot document preparation. Call the Senior Center at 925-931-5365.

LAWYER IN THE LIBRARY This virtual program through the Pleasanton Library is every third Tuesday of the month and each registrant will have a 15 to 20 minute free consultation with a member of the Alameda County Bar

Association. Contact mcorpor@cityofpleasantonca.gov.

PLEASANTON RIDES FOR SENIORS Serving eligible Pleasanton seniors with transportation needs throughout Pleasanton and to select destinations in the Tri-Valley. Pleasanton Rides is a door-to-door shared-ride transportation service. For reservations and information call 925-398-1045.

FREE REMOTE MEDICARE COUNSELING Health Insurance Counseling (HICAP) and Advocacy Program provides free remote Medicare counseling. To schedule a phone counseling appointment call 510-839-0393 or visit lashicap.org/programs/hicap.

FEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM The City of Pleasanton Library and Recreation Department provides a Fee Assistance Program for residents who would like to participate in recreation programs but may not have the financial means. Visit cityofpleasantonca.gov/gov/depts/cs/fees.asp.

DISCOUNT OF 20% ON WATER/WASTEWATER ACCOUNTS Pleasanton Residents age 65 or over are eligible for this discount. Contact the Utility Billing Office at 925-931-5425.

WEISNER SENIOR FUND Provides emergency, one time grants or

loans in nominal amounts to adults age 60 and above in extreme need of financial assistance. Contact Senior Support Program 925-931-5379.

LUNCHES AT THE SENIOR CENTER Senior Lunches (60+) are served in the Main Hall 11:45 a.m.-12:45 p.m., Monday-Friday. Call Open Heart Kitchen at 925-500-8241 for more information.

MEAL ON WHEELS Providing home delivered meals (60+). Call 925-931-5385 for more information.

Exercise

MATURE ADULT FITNESS CLASSES The City of Pleasanton is offering a variety of virtual and in-person Adult Fitness Classes at the Pleasanton Senior Center including Chair Yoga, Fit for 50, Flow Yoga, Core, Stretch & Balance, Line Dancing and Tai Chi- Zumba. Visit pleasantonfun.com.

Social Groups

SONS IN RETIREMENT SEEKING NEW MEMBERS Tri Valley Branch of the Sons in Retirement (SIRs), which provides social activities for men over 50, is seeking new members. The group is open to all men who are retired, or semi retired and aims to improve the

lives of its members through fun activities and events while making new friends for life. For more information, call Bob Jacobsen at 925-846-5774 or email ayjake@sbcglobal.net.

Technology

PERSONAL TECHNOLOGY USERS GROUP For all computer enthusiasts, this virtual program through the Pleasanton Senior Center includes discussions, lectures, demonstrations and a question/answer period. 10:00 a.m. the 4th Thursday of the month. To sign up, email pleaseniorgmail.com.

TECH TUTORING AT THE SENIOR CENTER One-on-one tutoring sessions are available at the Pleasanton Senior Center. 9 a.m. and 10 a.m. on Wednesdays. Bring your own device. \$2.50R/\$3NR. Call 925-931-5365.

Driving

AARP SMART DRIVER COURSE Sign up to refresh driving skills and learn new traffic laws and regulations, driving techniques and proven safety strategies. 12-4 p.m., Aug. 17 & Aug. 24. \$20 AARP Member/\$25 Non-Member. To register call 925-931-5365.



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SENIOR SUPPORT

Continued from Page 11

the time the PPP applications were submitted.

Bank statements for SSPTV obtained by the Weekly show that the PPP loan funds were kept in a separate investment account and did not commingle with general funds of the nonprofit. Records also reflect that all loans and interest acquired via PPP were eventually forgiven by the federal government.

Former SSPTV employee Mary McNamara filed two complaints — in fall 2021 and spring 2022 — via the Small Business Administration's online system over the PPP loans and allegedly misleading applications filed on behalf of the local nonprofit. These however have not been investigated or further addressed by the federal agency, according to McNamara.

McNamara, an employee of SSPTV for seven years, including five in case management, until she was let go in 2020, was critical of Taylor's tenure.

"He didn't have experience with older adults," she said. "He was missing half the time. He wasn't around."

There are additional reports that during his time as director Taylor exhibited ineffective style and disconnection with SSPTV's service demographic. He did not have experience working with seniors before taking the job in 2017, according to multiple former staff members.

Taylor did not respond to requests for comment in recent weeks regarding any allegations or questions about his leadership during his time as executive director with SSPTV.

Other former staff members support claims of Taylor's indifferent leadership.

"(Taylor) was very disinterested in the population that we were serving. And every

suggestion that we would have, as in a staff meeting, would be shut down as to going above and beyond what our seniors would need," Silliman said.

Silliman and other staffers showed interest in expanding their programs and creating more opportunities to connect with the seniors.

"It almost felt like we were going backwards instead of going forward with our mission statement, which is to provide seniors and in my program with socialization and be able to have them feel that they could stay independent and safe in their own home," Silliman said.

Curt Hawk, a retired fire captain of the Newark Fire Department, volunteered on several occasions with Senior Support. He had been familiar with the founding executive director, Marlene Petersen, until Taylor took over in January 2017. His wife, Lorie, began working for SSPTV in 1995.

"Over the years I was constantly impressed by the dedication of all of those who worked at Senior Support," Curt Hawk said. "The dedication of everyone was to do as much as possible, and then some, to provide a wide range of services, often personalized, to as many seniors as possible."

Hawk believes sentiment at the organization changed after new leadership.

"After director Petersen retired and the board hired Robert Taylor, my wife continued to work for Senior Support for about two years. During that time she and her fellow employees saw that the focus on providing the best for our senior citizens was lost," Hawk said.

In the wake of the closure of services provided by SSPTV, most recently the Friendly Visiting Program, concerns have grown around the organization's future plans. The nonprofit has not made any official statements on what the organization plans to do following the visiting program's elimination. ■

ELDER ABUSE

Continued from Page 15

for Seniors attorneys can still help with restraining orders and finding the best way to deal with their abuser, without getting the police immediately involved.

It is important to note that the nonprofit only deals with civil cases, not criminal cases, and they can only help elders who call in, not their family members.

One example of a civil case that isn't at the forefront of elder abuse discussions is financial abuse.

According to the California Association of Area Agencies on Aging, an organization representing California's 33 area agencies on aging, elder abuse is already significantly underreported.

For every case known to programs and agencies, 24 are unknown — for financial abuse, only one in 44 cases is known. Financial elder abuse typically refers to instances like online and phone scams where people trick older people who might not be as privy with technology, to give personal information like bank account numbers and their social security.

"When they get on the phone with someone ... those are really difficult situations for the elders to recognize that it is a scam," O'Malley said.

The county, along with other organizations

that aid seniors, recognize that technology is in some way, the achilles heel for older communities, which is why being there for your elderly relatives is important.

"These scams against elders are going to continue to become prevalent as more and more things become computerized," the DA's office said.

"These older generations may have some proficiency in computers, but may not be experts ... This opens elders up to phishing scams and makes them more vulnerable," officials added. "We need to take care of our elders. Isolation contributes to elders getting scammed, so please remember to check in on the elders in your life often."

Checking in is something that O'Malley and Lowe stressed in their video, saying that it really comes down to family members communicating and educating their older relatives. Lowe said that it should be treated like checks and balances where the family checks in with the banks and makes sure that nothing is out of the ordinary.

She also said that for seniors, it's important to not only use the resources in the county but to also double check any website they visit and not fall for phone calls that aren't government bodies that never actually call you if they need something.

"When there is an elder in your life, please don't allow them to be isolated, please visit them, call them on a regular basis," Lowe said. ■



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