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MVMCC Management Update

We are paying close attention to fire safety and abatement issues here in the Park. We are working to cut back or clear all common areas of fire-prone material. The Novato Fire District has been providing defensible space fire crews to further help protect MVMCC from wildfire by removing dry brush and fallen limbs between MVMCC and St. Vincent's.

Please keep all pets indoors unless on a leash out for a walk. Several cats are on report with the front desk as unattended and/or outside. Remember, the young quail are vulnerable to cats.

Please go the extra mile to keep your dogs on leash or indoors and quiet, especially at night. People need their sleep and quiet time when working or just home relaxing. Please do not leave your dog unattended or tied up outside. They will bark for their owner. Remember, all residents with pets have a signed pet agreement.

While you are out for your evening walk, please wear visible clothing for safety.



Matt Greenberg
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Directory Update

New Residents

Lu and Sharon Damerell
 45 Club View Drive
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damerell.pg@gmail.com
 Sharon: cell 925-457-9064
sharonleebn@gmail.com

Tim Hoke (Connie Marelich's son)
 101 Marin Valley Drive
 cell 925-575-6189
timhoke@yahoo.com

Change

Jo Ussery
 new phone number
 415-506-4360

Pumping Station Project Update

by **DAVID STIER**
 Associate Engineer,
 Vice President of Nute Engineering



Pump Station Interior with New Polyurethane Coating

The beginning of August was marked by the paving of the parking strip along Marin Valley Drive and consolidation of the contractors'

THE ECHO 2023

MARIN VALLEY

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 BAR MANAGER EMERITUS **Fred Dargie 415-884-2969**

SUBMITTING ARTICLES

Email articles with "ECHO" as the subject to **Anila Manning: anilahere99@gmail.com** with a copy of the article in the body of the email. Images should be high resolution.

ECHO DEADLINE

The 8th of the month or sooner for the next issue.

Letter to Residents

Greetings from the Park Acquisition Corporation Board.

August was a busy month for Marin Valley Mobile Country Club residents. With no genuine outreach from the City of Novato to our residents and despite an extraordinary turnout of over 140 residents at each of the Council's last two closed sessions, the City (at press time) is continuing its pursuit of the sale of the land our homes are situated on to a single, for-profit developer, with no visible consideration of alternatives.

Residents are sharing many good ideas to aid our situation, but many of these cannot be implemented while strategy is being developed by the PAC Board in concert with legal counsel.


We will continue to keep residents informed regarding a possible sale. The board is communicating with residents primarily via email, so please be sure that Carol-Joy Harris (caroljoyharris@comcast.net) has your email for this purpose and make sure her email name and the name *PAC Board* are in your contacts list.

PAC Board Meeting Participation Is Encouraged

The PAC Board's meetings are enriched by resident participation. Your suggestions on how MVMCC can better serve your and the community's interests are always welcomed. Come to the PAC Board meetings or email us.

For a period of time going forward, the PAC Board will be holding weekly meetings at the clubhouse and on Zoom. We want to be able to keep residents current with what is happening. Some of these extra meetings may be canceled if we have nothing new to report.

Recent meetings have been greatly enhanced by the many residents attending.

Agendas of future PAC Board meetings and the Zoom link are posted 72 hours before the meetings and are available to those on the mailing list. To be added to this list, contact PAC secretary Carol-Joy Harris at caroljoyharris@comcast.net. You can also find the Zoom link on our marinvalley.net homepage next to the PAC  logo.

Projects

Work on the sewer pump station near the clubhouse resumed after a delay of several weeks. The City's contractors are working toward the goal of having the new pump station operational in September. We are still hopeful that the City comes through to assist with the engineering needed for the new clubhouse roof and solar panels for heating the pool.

Activities

Matt with our Management Company, MVEST, HOL, and Mar Val are all very active on your behalf, and their activities are reported on in articles in each month's *Echo*. I urge you to investigate and participate. By the time the *Echo* is printed, some events have already passed. It is best to see the notices at the front desk and on our website (marinvalley.net) to take advantage of these worthwhile events.

In service,




Jay Shelfer
PAC PRESIDENT
jjshelfer@yahoo.com
415-250-0375 cell

work area around the pump station. After the new concrete work was cured, the pump station interior was coated with a specialized polyurethane coating to preserve the concrete for many years to come. Work activities for the month of September will include the

installation of underground electrical wiring and of the pump-control panel for the facility, as well as the completion of on-site sewage- and odor-control piping systems. The startup and testing phase of the pump station is expected to begin at the end of the month. ■



Park Sale Anxiety

by JOHN HANSEN



Yes, the City of Novato is attempting to put our beloved community on the market, placing into question what our personal and collective future might bring. While our PAC Board is working tirelessly to generate a solution that retains our community values and attributes, the damage began immediately upon realizing the City’s intentions. While we hope for the best outcome, our minds naturally go to a perception of fear of an unknown future – anxiety.

Anxiety is a primitive emotional tool we evolved long ago to help us sharpen our senses when venturing into the unknown. But like many of our ancient tools, anxiety can be useful in the short term, but when extended to days, weeks, or months can become detrimental to our health, especially for those of us who may already experience health compromises.

But just because the issue remains doesn’t mean that anxiety must continue to accompany it. There are several surprisingly simple and effective fixes you can play with to try to tame the angry beast:

1. Breathing is something we do all the time, but the way we breathe has a profound influence on our autonomic nervous system – that part of our brain and body that regulates the sympathetic (flight, fight, fear, freeze) and parasympathetic (relax, eat and digest, loving) systems. Rapid, shallow breathing stimulates the sympathetic system, whereas slow, deep breathing (sighing, yawning) is a parasympathetic stimulant. Obviously, you want to opt for the latter choice.

There are countless “breathing exercises” that have surfaced through many social systems over the millennia, but one of the simplest goes like this:

First, sit quietly in a comfortable chair,
then take in a long, slow inhale
– hold for a couple of seconds –
and follow with a long, slow exhale
and hold again. Repeat.

2. Chants, mantras, affirmations. Most spiritual systems and religions offer a range of chants, mantras, or brief prayers that may be repeated (think om or Hail Mary). These can be very powerful tools, especially for the respective believers. Not a believer? That's okay, there's something for you, too – affirmations. Something as simple as repeating “I am peaceful and relaxed” several times per sitting and a few sittings per day can be just as effective.

3. Mindfulness is simply any practice that brings your mind back from the fantasies of past and future to awareness of the present moment. The best route to mindfulness is meditation. If you're unfamiliar with meditation, you can start with “guided meditations” – there are many flavors on YouTube. Other activities that promote mindfulness include things like “gratitude journaling” (write down five things you're grateful for – every day); or go for a leisurely walk in nature (sans earbuds) and focus on all your sensual inputs – sounds, smells, tactile sensations, the breeze, etc.

4. Your favorite soft, nonlyrical music can entrain your rhythmical self in a way that excludes past and future fantasies.

Use any or all of these simple techniques to give yourself a break – short-term or long-term – from any anxiety you may be experiencing. It's like taking a rest break when you're working – you will emerge relaxed and invigorated. The more you practice any one or a combination of these, the better you will feel.

And there's more: If you find it difficult to get started with these exercises, or if you just can't shake off the beast, there are a few professionally experienced neighbors who may be willing to help you – contact Inula Martinkat (415-884-4469, inula@iups.edu) for more assistance or maybe a referral.

Yours in good health. ■

Sunrise, Sunset

by **KEVIN MULVANEY**

Regarding the February *Echo* article on driver/pedestrian safety in the Park: Frank Paganini, a Class A professional driver by trade and longtime resident, made a great suggestion.

Pedestrians and drivers both need to be especially careful on east/west facing streets at sunrise and sunset. The sun may partially or even totally blind drivers, so pedestrians need to be ready to step aside if drivers seem to be unaware of them. ■



Register with Alert Marin
to receive emergency alerts from
Marin County www.alertmarin.org
415-473-6376

New Fire Protection Grants – Some at 100% Reimbursement

by **MICHELE RIVERS** and **ERMA WHEATLEY**

Another regretful impact of the City of Novato's continued interest in selling the Park is how this affects the ability of many residents to improve their homes during the fire season and other emergencies. With the uncertainty of our future, it is understandable that some residents may experience hesitancy to spend their limited resources to protect their homes at this time. Yet the fire season is still in our midst. Fortunately, some grants are fully reimbursable for your eligible expenses.

The new round of funding from the Marin Wildfire Prevention Authority for 2023–24 has two types of grants to help with the costs of projects to protect our homes from fire — for defensible space and for home hardening.

GRANT PROGRAM GUIDELINES

Applicants who fit MWPA's eligibility criteria may receive up to

— for Defensible Space

\$1,000 with no match requirement. This means that they will fund 100% of your eligible expenses.

— for Home Hardening

\$5,000 per fiscal year per land parcel. **Some home hardening work is so important that they will fund 100% of your expenses** to complete it, as long as the need is identified during your Defensible Space and Home Hardening Evaluation.

The 100% home hardening reimbursable items for us (without garages) are:

Vents Installation or replacement of vents with < 1/8" screen (see <https://firesafemarin.org/harden-your-home/fire-resistant-vents/#gsc.tab=0>) and



Gutter Guards Installation of gutter guards.



All other home hardening work identified during your evaluation will require a 50% match. This means that for items other than vents or gutter guards, only 50% of the expense will be reimbursed by MWPA.

The grants are on a first-come first-served basis to Marin County residents who complete the work identified in their MWPA Defensible Space and Home Hardening evaluation, available online. Eligibility qualifications for applicants or a household member include at least one of the following:

- Aged 60 and over
- Physical development or intellectual disabilities
- Chronic conditions or injuries
- Dependent on public transit
- Low-income household per HUD requirements (1 person: \$104,400, 2 people: \$119,300)

How to Apply To access the grant application, go to www.marinwildfire.org/resident-info/resident-grants and scroll down to “TO BEGIN THE APPLICATION PROCESS: ENTER YOUR ADDRESS BELOW.”

Review time is approximately 2–4 weeks from the time you submit the application. Applicants are limited to a lifetime award limit of \$15,000 in grant funding from MWPA and member agencies. Grant income is taxable in California.

You must submit a completed and signed W9 form, and all receipts and invoices related to work outlined in your Defensible Space and Home Hardening

Evaluation report. Please note that the purchase of equipment is not an eligible expense. Invoices and receipts must include the applicant’s name and the address of the property, the contractor’s or vendor’s name and contact information including license number, the date and description of the work completed, proof of payment, and photos of the completed work. Please allow for an additional 2–3 weeks to receive payment after the work is finished.

For Novato grants and how they differ, see www.novatofire.org/prevention/wildfire-mitigation-and-vegetation-management ■

Message from Mar Val

Dear Friends,

It is hard to believe, but we are at the end of summer and are looking forward to our Labor Day Event – an all-American Labor Day BBQ on the deck with hamburgers and hot dogs. Please join us.

There is some good news and some not-so-good news.

Let’s deal with the sad news first – we are reluctantly raising the price of a nonalcoholic drink ticket from \$1 to \$2 as of November 1. As you are no doubt aware, the price of almost everything has increased while tickets for nonalcoholic drinks have been at \$1 forever ... the time has come where we have no choice. With the addition of the CRV and sales tax, we are not breaking even on most nonalcoholic drink sales. Tickets you currently have

or purchased prior to November 1, 2023, will be good forever ... however, tickets purchased on or after November 1 will cost \$2.

The good news is alcoholic drink tickets will remain at \$6 a drink ... the price has been the same since 2018, still the best deal in town.

Mar Val strives to keep prices of food and beverages affordable.

We will be celebrating Oktoberfest on September 22.

What is Oktoberfest, you ask? It started in Germany with a series of horse races celebrating a royal wedding. The event was so popular that it became an annual event ... beer and sausages were not added to the festival until the late 19th century. So get out your traditional Bavarian clothing – lederhosen, loferls, charivari,

and dirndls – and join us. FYI, the average cost of a beer at Oktoberfest in Germany is going to be €13.75, or US\$15.45. At Mar Val’s Oktoberfest, beer will still be selling for a very modest \$6. What a bargain!

As they say in Bavaria, O’zapft is!



Looking forward to seeing you all at Pub and Mar Val events.



Carolyn Corry
MAR VAL PRESIDENT
ckcorry@comcast.net
415-370-6403 cell



Mar Val

LABOR DAY DINNER

Monday, September 4

5 pm Cocktails 6 pm Dinner

MENU

Hamburgers or Hot Dogs
(Chili available)

or

Impossible Burgers or
Morning Star Veggie Burgers

Potato Salad Green Salad

Frozen Dessert

\$15 per person

Reservation deadline is September 1 at 5 pm
or when 120 reservations have been received.

No cash. Make checks payable to Mar Val.
Questions – Call Susan Hoff @ 707-365-9426.



Mar Val Pub Night

Friday, September 29

5 pm Cocktails 5:30 pm Dinner

Bratwurst with Sauerkraut
or Vegetarian Entrée – Chef's Delight
Potato Salad
Cookies

\$10 per person

Reservation deadline – September 27 at 5 pm
or when 100 reservations have been received.
No cash. Make checks payable to Mar Val.
For questions, call Susan Hoff at 707-365-9426.

Home Owners League Message

Greetings,

Free Food

The Park has been receiving an abundance of free food delivered several times a week from the Farmers Market, Costco, Nugget, Lucky's, and Safeway. HOL is concerned that some residents who are in real need of food assistance are, for one reason or another, not able to come to collect the plentiful food. Thus, if you do collect food, please ask your neighbors who may be housebound if you can take some to them. Find out about any diet restrictions and collect only as much as can be eaten while the food is still fresh. Deliveries are usually on Thursdays, Saturdays, and Sundays, sometimes twice in one day. We have tried to set up a fixed schedule so people can plan in advance, but deliveries are made by volunteers from outside the Park who aren't always able to arrive at the expected time.

The food deliveries have been under the dedicated direction of Tara Plocher and Susan Meyer, but with multiple deliveries per week they are overworked. A group of assistants has been formed to assist with the receiving, presentation and storing, and cleaning up. If you would like to help out, please contact Tara.

Additionally, we are going to reach out to the Marin Health Department to see if we can receive frozen or chilled produce as well as meat and fish. If that comes about and we are given our own fridge, we will let everyone know.

Yard Maintenance

Our Yard Maintenance Fund is depleted for the time being, thus until the next round of fundraising (September or October), we will not be doing more yard fire-abatement or beautification cleanups.

Grandkids Day

Our eagerly awaited Grandkids Day has been postponed until we can be sure to get more children to attend, as only eight children were signed up. When the *Echo* gets back on a regular delivery, we will try again in a month or two in hopes of attracting more grandkids.

Pool Rules

See p. 12 for a restatement of the pool rules. It is important that these be adhered to for safety reasons, especially concerning showering before entering the pool area and making sure the gate is always shut. Thank you for your help with this.

The Tiny Billy Bobs

Many people enjoyed our recent yearly concert with Bill Hartwell. These concerts are organized and financed by Charlotte Kells. In November she will also be bringing us the Tiny Billy Bobs, a very local band of ukulele players, unlike any you have previously heard.

HOL meetings

Our HOL meetings are on the first Wednesday of each month in the Fireside Room and are usually a lot of fun. The next meeting will be Wednesday, September 6, at 6 pm. Please come and enjoy it with us.

Thanks,



John Feld
HOL PRESIDENT
johnmfeld@gmail.com
510-495-4138 cell

New Game Night ■ First Thursday 7-10 pm

by **ED COLLINS**

We had a great turnout for the Thursday Night games, so the Game Nights have now officially changed to First Thursday Game Nights.

Please come on down for an exhilarating, mind-enhancing time. Remember, games can range from simple to complex, from short to long, from cards to social games to party games! Games are provided or bring your own. Ed Collins, 415-377-7696. ■

Chair Yoga ■ Thursdays 10-11 am

by **DONNA SIMONSEN**

Want to start the morning by gently exercising and relaxing the mind, body, and spirit? Haven't done yoga?

No problem. Chair yoga is for everyone! It's a wonderful way to exercise, manage stress, relax the body and mind, stretch, balance, strengthen, focus, and learn. It's



especially useful for seniors and those with chronic illness or disabilities. Optional standing poses using the support of a chair are offered along with the seated versions.

I have been teaching chair yoga for 20 years. I am passionate about yoga and teach with ease and gentleness. Suggested donation is \$12. ■

Circle of Friends to Show Emmy-Nominated Documentary

by **ANEESHA DILLON and TIMO NAVSKY**

Tuesday, September 12 • 1:30 pm • Fireside Room

We will be watching *Last Flight Home*, a documentary film by Ondi Timoner. In 2022 it was nominated for an Emmy Award in Exceptional Documentary Film Making.

This film, which premiered at the Sundance and Telluride Film Festivals, chronicles the remarkable life of Eli Timoner

and his decision to use the California End of Life Option Act to peacefully end his life with grace and dignity surrounded by family. It's a deeply moving and heartfelt documentary on love, support, forgiveness, and the passing on of wisdom to children and grandchildren. It authentically details the journey of a man who consciously ends his life with total support from his family.

It is a long movie, over two hours. We will begin our meeting in the Fireside Room at 1:30 pm, take a bio break midway through, and share with each other when the movie is over. Please bring tissues, water, and a small snack if you'd like. It is scheduled earlier than usual because of the Novato City Council meeting that evening many of us plan to attend. ■

Nonviolent Communication Workshop

Monday, September 11 • 2-3:30 pm • Fireside Room

by **MICHALE DANCER**

“If you really want peace then you will choose peace.”
—Eckhart Tolle



Martine Algier is a certified trainer with the International Center of Nonviolent Communication (cnvc.org) and a founding member of the West Marin Community Mediation Board, and she led workshops at Esalen Institute in Big Sur for both staff and the public for over four decades. Her background includes Transpersonal Psychology and Somatics, Neurolinguistics, and holistic healing. She is passionate about community building and “Taking the war out of our words to build a Global Culture of Peace.”

Nonviolent Communication (NVC) offers the skills and knowledge for conflict transformation that are essential to being able to build and maintain thriving community and to live peacefully in our daily interactions. We may be called upon to choose peace several times a day.

NVC gives us a firm understanding of how to make that choice while being kind, honest, and clear about our limits. My husband Marty and I are planning to bring in Martine Algier, a trained mediator, to share an hour-long presentation in which we can learn skills that can be immediately applied in your life with friends and family.

We’ll learn keys to creating solutions that take everyone’s needs into consideration without compromising our core values and concerns, and discover some ways war language and thinking are encoded in our habitual language.

Marty and I will pay for Martine’s time. I want to bring in as many people as possible and not deter anyone from hearing her speak.

Sign up in the clubhouse lobby, and we’ll see you from 2 to 3:30! ■

Pool Rules

Many residents are enjoying the pool and spa during these dry summer months. We would like to remind everyone of the Pool Rules so residents and guests may enjoy a harmonious use of these popular facilities.

- All users must shower immediately before using the pool or spa. The changing rooms, washrooms, and showers are now fully open for your convenience.
- All guests must be accompanied by a host resident. Residents are responsible for their guests’ behavior.
- Kids’ hours are 11 am – 2 pm. No diapers are permitted in the pool or spa. No children under five years of age are allowed in the spa.
- No food or drink is permitted in the pool area, except for nonglass water bottles. If glass is broken, the pool or spa will need to be closed and perhaps drained. Picnic tables are available outside the pool gate for your use, to enjoy food and nonalcoholic beverages.
- No radios or other devices except in authorized classes, or unless used with earbuds.
- The pool/spa area is a Quiet Zone where residents like to connect and relax. Residents who bring children to the pool area during the kids’ hours must ensure that noise is kept to a reasonable level. Screaming and loud shouting are not permissible.

Thank you for your attention. Please be courteous if asked to follow pool rules. A phone number for Pool Security is posted on the gate if needed. Let’s have a safe and enjoyable summer! ■

The Pool Committee

New Marin Valley Gallery Art Installation

by **SUZIE LAHR**

Sunday, September 17 • 10 am – Noon pm • Fireside Room

Are you an artist in this Park who has not exhibited here in the past? Don't be shy, step right up and let us see your creative talents. Join us in our next Marin Valley Gallery exhibit to be installed on Sunday, September 17 at 10 am until noon. Please pick up any art that is currently being exhibited at the same time.

The gallery will be closed to the public that day. This exhibit will remain in place over the holidays.

And the good news is we sold two gallery pieces in this latest exhibit!

I was in the Breezeway Boutique the other day

talking to a resident about our gallery, and another resident overheard us say the word *art* and, surprise, she is an artist too! I hope to see both these lovely women bearing artistic creations to install in our space on September 17 along with others of you who have kept the gallery going with your support and creative art over the many years.

Now is the time to take a deep breath, shrug off those apprehensive thoughts of what might happen, live in the moment, and enjoy each other and the gifts the world has given each of us. And, as curator of the gallery, the gift I can give to all of you, along with David Gray who carefully

hangs all the exhibits, is to delight everyone with the talent that abides in our Park and to enhance our clubhouse gallery for all residents to enjoy.

Questions are always welcome. Just leave me a phone message at 415-884-9611 or email me with MV Gallery in the subject line.

Here is the watercolor I will be exhibiting after a long time of not picking up a brush to just put paint to paper! It can become a very meditative experience that completely pulls you into creativity. Who knows what the end product will be? That is what makes it so intriguing and gives us joy when we see the finished product. ■



How to Stomach Climate Change

by **JOHN HANSEN**

“Finish your dinner if you want dessert” – Mom

Our home – the only one we know of in the universe – has a fever, and it’s getting worse. Much of the heavy lifting to break the fever must be tackled by those younger, stronger, and more energetic than we are. But there are many things we elders can do to help the cause. You might first think of a new e-car – that’s okay but you may need to drive a bit more than you do to offset the carbon price for the car’s construction.

There’s something else we all do a few times each day that can make a big contribution – eating!

Let me explain ...

Food production for our consumption has a huge greenhouse gas footprint, but the worst part is that about 25% of food produced for our culinary enjoyment goes to waste. Now, I’m not talking about the part that remains in the field and gets plowed under to help nourish the next crop; rather, it’s all the food that is grown, harvested, transported, stored, processed, and trucked to the supermarket – about a quarter of which is tossed onto the landfill where it rots and produces copious amounts of methane gas that is 28 times more potent than CO₂!



Sorting and displaying produce delivery in the Breezeway

But, hey, we’re getting on top of it. More and more places are launching strategies to divert this atrocious waste in ways that are also beneficial. California law now mandates food and agriculture industries to keep food out of landfills. Every stage of the food production chain is beginning to be managed more efficiently: Some waste is incorporated into animal feed, some goes to compost, and – more importantly for us – foods that are slightly blemished, overstocked, or approaching the end of shelf life, BUT still perfectly edible and nutritious, are being reclaimed.

A few of our (numerous) community pillars have taken the initiative to arrange for deliveries of a variety of foodstuffs right here to the clubhouse breezeway – for all of us to share in this global warming-mitigation effort. The added benefit is that it can also take a big bite out of your grocery bill.

It’s a win-win: a service to the world and a smaller grocery tab – who can complain? We can all benefit from this, but some more than others. As I write this piece, an HOL committee is eagerly figuring out how we can optimize this program, how we can share it with the less mobile among us who may need it more than others, and how we can do all this affordably, efficiently, and sustainably – GO TEAM!

As this is a new and evolving program, it is changing rapidly and may be different by the time you read this. The current delivery and source schedule includes:

- **MONDAY about 12:30 pm:** Nugget
- **TUESDAY about 8:30 pm:** Novato Farmers Market
- **THURSDAY about 12:45 pm:** Costco, Safeway
2–3 pm: Food Bank
- **SATURDAY about 11 am:** Lucky Market
- **SUNDAY about 11 am:** Costco
2:15 am: Marin Farmers Market

One more thing – the idea is to consume this food in order to keep it out of the landfill, thus take only what you can surely use or share with friends and neighbors. Letting it turn into “refrigerator soup” would be counterproductive. ■



Novato's Mobile-Home Community Checks Many "Blue Zone" Boxes

by **DR. MEG JORDAN**, PhD, RN, NBC-HWC

From the *Marin Independent Journal*: Marin Voice

Did the State ask how you're doing?

This week I found a survey in my mailbox from the California Department of Aging, inquiring about whether I was securely housed or feeling lonely or getting adequate nutrition. It was a comfort to me that my State was pursuing all the right questions, whether or not this particular agency had any solutions at hand.

I have a great deal of familiarity defining those solutions, as a medical anthropologist teaching behavioral and integrative health. I've lectured at national conferences and published peer-reviewed journal articles about the value of social connections and ways to harness the social determinants of health for [the] enhanced wellbeing for all people.

It occurred to me that 90% of the questions in this four-page survey were satisfied by my local community, Marin Valley Mobile ... Country Club (MVMCC) a close-knit mobile home park of over 400 residents, owned by the City of Novato since 1997, with competent oversight from PAC, an elected group of residents. The City doesn't provide these healthy living activities, such as yoga or book clubs, as recommended in the survey – the residents themselves provide them through volunteer commitments.

However, the City has provided security and stability by serving as a nonprofit entity-owner, with reasonable, affordable rents. A defined 40% of the lots are reserved for low income. This financial stability is an endangered aspect of community wellbeing in much of California, as we witness cries of unaffordability echo everywhere, along with a private equity mad dash to purchase mobile home parks, resulting in exorbitant rents for retirees and vulnerable elderly.

Examining the social conditions that promote people living well into their 90s and reaching centenarian status, I've visited Blue Zones around the world from Okinawa to Sardinia, and consulted with hospital groups centered in Loma Linda, an official Blue Zone site in Southern California. As researchers, we report on the unique conditions in these zones. They tend to vary widely around diet and activity, but the one factor that seems to rise above the rest is that they feature **socially engaged elders**, securely housed and actively participating at the *center* of civic life, not the periphery. Connection and centeredness appear to be critical to physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health as we age.

Wellbeing with an environment that fosters health and happiness for people of every age – this vision

for population health from the National Institutes of Health is seldom manifested in the US. Escalating rates of the "diseases of despair" – loneliness, addiction, and suicide – are generating a tidal wave of concern among municipalities nationwide. All age groups are affected. Social isolation during the pandemic is linked to staggering increases in teen suicide. Health care professionals are now rethinking risk factors for chronic disease, as we encounter new findings that the lack of social connection now outpaces the traditional risk factors of smoking, inactivity, and poor diet or obesity in some populations.

Evidence mounts that people with more social connectedness have better health and longevity. Once older adults know the deep joy of belonging, they will fight with their limited resources to retain it. In the last two months of Novato City Council meetings, the Mayor, City Manager, and Council members were met with about 140 older adult protesters advocating for their beloved community, MVMCC, to not be sold by the City to private developers.

Some day I might apply for Blue Zone status for MVMCC, and then not only would the Dept. of Aging have its exemplar, but the Novato's cherished mobile home park would be listed with the likes of Okinawa and Sardinia, and might just qualify as the happiest Blue Zone of all. ■

Spinach with Scissors on Top

by **LORNA SASS**

Yesterday I discovered a small pair of scissors on top of the spinach I was steaming in a covered saucepan. Boy, was I surprised!

I had used the scissors to cut open the Trader Joe's bag, and somehow it ended up getting cooked along with the Popeye food.



PHOTOGRAPH: LORNA SASS

In the past I would have gotten very upset when I did a goofy thing like that, but recently I realized that becoming angry with myself only made things worse — what the Buddhists call the second arrow: First you trip and then you call yourself an idiot for tripping instead of offering yourself consolation.

So I vowed to stop injuring myself with the second arrow and instead to practice self-compassion. What has helped is remembering a game I played many decades ago when I was a food and travel writer. I was often on the road and staying in hotels when promoting my cookbooks, and inevitably the breakfast room service tray would arrive with something amiss — like hot tea in a carafe that still had the strong scent of coffee. I couldn't bear to drink it and had to reorder and wait until a better version arrived. This was challenging in my half-awake state — often at 5 am to make a morning TV show — and I would feel quite annoyed — not a fun way to start the day!

After numerous breakfast mix-ups, I got the idea to write an article called “The Room Service Blues.” After that, I couldn't wait to see what the next blunder would be so I'd have

more juicy material for the article. Remembering this helpful reframe, I decided to write this essay for the *Echo* so I could begin to look forward to the next outrageous thing I'd do in order to have more material for the article. Because of my diminishing memory, I even started to keep a list of the slipups, but now I can't remember where I put the list!

A few days ago, I smelled burning and became quite disturbed. I looked everywhere inside and out to determine the source but couldn't find it, so I went back to what I was doing. But the smell grew more insistent and I could no longer ignore it. Finally, I saw that the saucepan of tea I was reheating had evaporated, leaving the teabag to smolder and burn the bottom of the pan. I had to toss the pan.

This incident brought to mind my Gram, who lived well into her nineties and would periodically forget that she had put the kettle on to boil. She ruined many a kettle and would always laugh with a twinkle in her eye when she reported these senior bumbles to us. Laughter is so good for us, so calming and healing. (As the writer Norman Cousins was fond of saying: *Laughter is internal jogging.*)

Nowadays, in an effort to avoid goofs, I'm trying to simplify and do only one thing at a time. As a former champion multitasker, this takes some discipline, but it seems necessary to avoid creating some serious messes.

I've also started doing work-arounds to ease the pain of yet another blunder. When I left the house

for the fifth time wearing my computer glasses – not realizing it until I was on the highway, then having to return home to fetch my progressives – I decided to have an extra pair of distance glasses made to leave in the car.

And I'm getting better at remembering to laugh and roll my eyes in wonderment at all the goofy surprises of old age that I can't anticipate. It's a whole lot better than castigating myself for hours about having brain rot – or what one friend calls "lapses of the synapses."

One lesson I'm getting from all of this elder confusion is that I'm no longer supposed to be living so devotedly in my head, rushing from one thing to the next to make check marks on a long to-do list. Rather, it's the time of life to be heart-centered and in slowdown mode. To this end, I have created a "to-don't" list, eliminating much of the running around I used to thrive on but no longer have the energy for.

Now where is that darn list of goof-ups I so diligently made? Maybe it's with my favorite two pairs of Cuddl Duds stretch pants that have gone missing? Perhaps I should look in the oven or some other unlikely place? (An older food colleague confessed recently that she eventually found her half-eaten breakfast bagel in her sock drawer.)

Ah, I found the "goof list" at last under a pile of papers on my desk, a logical place I didn't think of checking. I offer it to you now with the hope that it invites some knowing laughter – though I can assure you that none of the items that follow tops steaming spinach with scissors!

List of Recent Lapses of the Synapses

- Tossed my small hand rake into the green bin along with the leaves, but didn't realize it until after collection day.
- Lost yet another hat.

- Left the car's trunk door open overnight with all my possessions visible.
- Couldn't remember a good friend's last name.
- Got the time wrong and missed the first hour of a two-hour singing class.
- Tuned into a Zoom call and got the message that the host was in another meeting. Felt frantic until I realized I was an hour early.
- Got the day wrong and showed up for a concert that wasn't going to happen for another week. Also arrived two weeks early for a haircut appointment.
- How did that big food stain get on my blouse? (Work-around: start wearing a bib?)
- Ordered a duplicate supplement not remembering that I had ordered a bottle of the same stuff the day before.
- What? Is it really noon already? What happened to the morning? And where did I put my mug of morning tea?
- Looking frantically for my keys for the umpteenth time. Work-around: made duplicate keys for both house and car and hid them here and there outside.

Well, now that I'm ready to hand in this article, maybe the goofiness will slow down? Unlikely ... and I'm also wondering if you, dear reader, would like to add anything to the list? We could run a contest, and the one who does the ditziest thing wins! Any idea what the prize should be?

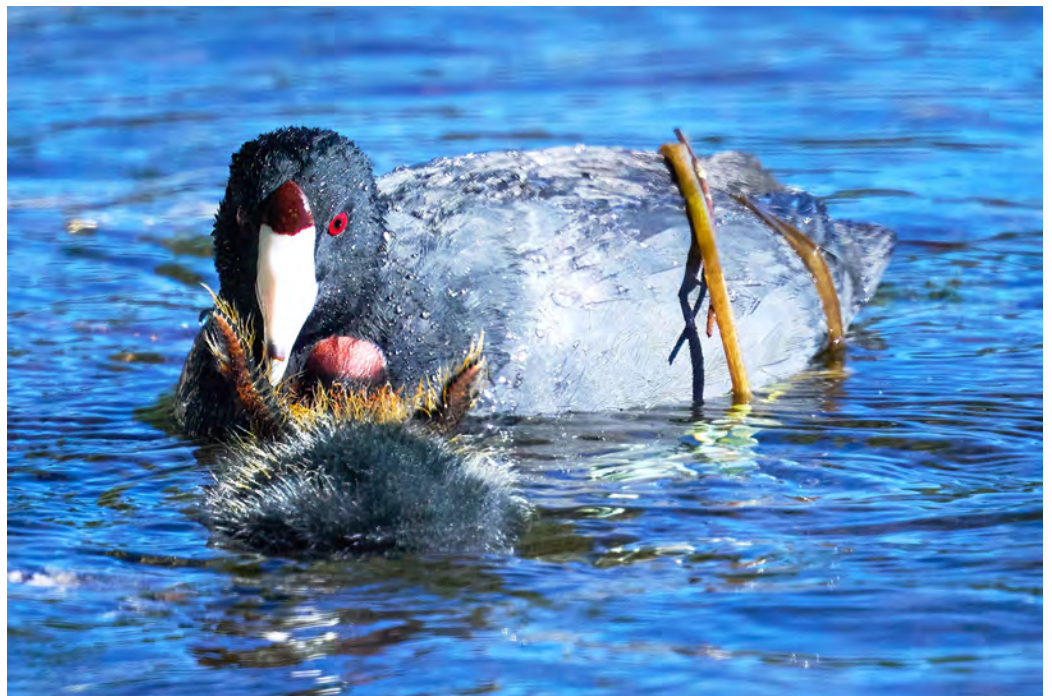
A three-way timer perhaps? A bib? Tickets to a comedy show?

A few days after I handed in this article, Serena Fisher sent me this pertinent quote from the internet: *I finally did it! Bought a new pair of shoes with memory foam insoles. No more forgetting why I walked into the kitchen ...* ■

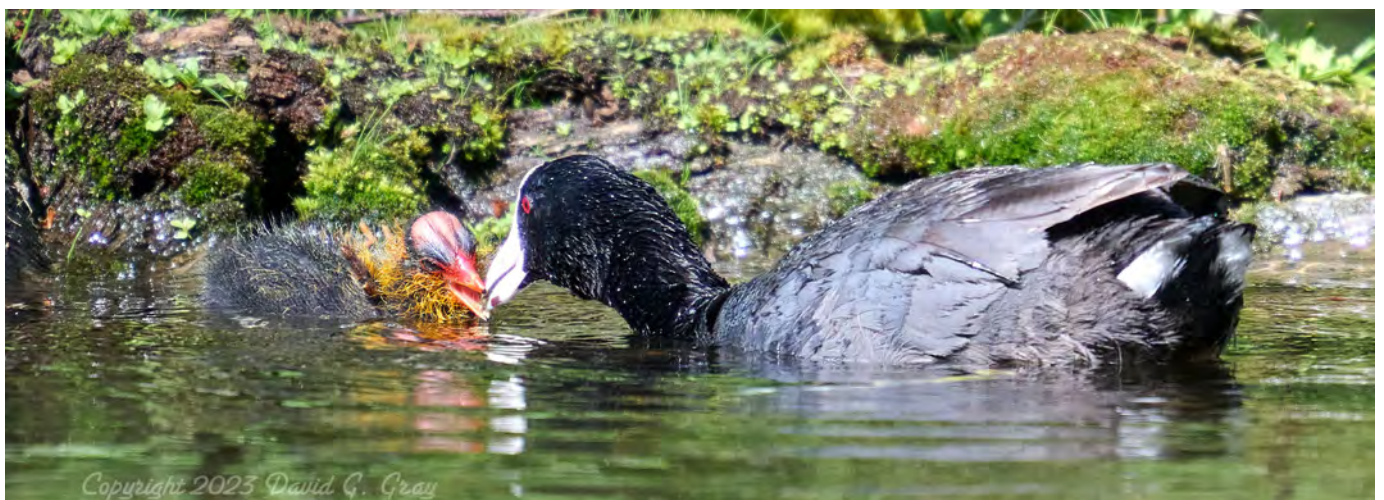
Baby Coots

Text and Photography by **DAVID GRAY**

The American coot (*Fulica americana*) is a gruiform (same family as the gallinule and rail) whose behavior is very similar to that of a diving duck. The coot is common to marshlands in most of North and Central America. The adults have black heads, very dark-gray bodies, and a white bill. We find them in the ephemeral ponds here in our Park after the rainy season, and they are easily observed in the Las Gallinas ponds to our south. If you see them up close, you might be shocked at their unusual red eyes.



The coots eat grasses and algae from the bottoms of lakes. They are about half the size and weight of a mallard, so they are indeed small waterfowl. They nest on the ground and prefer isolated islets for protection.







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Back in July, we were camping in the Mt. Lassen Volcanic National Park at Manzanita Lake, and I saw the smallest baby American coots I have ever seen. They still had their pinfeathers, whose coloration was surprising to me: bright orange feathers ringing the bald spot atop their heads. The orange pinfeathers matched the bright orange of their beaks. They were about 1/10 the size of the adult coots. Their constant begging for food was accompanied by a waving of stubby wings and croaking calls. I attribute the late hatching to the ambient temperature being kept low by massive amounts of snow still present from last winter's storms.



Had I seen these baby coots without the parental interaction, there is probably no way I could have identified them as being coots. Their ungainliness in the water was exceeded when they got onto land: their feet are enormously long compared with their body size. Their walking reminded me of how I feel trying to walk wearing flippers. ■



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1>SEPTEMBER 2023</h1> <p>Please check our website marinvalley.net for late-breaking news and for Zoom links</p>						<p>1 7:30-9AM Taiji <i>David MacLam/Deck</i></p> <p>10-11AM Water Aerobics</p> <p>12PM Mahjong</p> <p>5PM Labor Day Dinner Deadline</p> <p>5-7PM Pub</p> <p>6:30PM Dancing <i>Meadow</i></p>
<p>3 7:30-9AM Taiji <i>David MacLam/Deck</i></p> <p>10-10:30AM Meditation <i>Zoom/ Michael Hagerty</i></p>	<p>4 6AM Trash</p> <p>10-11AM Water Aerobics</p> <p>5PM Mar Val Labor Day Dinner</p>	<p>5 7:30-9AM Taiji <i>David MacLam/Deck</i></p> <p>6PM PAC Board Meeting <i>Zoom/contact Carol-Joy Harris</i></p>	<p>6 7:30-9AM Taiji <i>David MacLam/Deck</i></p> <p>10-11AM Water Aerobics</p> <p>6PM HOL Board Meeting <i>Fireside Room</i></p> <p>6:30PM Dancing</p>	<p>7 7:30-9AM Taiji <i>David MacLam/Deck</i></p> <p>10-11AM Chair Yoga <i>Fireside Room</i></p> <p>11AM-12 PM Rollin' Root </p> <p>6-10PM Game Night <i>Ed Collins</i></p>	<p>8 7:30-9AM Taiji</p> <p>10-11AM Water Aerobics</p> <p>12PM Mahjong</p> <p>5-7PM Pub</p> <p>6:30PM Dancing Echo deadline</p>	<p>9 6:30PM Dancing <i>Meadow</i></p>
<p>10 7:30-9AM Taiji</p> <p>10-10:30AM Meditation</p>	<p>11 6AM Trash</p> <p>7:30-9AM Taiji</p> <p>10-11AM Water Aerobics</p> <p>2-3:30PM Nonviolent Communication <i>Fireside Room</i></p>	<p>12 7:30-9AM Taiji</p> <p>1:30-4PM Circle of Friends <i>Fireside Room</i></p>	<p>13 7:30-9AM Taiji</p> <p>10-11AM Water Aerobics</p> <p>11PM Ladies Bridge <i>Private, Fireside Rm</i></p> <p>6PM Mar Val Board Meeting</p> <p>6:30PM Dancing</p>	<p>14 7:30-9AM Taiji</p> <p>10-11AM Chair Yoga</p> <p>11AM-12 PM Rollin' Root </p>	<p>15 7:30-9AM Taiji</p> <p>10-11AM Water Aerobics</p> <p>12PM Mahjong</p> <p>5-7PM Pub</p> <p>6:30PM Dancing</p>	<p>16 6:30PM Dancing</p>
<p>17 7:30-9AM Taiji</p> <p>10-10:30AM Meditation Art Installation <i>Gallery CLOSED</i></p>	<p>18 6AM Trash</p> <p>7:30-9AM Taiji</p> <p>10-11AM Water Aerobics</p>	<p>19 7:30-9AM Taiji</p>	<p>20 7:30-9AM Taiji</p> <p>10-11AM Water Aerobics</p> <p>6:30PM Dancing</p>	<p>21 7:30-9AM Taiji</p> <p>10-11AM Chair Yoga</p> <p>11AM-12 PM Rollin' Root </p>	<p>22 7:30-9AM Taiji</p> <p>10-11AM Water Aerobics</p> <p>12PM Mahjong</p> <p>6:30PM Dancing</p>	<p>23 6:30PM Dancing</p>
<p>24 7:30-9AM Taiji</p> <p>10-10:30AM Meditation</p>	<p>25 6AM Trash</p> <p>7:30-9AM Taiji</p> <p>10-11AM Water Aerobics</p>	<p>26 7:30-9AM Taiji</p>	<p>27 7:30-9AM Taiji</p> <p>10-11AM Water Aerobics</p> <p>4PM Book Club <i>Carol-Joy Harris</i></p> <p>5PM Oktoberfest Dinner deadline</p> <p>6:30PM Dancing</p>	<p>28 7:30-9AM Taiji</p> <p>10-11AM Chair Yoga</p> <p>11AM-12 PM Rollin' Root </p>	<p>29 7:30-9AM Taiji</p> <p>10-11AM Water Aerobics</p> <p>12PM Mahjong</p> <p>5PM Oktoberfest Pub</p> <p>6:30PM Dancing</p>	<p>30 6:30PM Dancing</p>