

SONOMA SENIORS

COUNCIL ON AGING *Today*

JANUARY 2008

Caring for Aging Baby Boomers

Challenges for the Upcoming Presidency

by Shirlee Zane, CEO
Council on Aging

**“When my bones are stiff and aching, and my feet won’t climb the stair,
I will only ask one favor: don’t bring me no rocking chair.
When you see me walking, stumbling, don’t study and get it wrong.
‘Cause tired don’t mean lazy, and every goodbye ain’t gone.**

—*Maya Angelou*

Next month California will vote in the Presidential primaries and help determine who will be our next President. A key issue, apart from ending the war in Iraq, is financial and other challenges that our country will face with the aging of a huge portion of our population: baby boomers.

Every facet of our society will be touched by aging in the next 20 years. While Westerners have been poor at esteeming our elders in comparison to most other cultures, we will be forced to grapple with all of the effects of getting older. Every 7 seconds someone turns 50, and people over the age of 80 are the fastest growing segment of the population today.

The new administration will be confronting these challenges of aging: 1) healthcare, 2) retirement funds, 3) mobility and 4) independence and quality of life.

Medicare is our only national healthcare program. Prior to its inception in 1966, over 50% of the senior population did not have health insurance. We will need to keep it strong and viable for aging Baby Boomers. Medicare Part D, while it has provided some savings on prescription drugs for seniors, weakens Medicare by channeling billions of dollars into the private sector.

We spend most of our healthcare dollars during the last eight years of our lives, and Americans spend 15% more on healthcare than any other developed nation. Contrary to popular belief, we do not have the best healthcare system in the world. In fact, we were recently ranked 41 out of a rating done by the United Nations Healthcare Study. What this means to older Americans is that the next presidential administration will need to tackle

our current healthcare system in a way that reduces and contains costs, provides more incentives for preventive medicine and ensures coverage for all. While the argument against a national healthcare system centers on not wanting an increase in taxes (and who does!), the potential savings in healthcare costs will offset any increases in taxes, according to current economic analysis.

Similar programs are being tried and tested in states with positive results, such as Hawaii and Massachusetts.

Social Security was established under the Franklin Delano Roosevelt administration as a way to end poverty among seniors and provided a system whereby the government assisted retirees with a pension program to care for them in their old age. It has 1% administrative overhead and reduced poverty among seniors by 20%. Unlike private investments, Social Security is guaranteed to provide retirement benefits for as long as we live. This is especially important for women, who tend to live longer, spend more years alone, and have fewer assets than men.

Social Security has been the most successful and equitable social assurance plan for five decades. It is protected from inflation with regular cost of living adjustments. **It is an earned benefit, not a welfare program.** Participation in the collective pool through FICA contributions generates a claim to benefits in retirement, disability, or the death of a working spouse.

The program will be threatened within the



“Bess” (Photo by Harvey Henningsen)

The time to raise our voices is now. The time to advocate for strong senior services and an infrastructure that affirms aging is today. Let your voice be heard—by casting your vote this Presidential primary.

next 30 years unless we can find a way to boost contributions through an expanded workforce, a rate increase, or a higher cap. Currently when a worker has earned \$90,000 in the calendar year, no additional contributions are made. Simply by raising that cap to \$130,000, we would keep Social Security viable for the next 70 years.

Mobility—and reliable, economical public transit—continues to be a major problem for aging Americans. Studies show that up until the age of 79, older drivers have a safe driving record. However, after that age there is often a steep decline in safety. Most seniors feel, understandably, that giving up their drivers’ license is giving up their freedom to be mobile and independent. This, no doubt, is largely

See **Caring**, page 7



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Happy New Year

Consider This...

by Shirlee Zane, CEO



With the New Year, I would like to share my vision of things I hope for and believe we can achieve with sufficient political will, intelligence, resources, imagination and commitment in 2008.

I hope we can eliminate hunger in Sonoma County.

I hope we can outlaw plastic bags in Sonoma County, because they hurt the environment and are not necessary.

I hope that we can work toward putting an end to homelessness by increasing transitional housing, shelter beds and programs that assist the homeless.

I hope we dramatically decrease the number of prisons and jails we build here in the county and California by investing in social services such as drug rehabilitation, mental health programs and services for at-risk youth that ultimately reduce crime rates.

I hope that the public sector—cities, county, state, and federal government—will do a better job balancing budgets and take some cues from private business.

I hope that we can dramatically reduce our carbon emissions both here and around the world, recognizing that climate change is a harsh reality that affects us all.

I hope the polar bears and penguins don't die, because they are so incredible and it would be a horrible tragedy if we lost them.

I hope that every city and the county will significantly increase their affordable housing.

I hope that far fewer people will lose their homes due to predatory lending.

I hope we get a train.

I hope we can demonstrate to our children and youth that they are precious to us; they are our future, and we need to do a better job of educating them, supporting them and providing them with the necessities of life—such as food, shelter and healthcare. Mostly though, I hope they will know that they are loved and that there are no unwanted children in our community.

I hope we pay our teachers and caregivers better.

I hope we all become saner, kinder drivers who are more forgiving.

I hope that we remember that most of us will have a disability at some point in our life and figure out better ways of becoming an accessible, friendly community to the disabled.

I hope that there will be no fatalities or serious injuries of pedestrians or bicyclists, because we are doing a much better job of respecting these two forms of healthy, green transportation.

I hope that as we become a more diverse community that respects, values and appreciates diversity, that we will celebrate and not fear our differences by learning from one another.

I hope we come closer to a national healthcare plan and a California health plan that is a fair partnership between the private and public sector and, most importantly, that provides healthcare to all.

I hope we stop the increase of legalized gambling in all of its forms.

I hope we get rid of "reality" TV shows.

I hope we learn as a society that healthcare begins with us—when we eat right, exercise, do not smoke or drink heavily and take care of our relationships and emotional and mental health.

I hope technology and the latest electronic devices stop distracting us from living.

I hope we realize that water is a sacred and incredibly valuable resource that no one can afford to waste, even when it is pouring rain outside.

I hope we continue to remember the military service men and women in our prayers and support their families here at home.

I hope we find better solutions to ending violence in all of its forms; domestic violence, elder abuse, child abuse and verbal abuse.

I hope the Dodgers and Giants go to the World Series.

I hope the war ends.

I hope we slow down, laugh more, sing more, pray more, dance more, give more, smile more, plant more trees and flowers, walk more, read more, spend more time with seniors and children, hug our pets, create something beautiful every day, say "thank you" and "please" more and live our lives with more forgiveness and gratitude.

Council on Aging

Mission Statement:

To provide services that support the independence and well-being of older adults in Sonoma County, and to be a strong advocate for the quality of life of elders locally and nationally.

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Continued on page 8



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Santa Rosa CityBus transforms the downtown Transit Mall.

How do you turn a one-block, concrete-sided street where people congregate to catch a bus into an attractive, vibrant setting?

Well, that is exactly what Santa Rosa CityBus has been working towards. Upon receiving a grant from the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, CityBus has been reviewing proposals submitted by urban design companies that will combine urban planning, landscape architecture and architecture to enhance the arrangement, appearance and functionality of the City's downtown Transit Mall. This is a major undertaking which, when completed in 2010, will include: public art, enhanced lighting, potential for a retail center for concessionaires, and new passenger amenities such as electronic bus arrival and departure displays and other exciting enhancements aimed at creating a setting that is appealing to transit riders.

Too anxious to wait until 2010 for all the planned improvements, Santa Rosa CityBus has initiated a program to power wash the Transit Mall every week by CityBus staff and has contracted with a professional power washing company to come in twice a month, at night when no one is around, and "super clean" the facility.

In addition, Santa Rosa CityBus is providing on-site security. A security guard patrols the Transit Mall daily between noon and 8:00 p.m. with two guards on-site during the "after school" rush. A new Web-based security camera system has been installed which allows the Santa Rosa Police Department and CityBus staff to monitor activities at the Transit Mall 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The Transit Mall is staffed by CityBus Transit Service Representatives (TSRs). You can recognize them by their bright yellow vests labeled "CityBus Staff." They are in the Transit Mall to provide travel assistance and trip planning information for all of the Transit Operators (Golden Gate Transit, Sonoma County Transit, Mendocino Transit and Napa Vine) that utilize the Transit Mall.

Santa Rosa CityBus has purchased a new Mobile Transit Information Center which will be parked in the lot on the north side of the Transit Mall early next year. This



easily recognizable information center will enable CityBus Transit Service Representatives to provide more information, assistance and services to transit travelers.

The improvements Santa Rosa CityBus has already initiated and those planned are all a part of CityBus's goal to make travel by bus an appealing, reliable, affordable and environmentally friendly transportation option.

For more information on the Santa Rosa CityBus Transit Mall contact Mona Babauta, Deputy Director, Transit, at 543-3925.

If you'd like information on the "Learn to Ride Santa Rosa CityBus" Travel Training program, which includes a trip through the downtown Transit Mall, contact Joy Gipson, Outreach Coordinator, Transit, at 543-3336.

Just Wondering....?

If you mixed vodka with orange juice and milk of magnesia, would you get a Philip's Screwdriver?

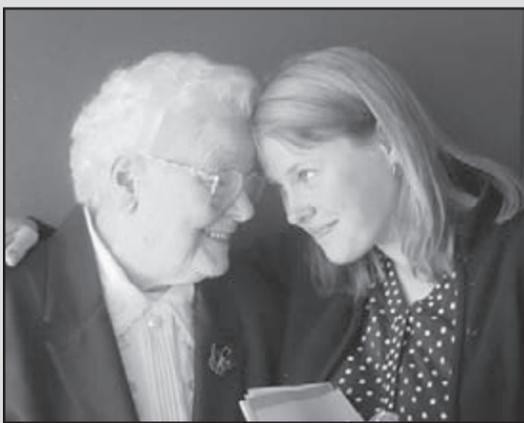
Why do women wear evening gowns to nightclubs? Shouldn't they be wearing night gowns?

If love is blind, why is lingerie so popular?

Why is the man who invests all your money called a broker?

Do Roman paramedics refer to IV's as "4's"?

Why isn't 11 pronounced "onety-one"?



Q: How can you invest in the well-being of Sonoma County seniors?

A: Set up a charitable trust or estate plan that will help us feed and care for seniors now and into the future.

For information on how you can help Sonoma County seniors, call Shirlee Zane, CEO, at 525-0143.

The Council on Aging is proud to announce that the Endowment Fund is managed by Exchange Bank. The Exchange Bank continuously serves Sonoma County community charitable endeavors. For more information, call 524-3151.



A Prize-Winning Cautionary Tale

Lucy Forest called with exciting news: she had just won \$250,000 from the National Clearing House! "Wow!" I enthused.



But they wanted \$2,500 to "insure" the prize.

Oh. "Did you send it," I asked anxiously?

"Well," said Lucy, "I told them that was too much, so they agreed to accept half that much."

Now I was getting alarmed. This is a classic scam, perpetrated on unwary seniors who send a check and never receive the prize. But I needn't have worried. Lucy, who I should have remembered is no fool, was having fun with me.

"At about 1 p.m.," said Lucy, "Mr. Williams called me to give me a confirmation number and a PIN and told me to keep all of this confidential. If asked why I was withdrawing so much money, I was to say that I had a sick relative. He asked where the nearest airport was so they could deliver the money to me in the morning. Another call told me 'We are at the border now, ready to bring you your check.'"

Lucy, meanwhile, had determined that the address in Toronto that she was supposed to send the check to was false, and that there was no listing for a "National Clearing House." Then she called the police to report the scam.

When "Mr. Williams" called at 3 pm, she let him know that she was on to him.

What should you do if you get a suspicious financial offer?

Council on Aging recommends:

- ◆ Call Adult Protective Services at 1-800-667-0404 and give them the details about the scam.
- ◆ Call Council on Aging Financial Services (525-0143, ext. 108) and ask for our "Financial Protection for Seniors" brochure.
- ◆ Attend our free seminar on finances. See "Living Longer, Living Better" on page 5 for details.

Lucy Forest is the former writer of a column for seniors in the Press Democrat. See *Sonoma Seniors Today*, Oct. 2007, for more on Lucy.

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Ernestine I. Smith

Beloved Sonoma County Conservation Pioneer

by Bonnie Allen

Ernestine Smith has been called “a native California whirlwind of energy in defense of the environment and general decency.”

Athlete, naturalist, educator, photographer, singer, conservationist, women’s rights activist, Ernie—as she is affectionately known—has always walked her talk.

In fact, according to Linda Curry, who wrote a biography of Smith for her birthday, she and Sonoma County Tomorrow’s Iva Warner, both in their late sixties at the time, “once walked all the way around Fitch Mountain collecting signatures to stop the Peripheral Canal.”

At 93, she retains her cherished independence, living in her own home across the street from fellow activist and friend Martha Bentley.

Their 40-year friendship dates to 1967, when the two were founding members of the Madrone Audubon Society, and continues as the two look out for each other as neighbors.

Smith grew up on a farm in Paso Robles, where her family eked out a hard living, raising potatoes, alfalfa for their cows, and wheat. Poverty didn’t keep Smith from excelling at everything she did, including starring in track and field hockey in high school in the 1930s.

“She was diligent in her pursuit of education in spite of financial hardships,” notes fellow conservationist Lucy Kortum.

She graduated with honors in biology from San Jose State, went on to teach science and physical education, first in Ferndale and then at Santa Rosa’s Montgomery High. During a train ride, she met the Floyd P. Bailey, president of SRJC, who promptly offered her a job: science or physical education.

Smith chose P.E. She worked to get young women involved in sports and brought women’s intramural athletics to the campus before Title IX existed.

Smith herself was an ace field hockey

player and traveled with the U.S. team to Australia and Zambia.

Smith’s activism began with the fight against a nuclear reactor at Bodega Bay.

She once went to a hearing to oppose a luxury development on the Russian River.

“Ernie stayed at the hearing until it ended at 5 AM,” said Bentley. “Then she went home, took a shower and went off to teach her classes.”

Curry called her, “a major force in the creation of Sonoma County Tomorrow, Sonoma County Conservation Council and the Bouverie Preserve in Glen Ellen,” where she helped develop the docent program and was a founding member of the Quercus Quire, which teaches basic concepts of nature to children through song. Many awards and honors adorn Smith’s kitchen walls.

Conservationist Bill Kortum recalls her reaction when the California Highway Commission planned a four-lane bridge across the mouth of the Russian River, on a road that the Coastal Commission had designated as two lanes.

“Ernie traveled to the next meeting of the Highway Commission, stood up at the podium and reminded the members that their apparently oblivious engineers were designing a growth-inducing four-lane bridge at Bridgehaven,” said Kortum. The commission backed down, and some refer to the resulting two-lane bridge as the “Ernie Smith Bridge.”

The most influential person in her life?

“My mother! She taught me to be fair, honest and compassionate.”

Deeply modest, Smith needed no better testament to her own influence than the fact that three friends showed up for her interview for this article, all eager to share some aspect of her good deeds. Marie Sugiyama, a student of Smith’s at SRJC in 1952, said, “She got me involved in the first female athletic contest at a school. Before that, there were no there were no women’s sports anywhere. Ernie’s affected many students’ lives in Sonoma County. She was the influence that made me a teacher.”



Moreover, said Sugiyama, Smith talked to the students about the environment during bus trips to athletic events. During this time she also taught a popular class on camp crafts at Hood Mountain.

Martha Bentley contributed to the interview by sharing stories about Smith’s activities and friendships. Bentley is herself the founding member and director of Bird Rescue Service of Sonoma County. Among honors the two share is the Madrone Audubon Society’s Bentley-Smith Award given annually to a Madrone member for contributions to the protection and enhancement of the environment through education and/or conservation activity in the community.

In 1980, Bentley, Smith and Iva Warner were named Sonoma County Environmentalists of the year by the Sonoma County Conservation Council.

It is perhaps the friendship between the two activists that enables Smith to continue living independently. Although Smith received Meals on Wheels during an illness, she now prefers to do her own cooking.

Her advice for seniors looking forward to a ripe old age?

“Keep busy; get involved.”

“Don’t sit and mildew,” adds Bentley, approvingly.

The View

Customized Care for Seniors with Low Vision at Sunrise of Santa Rosa

Today the number of seniors experiencing low vision problems is on the rise. In many cases, the inability to see properly compromises independence and well-being. Sunrise has developed a solution to this growing concern – *The View*.

The View provides customized, low vision care and services in a comfortable environment. Resident suites feature design elements to maximize independence. Specialized activities aim to increase quality of life and encourage interaction with other residents.

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Ask COA Legal



Q: What Is Predatory Lending and How Can I Avoid Becoming a Victim?

by Barbara Swary, Legal Director

A: "Predatory Lending" encompasses a variety of home mortgage lending practices. Predatory lenders often pressure homeowners into signing loans they cannot afford or that are not in the customer's best interest. Often, the tactics include false promises and deceptive sales tactics. Borrowers may be pressured into signing the loan contract before they can thoroughly review the paperwork and the math to make certain they can afford the loan payments.

Generally, predatory loans have high up-front fees added to the balance, decreasing the equity. Loan amounts are based on your equity in your home, without considering your ability to make scheduled payments. If you are unable to make the scheduled payments, you are encouraged to refinance generally into another unaffordable high-fee loan, which snowballs into a cycle until there is no homeowner equity, resulting in foreclosure.

Seniors and minorities are especially likely to be targets of predatory lending. The following guidelines should help you avoid becoming a victim of predatory lending practices:

1. Know what you can afford. Review your income and expenses. ALWAYS borrow within your budget. DO NOT inflate your sources of income or provide any false information to qualify for a loan.

2. Choose a reputable broker/lender. Make sure they are properly licensed with the California Department of Corporations and/or California Department of Real Estate. Be aware of salespersons who approach you with offers that sound too good to be true.

3. Understand the loan application and loan contract. Shop around for a loan. Compare interest rates, fees and points and examine the terms of the loan. You have the right to review your credit score and obtain a copy of your credit report to make certain that it accurately reflects what is on the loan. You are entitled, by state and federal law, to "Good Faith Estimate" disclosures as to the costs and expenses you are to pay with the new loan. Doublecheck the loan application to make certain that it accurately reflects the cost of the home and your income from investments, employment, and retirement.

4. Lastly, before you sign, ask questions about the term of the loan; check the contract to make sure the terms you agreed upon are clearly written in the loan documents.

◆ READ the entire loan contract—NEVER SIGN a blank form or one with inaccurate information.

◆ Talk with an advisor or professional before signing the contract. NEVER allow yourself to be pressured into signing a contract that you are uncomfortable with or do not understand. NEVER rely on any verbal promises.

◆ Find out if there are any cancellation rights. Look for prepayment penalties and restrictions.

For the next legal article, I will discuss seven signs of predatory lending. "CONSUMER BEWARE" is the first step to protecting yourself from predatory lending, scams, identity theft and other threats to your financial and personal security.



Send your questions to SST, Legal Q&A, 30 Kawana Springs Road, Santa Rosa, 95404 or by email to legalcoa@sonic.net. Barbara Swary, Esq., Director of Senior Legal Services at Council on Aging, will answer a question every other month.



"Feed a Senior"

Pacific Market Customers give record amount

Each year, over Thanksgiving, Ken Silveira of Pacific Market offers his customers the opportunity to support the Council on Aging's Meals on Wheels program by adding a donation to "Feed a Senior" at checkout. Pacific Market employees join in the spirit by asking each customer if they would like to donate—and their enthusiasm has paid off.

This Thanksgiving, almost \$28,000 was raised at the Sebastopol, Santa Rosa and Rohnert Park stores, \$8,000 more than last year. Those contributions will provide

8,000 senior meals this year.

"Pacific market employees and customers went all out this year to break all previous records and help us feed our seniors," said Council on Aging CEO Shirlee Zane. "We need to support businesses like Pacific Market that are good citizens in the world."

On behalf of Council on Aging and the seniors receiving meals, a huge thanks to Ken Silveira, the entire staff and generous customers of Pacific Markets.

New Year's Resolutions 101

We asked for New Year's Resolutions that are easy and fun to keep. Here's what we came up with:

Bonnie Allen:

- ✓ Eat more of my favorite anti-oxidants: chocolate and red wine.
- ✓ Work on getting my cat to purr more often.
- ✓ Find a home for ALL my persimmons.
- ✓ Procrastinate more. Starting tomorrow.
- ✓ Learn to juggle.
- ✓ Get my hands dirty more often. (See "Odds 'n' Ends," page 8).

Jane Doroff:

- ✓ Return to the water by swimming and learning how to sail.
- ✓ Walk the dog more often.
- ✓ Remember to say thank you.
- ✓ Laugh and smile more.

Michele Leonard:

- ✓ I need a new flower mound along the left side my front walk way. The right side is already completed with three large lava boulders and a variety of flora. In the new mound, I'll be planting both annuals and perennials. I figure I'll need at least 3 yards of topsoil for a decent sized mound. if there's any way of managing a small pond or fountain I'll try to incorporate it. When it's finished, you'll walk between the gardens into the front door.

David Letterman:

- ✓ Turn in that Uzi for a shiny new bicycle.
- ✓ Have applause sign installed in my bedroom.
- ✓ Four words: Mrs. Kathie Lee Letterman

And on a more serious note, Carly Wardlaw:

- ✓ I'm going to stop telling myself "no." I'm going to start telling myself "yes" when new opportunities present themselves. If I strive to accomplish this New Year's resolution, 2008 will be an adventurous and exciting year for me. I will hopefully learn, grow, and surprise myself along the way!



Attention readers! Do you have a special Valentine's Day memory or anecdote, or a romantic story to share? We'd like to hear from you!

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due to a serious neglect of our public transit system.

As an Advisory Committee Member for MTC (Metropolitan Transportation Commission), I can say that the vast majority of our billion-dollar transportation budget in California goes to maintain roads. The next Presidential administration will need to develop a strategic and comprehensive public transit plan for aging Americans, one that allows seniors to not have to forfeit their independence when they give up a driver's license.

Quality of life remains a high priority for us as we age. We desire to be able to live independently, yet remain social and active, having our basic needs met without the fear and anxiety of want, which was also one of FDR's four freedoms. There will be much to accomplish in the next administration in the way of reinforcing current programs and establishing new programs that maintain quality of life for older adults.

Currently, the Older Americans Act (OAA), which supports many quality-of-life programs, is extremely underfunded. Programs that Council on Aging runs under the OAA only cover about 38% of the costs, such as senior nutrition (Meals on Wheels), case managers, social and recreational programs, information and assistance, legal services and others. If we truly care about providing these life-sustaining services to seniors, we will need to dramatically increase the funding to meet the needs of aging baby boomers.

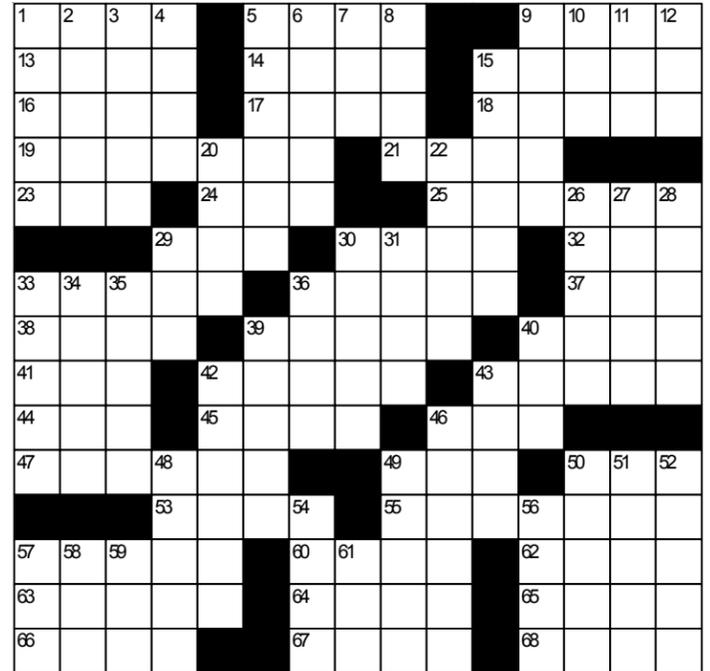
Government on all levels will need to strategically identify resources, programs, and policies that assist Americans to age positively in the coming years. If we foolishly wait until that population bubble hits, we will be unprepared. The time to raise our voices is now. The time to advocate for strong senior services and an infrastructure that affirms aging is today. Let your voice be heard—by casting your vote this Presidential primary.

January Crossword Puzzle

Solution on page 8

Across

- 1 Melody at dusk
- 5 Over
- 9 Nail
- 13 Militarily truant
- 14 Butter alt.
- 15 Car accident
- 16 African nation
- 17 All right
- 18 Loose thread
- 19 February 5 event
- 21 Winter theme element
- 23 Hoopla
- 24 Gov. org.
- 25 Chronicles
- 29 Commit a 30 down
- 30 Big Ben sound
- 32 Abraham's nephew
- 33 Theater site of global warming lecture
- 36 They can be predatory
- 37 One of an anatomical quintet
- 38 Astringent
- 39 Deviant
- 40 Comfort
- 41 Sailor
- 42 Kitty feedings?
- 43 Throat infection
- 44 Airport abbr.
- 45 Man of action
- 46 Holiday or Watson
- 47 ___ vests, worn by CityBus workers
- 49 Female prefix
- 50 Tax org.
- 53 Mother of Elizabeth I
- 55 Take apart
- 57 Disney creature
- 60 ___ mater
- 62 "Arsenic and Old ___"
- 63 Top colleges
- 64 Confederates, for short
- 65 Turquoise
- 66 Biological unit
- 67 Coal-burning byproduct
- 68 It may be help prevent depression



www.CrosswordWeaver.com

Down

- 1 Florida City
- 2 One was named after Ernie Smith
- 3 FDR's ailment
- 4 Cowboy sidekick Pickens
- 5 Less rich
- 6 Synthetic resin
- 7 Aral, for instance
- 8 Child's tools
- 9 Muscle
- 10 Pastor's title, for short
- 11 Expert
- 12 Ten liters, for short
- 15 "Two ___ don't make a right"
- 20 Seventies hairdo
- 22 Babysitter
- 26 Marriage site
- 27 Untied
- 28 Like a 30% grade
- 29 Shade tree
- 30 Mistake
- 31 California landmarks
- 33 Term for 41 across
- 34 Thrill
- 35 Agrarian
- 36 Diet word
- 39 Recognized
- 40 List ender
- 42 Aphrodite's lover
- 43 "___ of the Pioneers"
- 46 Ruler
- 48 Tag
- 49 Okra concoction
- 50 Like some Kurds
- 51 Happen again
- 52 Blood and tears partner
- 54 Corn units
- 56 Dressed
- 57 Pen brand
- 58 Santa Rosa, for instance (abbr.)
- 59 Unit of plastic thickness
- 61 MGM's mascot

Volunteers Needed

"Learning Laguna"
Docent Training



The Laguna de Santa Rosa Foundation is seeking people interested in learning more about the Laguna, Sonoma County's richest wildlife area, and sharing what they know with elementary school children.

The Foundation's Learning Laguna program serves 2nd-5th grade students throughout the Laguna Watershed. Docents lead dynamic, engaging environmental education activities in the classroom and during field trips to various Laguna Preserves. Docent enrichment activities provide camaraderie, on-going education and opportunities for docents to expand and share personal interests.

Orientations will be held in February, and the 10-week training course begins Monday, March 10. To apply or find out more, visit: lagunafoundation.org, or contact the Education Programs Director, Christine Fontaine, christine@lagunafoundation.org, or 527-9277 x 102.

Orientation is from 6:30 to 8 pm, Mon., Feb. 4, Sebastopol Library; Tue., Feb. 12, Rohnert Park/Cotati Library; and Wed., Feb. 27, Santa Rosa Central Library.

SUDOKU A logic puzzle

Supply the missing numbers so that every row, column and 9-digit square contain only one of each number. No math skills are required, and no guesswork.

For hints on doing Sudoku puzzles, visit www.websudoku.com, or send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Sonoma Seniors Today, 30 Kawana Springs Rd., Santa Rosa, CA 95404.

			1		8		5	4
8	3	1	4	5			7	
7			6			1		8
2	1						9	
		8				7		
	6						4	1
9		4			1			3
	7			3	5	4	6	9
3	8		2		9			



Get Ready to Vote!

California primary:
February 5

Need more information? For links to candidate Web sites and contact information, your ballot issues, online registration request, county registrar of voters and more, visit smartvoter.org or the official California election site at sos.ca.gov. Or call the **Sonoma County Registrar of Voters: 565-6800**.

Last day to register: January 21. You must re-register if you have changed your address, political party or name since the last election you voted in.

Last day to apply for absentee ballot: One week before the election. If you register for a permanent absentee ballot, you will automatically be sent one in future elections.

Apply for an absentee ballot by filling out the absentee ballot request on your sample ballot or by calling the registrar of voters.



Working for You

Information & Assistance/ Case Management:

Do you need help with senior resources? Call us any time for information, assistance and case management services. Call Carol Martin at 525-0143, ext. 113. Sebastopol seniors only: call the Russian River Senior Center at 869-0618.

Senior Financial Services:

Our bonded and insured counselors assist seniors who are unable to handle bill paying, checkbook reconciliation, eligibility documentation for retirement programs, and other financial needs relative to their daily money management. This program is especially designed for the forgetful senior or the senior with poor vision and often protects them from financial abuse and late fees associated with forgetting to pay their bills. For peace of mind, call Connie Aust, Director, today at (707) 525-0143, ext. 108.

Senior Peer Support:

This program is to help seniors struggling with serious mental illness access services and programs that help them develop skills and social support, leading to a more constructive and satisfying life. After an assessment visit by CoA case managers and an LCSW, clients are matched with trained volunteers for 12 weekly support sessions to develop a care plan solution with the client's approval, then follow-up with progress notes. Sponsored by the Department of Mental Health Services. Call Michele Leonard, Volunteer Coordinator, 525-0143, ext. 147, for information.

Lawyer Referral Service:

If you are 60 years old or older and need an attorney, you will be referred to a panel of elder law attorneys experienced in working with seniors. An initial half-hour consultation is \$30. If you retain the attorney for further services, fees will be at the attorney's usual rate. The service is certified by the California State Bar, Certification #0111. Call 525-1146 for information.

Nutrition:

Meals on Wheels delivers hot meals to temporarily home-bound or chronically ill seniors. Ten dining sites provide meals and companionship. Therapeutic meals and nutritional counseling are available for special needs. Call Shelli Kittelson, 525-0143, ext. 135, for information on home delivery or dining site locations.

Senior Day Services:

This service has helped hundreds of people to reconnect with others through our Senior Day Activities program, offering the opportunity to gather for meals, exercise, entertainment, companionship, and arts and crafts. The programs are held in Healdsburg, Sonoma, and Sebastopol. Call Sharon Boyce at 525-0143, ext. 116.

Senior Helper List:

Our referral list includes caregivers in the county pre-screened with DMV and criminal background checks. Their services include some light housework, driving, cooking, and personal care. They charge approximately \$12-\$15 per hour. The cost of the list is \$50. Call Carol Martin, 525-0143, ext. 113.

Senior Legal Services:

Legal consultation and representation in matters of housing, consumer fraud, Social Security and SSI, Medi-Cal and Medicare, and elder abuse are provided. Also available are simple trusts, wills and durable powers of attorney for health care and finance. Call 525-0143, ext. 140.

Mediation Services:

Are you about to create an estate plan and document all of your wishes about medical and financial decision making? Would you like to include your family in the process? A mediator or facilitator can help make that conversation work smoothly. Mediators can help everyone participate in the most useful way. For more information call Gary Weiner, 525-0143, ext. 145.

Continued from page 3

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Save the date...✓

- ◆ **Nov.-June: Free Senior Movies.** (First Thursday of every month), 10 AM, Third Street Cinemas, 620 Third Street, Santa Rosa. For movie titles, call 522-0330, ext. 3. Sponsors: Todd VanDenBurg Financial & Insurance Services, Santa Rosa Memorial Park & Mortuary/Eggen & Lance Chapel, and Dr. Daniel Brown/Synergy Medical Group. For info call 523-1586, ext. 21.
- ◆ **Jan. 7: Global Warming Lecture.** 7 PM, Merlo Theater, Wells Fargo Center, 50 Mark West Springs Rd., Santa Rosa. Dr. Stephen Schneider, of the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which shared the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize with Al Gore. FREE. Info: 545-1770.
- ◆ **Jan. 17: Choices We Do or Do Not Make: A Look at Financial & Legal Strategies.** Council on Aging, 30 Kawana Springs Rd., Santa Rosa, 3 PM. FREE. For reservations, call 525-0143. See page 5 for more information.
- ◆ **Jan. 21:** Last day to register to vote in the California primary on Feb. 5.

Odds 'n' Ends

- ◆ Have fun, increase your vocabulary and help feed the world. That's the promise of freerice.com. Go to the site and take their vocabulary quiz. It will quickly recognize your skill level and give you words that are at the top of your personal learning curve. Every word you guess correctly results in a donation of 20 grains of rice to the hungry. (The site comes with a warning: This game may make you smarter!)
- ◆ Does gardening make you happy? There may be a reason. Researchers have found that a common soil bacterium, *Mycobacterium vaccae*, stimulates production of serotonin—a known depression-buster—in the brain. Just getting dirt on your hands is enough to get the process going.

