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**July 2026**



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# Management Update

- The 2026–27 budget cycle begins July 1.
- Defensible space maintenance and interior common-area cutback will begin June 15.
- Tree inspections have started in preparation for this year's pruning and removals.
- The goats will return in July for 3-4 weeks to assist with perimeter defensible-space maintenance.
- Retaining wall inspections are underway. The most critical cases, particularly walls that could pose a risk of damage to resident homes or property, will be repaired or replaced first, subject to Management's \$30,000 spending cap.
- RV storage is intended for recreational vehicles that are actively being used by their owners. Long-term storage is prohibited, as it prevents other residents from accessing and enjoying this affordable storage option.
- Vehicle storage in guest parking areas is also prohibited. If you have an unused or inoperable vehicle, please remove it from guest parking to avoid possible towing.



Matt Greenberg  
GENERAL MANAGER  
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## Directory Update

### New

**Heather Riley**  
10 Fallen Leaf  
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[heatherriley707@gmail.com](mailto:heatherriley707@gmail.com)

**Wendy St. John**  
177 Marin Valley Drive  
925-895-0724  
[herebedragons@mac.com](mailto:herebedragons@mac.com)

**Dan Schuster**  
9 Fallen Leaf  
415-845-1957  
[dan@danism.org](mailto:dan@danism.org)

## CACRV Bottles and Cans

KEEP THEM COMING —  
BACK OF THE BREEZEWAY

REGISTER FOR

# ALERT MARIN

<https://marin.sircom.org/subscribe>

### Echo Deadline to Submit Articles

Email articles by the 8<sup>th</sup> of the month for the next month's issue with the subject "Echo" to Anila Manning at [anilahere99@gmail.com](mailto:anilahere99@gmail.com).

## THE ECHO 2026

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### ORGANIZATIONS AND COMMITTEES

#### PAC BOARD

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VICE PRESIDENT **Meg Jordan 415-599-5523**  
VICE PRESIDENT **Greg Smyth 512-351-5501**  
SECRETARY **Carol-Joy Harris 415-883-2824**  
TREASURER **Stephen Plocher 415-302-9043**  
AD HOC NEGOTIATING COMMITTEE

**Brad Witherspoon, John Hansen**

STANDING COMMITTEES

ACQUISITION TASK FORCE **Brad Witherspoon, Serena Fisher, Alan Gump, John Hansen**

CAPITAL PROJECTS **Brad Witherspoon, John Hansen**

COMMUNICATIONS **Serena Fisher, Chair; Carol-Joy Harris, Charlotte Weiser**

**Stephen Plocher, Chair**

FINANCE

FINANCE SUBCOMMITTEES

PRO FORMA (BUDGET MASTER-PLANNING) **David King, Chair; Trish Brady, Stephen Plocher, Greg & Sheri Smyth, Brad Witherspoon**

FINANCIAL— ASSISTANCE; LOANS; RESOURCES **Serena Fisher, John Hansen, Sue Meyer, Brad Witherspoon**

MVEST **Bill Davis, Chair; Pauline Clucas, John Feld, David Gray, John Hansen, Pam Hyer, Stephen Plocher, Erma Wheatley, Brad Witherspoon**

POLICY **Serena Fisher, Alan Gump, John Hansen**

TECH TEAM **David Gray, Chair; Steve Brandon, Peter Dyke, Ron Citroen, John Feld, Julie Manson, Timo Navsky, Erma Wheatley**

WEBSITE **Erma Wheatley, Chair; Anila Manning, David Tetta**

#### HOL BOARD

PRESIDENT **John Feld 510-495-4138**

1<sup>ST</sup> VICE PRESIDENT **Ed Collins 415-377-7696**

SECRETARY **Anne Lakota 415-713-4606**

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AT LARGE **Michale Dancer 415-519-3395**

AT LARGE **Charlotte Kells 617-306-0265**

AT LARGE **Sandy Zeichner 415-902-5143**

STANDING COMMITTEE:

PARK MARKET **Jill Boland, Chair; Lynda & Dave Baker, Ginger**

**Christie, Mary Coyne, Edgar Furlong, John Hansen,**

**Sally Harris, Susan Hoff, Meg Jordan, Anne Lakota,**

**Joan Leopold, Gary McClendon, Deb McNeil, Sue Meyer,**

**Steve & Tara Plocher, Michael Theircof, Brad Witherspoon**

#### MAR VAL BOARD

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2<sup>ND</sup> VP/RESERVATIONS **Susan Hoff 707-365-9426**

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**Carolyn Corry, Anne Glasscock, Susan Harper, Carol-Joy Harris, Susan Hoff, Janet Willet, Paul Weinberger**

# Letter to Residents

## A Message from Your PAC and MVC Boards

by **BRAD WITHERSPOON**, *President*



*New PAC Board confirming new board positions at the annual PAC meeting of 2026*

### Board Election Results

This year, three PAC Board seats were up for election. After nearly 10 years of dedicated service, John Hansen and Jay Shelfer decided not to seek re-election, allowing at least two new members to serve on the board. Carol-Joy Harris ran for re-election for the third seat. After a concerted effort was made to recruit residents to run for the board, four residents entered as candidates: Meg Jordan, Deb McNeil, Judi Purdom, and Greg Smyth. When the final votes were tabulated, residents elected Meg Jordan, Greg Smyth, and Carol-Joy Harris. During the annual PAC meeting on Saturday, June 6, new board members were formally seated and officers were chosen:

*President* — **Brad Witherspoon**

*Vice President* — **Meg Jordan**

*Vice President* — **Greg Smyth**

*Secretary* — **Carol-Joy Harris**

*Treasurer* — **Stephen Plocher**

I would like to sincerely thank Deb McNeil and Judi Purdom for their willingness to serve on the PAC Board, and we greatly appreciate their commitment to the community.

The PAC Board also thanks Election Committee Chair Mary Currie and ballot counters Charlotte Kells and Susan Hoff for their excellent work. This was our first competitive PAC Board election in years, and the process was smooth and efficient.

### PAC Board Commitment to Residents

Now that the elections are behind us, it's time for the new PAC Board to roll up our sleeves and get to work. Many residents have expressed frustration over the PAC Board's lack of meaningful updates on the progress of discussions with the City to acquire the Park.

At the June 9 PAC Board meeting, as PAC Board President, I made a commitment to improve resident communications regarding the

PAC's efforts toward transfer of the Park by the City of Novato to a nonprofit, as originally intended. During that meeting Serena Fisher, Communications Committee Chair, presented a detailed outline of recent meetings with a number of former City officials involved in the 1997 Park acquisition, who confirm the NFA's initial plan to eventually transfer the Park to a non-profit.

Treasurer Stephen Plocher informed residents about plans currently in the works to set up a 501(c)(3) to take ownership of the Park after the loan is paid off in December 2027. Further updates will follow. Once all the details are finalized with our attorney, the PAC will host workshops to answer any questions. Residents will have a chance to vote to approve the final nonprofit structure.

Beginning with the August 4 PAC Board meeting, we are hoping to reinstate a resident Q&A workshop following the conclusion of the regular session. This approach enables the board to respond to resident questions without adhering to the restrictions imposed by the Brown Act. Residents can also expect:

- Resident Updates with more pertinent details
- MVMCC monthly financials posted on the website
- Workshops to update residents on the PAC's ongoing initiatives aimed at securing ownership of the Park

We have approximately 18 months to prepare for taking ownership of the Park from the City. A great deal of work remains to be done. The PAC Board is already hard at work. We invite every resident to join us. Only by working together can we finally achieve our long-awaited goal to become a resident-owned community.





**PAC  
COMMUNICATIONS  
COMMITTEE**

by **SERENA FISHER**, *PAC Communications Committee Chair*

The Acquisition Task Force, comprised of **Serena Fisher, Alan Gump, John Hansen, and Brad Witherspoon**, has been meeting with former City Council and Novato Financing Authority officials regarding Park ownership. These officials participated in the original transaction, and all have stated that the original intent was to transfer the Park to a nonprofit organization for the benefit of the residents.

The following statement is from two-term **Novato Mayor** and longtime **City Councilmember Carole Dillon-Knutson**, who supports this position. This letter and similar communications are available on our website at <https://marinvalley.net/park-documents/>. At the top of the Park Documents page, see the first section, **PAC 2026 Negotiation Documents**.

**Statement from Carole Dillon-Knutson**

As a former two-term Mayor and Novato City Council member, I was directly involved in the original acquisition of Marin Valley Mobile Country Club from the Sade family. The City's facilitator role was to help residents preserve their unique senior community as affordable housing in perpetuity.

At the time, the City worked with the Park residents to establish a structure that would protect affordability while allowing residents to remain in their homes with dignity and security.

The arrangement through the Novato Finance Authority made it possible for the residents to purchase the Park without putting City funds at risk. It was an innovative way for the residents ultimately to control their own Park. The residents bore all the risk. If the bond holders were not paid, their only recourse was to go after the Park, not the City.

This was not simply a business transaction. It was a long-term public commitment to the seniors who call Marin Valley home. Residents accepted rent increases because they trusted the City's assurances that, once the loans were repaid, ownership of the Park would ultimately transfer to a nonprofit organization for the benefit of current and future senior residents.

That understanding was central to the agreement. Many residents made financial and personal sacrifices in reliance upon it. Today, the City is nearing the completion of what was envisioned as a 30-year commitment, and the remaining obligation is not merely legal — it is moral and civic as well.

I respectfully urge the current City Council to honor both the spirit and intent of the original arrangement by following through on the commitment to transfer the Park to a resident-focused nonprofit organization. Doing so would fulfill the promise made decades ago and ensure that Marin Valley remains an affordable, stable, and sustainable senior community for generations to come.

The City now has the opportunity to demonstrate that public commitments matter, that trust between residents and local government matters, and that long-term stewardship of affordable senior housing remains a core community value.

Carole Dillon-Knutson

Date

# Message from Mar Val

Dear Friends,

## Happy Birthday, America!

Mar Val hopes you have made your reservation to attend the July 4th celebration. Let's gather and celebrate our freedom and the joy of living in this great country.

Chef Larry will once again be cooking for Pasta Pub night on July 24. For our newcomers, Pub dinners are relaxed, casual evenings featuring a delicious meal — all for only \$12. Please see the flyer in this *Echo* and join us.

Mar Val presents 12 events per year in addition to 52 Pubs. As you can easily imagine, this requires many folks volunteering in a variety of areas. Our wonderful volunteers plan, shop, cook, serve, decorate the room, take reservations, set up and take down tables and chairs, prepare drinks, sell tickets, make popcorn, greet new residents, maintain the library, and pay our bills and taxes — all while having a good time.

We work hard, but we also enjoy ourselves and each other's company. We would love for you to join us. Volunteers are the heart and soul of Mar Val, and we welcome your event ideas and suggestions.

Looking forward to seeing you soon.



*Mar Val presents*

## **Independence Day**

**Saturday, July 4**

5 pm Cocktails 6 pm Dinner

**Music by Brynda Foster**

**Try Our Margaritas**

### Menu

Pulled Pork Sandwich *or* Egg Salad Sandwich

Green Salad

Macaroni Salad

Chef's Surprise Dessert

\$17 per person. Make checks payable to Mar Val.

*Deadline for reservations: Wednesday, July 1, by 5 pm  
(or when 120 reservations have been received)*

*For questions, call Susan Hoff @ 707-365-9426*

# Mar Val's PASTA PUB NIGHT



**Friday, July 24**

Pub 5 pm    Dinner 5:30

**Larry's World-Famous Pasta Sauces  
(Your choice of Pesto or Meat)**

**Salad**

**Garlic Bread**

**\$12 per person. Make check payable to Mar Val.**

**Reservation deadline – July 21 by 5 pm**

**(or when 120 reservations have been received)**

**For questions, call Susan Hoff @ 707-365-9426.**

# Home Owners **HOL** League Message

Hello, Neighbors!

Here are a few important reminders and upcoming HOL events from around our beautiful Marin Valley community.



## Keeping Our Pool Open & Safe

We love seeing everyone enjoying the swimming pool, but we need a quick community team effort regarding the pool gate.

By California state law, pool gates must remain closed and are designed to be self-latching for a vital reason: child safety. We don't have many children wandering around the pool, but "not many" does not mean there are none. Pool safety organizations estimate that each year up to 5,000 family pets drown in backyard swimming pools nationwide. Leaving a pool gate propped open — even for just a moment — presents a serious safety hazard and carries significant legal liability. Moreover, if a county inspector visits and finds the gate propped open, they have the authority to shut down our pool immediately, potentially for the entire season.

We do have safety cameras in the pool area. To help keep the pool safe, compliant, and open for everyone to enjoy all summer long, please make sure the gate clicks securely shut behind you each time you enter or leave. Thank you for helping protect our neighbors and our amenities.

**If you notice the pool gate open — CLOSE IT.**

## CA CRV

### Park Market Recycling Program

Our Park Market bottle and can recycling program continues to grow, and the results have been wonderful. Thanks to the participation and generosity of our residents, we have donated more than \$550 to ExtraFood over the past few months. ExtraFood is the organization that supplies food to our Park Market four days each week, so this is a meaningful way for us to give back.

A special thank you goes to **Jill Boland** and **Janet Shouldis**, who spend considerable time sorting returnable bottles and crushing cans collected in the breezeway.

Please remember that only containers marked **CA CRV**, **CA Cash Refund**, **California Redemption Value**, or similar wording are eligible for redemption. Bottles and cans from outside California are often nonreturnable. Plastic containers from the Park Market and elsewhere should be placed in your household recycling bin rather than brought to the breezeway.

We ask that residents bring only eligible, properly labeled bottles and cans to the collection area. Batteries and light bulbs may also be recycled there. By taking a moment to sort items carefully, we can save our volunteers many hours of extra work each week.

Thank you for helping to keep this program successful and sustainable.



### Marin Valley Car Trunk Sale

Have items you'd like to sell but don't want the hassle of hosting a garage sale or inviting strangers to your home? Join us for Marin Valley's **Car Trunk Sale: Saturday, July 25, 1-4 pm**

Simply load your items into your car trunk, back into a designated parking space near the clubhouse, open your trunk, and let neighbors browse from the sidewalk. It's a simple, convenient, and social way to buy and sell within our community.

Have larger items that won't fit in your vehicle? Bring photographs and information so interested buyers can learn more and contact you.

There is a sign-up sheet on the clubhouse counter for anyone interested in participating as a seller. Knowing the number of participants will help us plan the space accordingly.

We hope this will become a fun and popular community event. See page 10.

## Calling All Bird Lovers

Bird-watching has become a favorite pastime for many Marin Valley residents. Our community is home to an impressive variety of birds, and with the addition of owl boxes, we continue working to make Marin Valley even more welcoming to our feathered visitors.

Following the recent owl presentation — which gave us an up-close look at one of nature's most magnificent birds — we are creating a special birding section in the library.

Some books will be reserved as references in the library, while others may be checked out just like our regular collection.

We're seeking donations of bird-related books that you no longer need. Whether they are field guides, photography books, stories, or works about bird behavior and conservation, your contributions can help build a wonderful resource for the entire community.

Together, we can make Marin Valley an even more informed and enthusiastic birding community.

Stay active, stay connected, use the gym, look out for one another, and we'll see you around the Park!



### What a Day!

### Celebrating the 2026 Health & Wellness Fair

A huge, heartfelt thank you to everyone who came out to make our second Health and Wellness Fair such an incredible success! The clubhouse was buzzing with positive energy, great conversations, and plenty of delicious food to keep us fueled.

It was wonderful to see so many residents taking proactive steps toward health and vitality.

Whether you melted away stress with a blissful chair massage from Jane Darco, discovered fascinating insights into your own personality with Meg Jordan, practiced senior balance and movement with Will and Susi Banuelos of Silver Dagon Wellness, or committed to longevity by signing up for Jay Shelfer's upcoming Nei Gung classes — the day was packed with inspiration!



## A Massive Thank You to Our HOL Team

An event of this scale doesn't just happen. A round of applause goes out to the entire HOL Board and our dedicated community volunteers. For all the ideas and assistance in pulling everyone together, the early-morning room setup, preparing the wonderful food spread, and handling the final cleanup, this team worked tirelessly behind the scenes. We are incredibly lucky to have such a marvelous, hardworking crew in our corner!

Our local guest presenters brought a wealth of world-class expertise right to our doorstep. If you missed a table, lost a business card, or are ready to take the next step in your personal healthcare journey, here is the complete contact list for our fair participants:

**Acupuncturist, chiropractor, and Chinese herbalist** — Dr. Ken Kowaleski, 916-384-8450, [chiropalm@yahoo.com](mailto:chiropalm@yahoo.com)

**\*Chair Yoga** — Laura Schepps, [lauradora2003@yahoo.com](mailto:lauradora2003@yahoo.com)

**Chiropractor** — Dr. Laura Sheehan, 415-681-1031, [sheehanchiropractic@gmail.com](mailto:sheehanchiropractic@gmail.com)

**Functional Nutrition** — Joey Anderson, 415-999-3539, [Joey@nutrientdenselife.com](mailto:Joey@nutrientdenselife.com)

**Hypnotherapy for Pain and Anxiety** — Mahesh Grossman, 510-813-8004, [maheshgrossman@gmail.com](mailto:maheshgrossman@gmail.com)

**\*Massage** — Jane Darco, 415-215-9447, [sevanti@sbcglobal.net](mailto:sevanti@sbcglobal.net)

**\*Nei Gung** — Jay Shelfer, 415-250-0375, [jshelfer@yahoo.com](mailto:jshelfer@yahoo.com)

**\*Personality Typing and Health Motivation** — Meg Jordan, PhD, RN 415-599-5523, [megjordan21@me.com](mailto:megjordan21@me.com)

**\*Silver Dragon Wellness (Kenpo Karate)** — Will and Susi Banuelos, 415-471-7707, [masaun991@gmail.com](mailto:masaun991@gmail.com)

**\*Strength training and mobility** — Nan Watanabe, [nanwatanabe@gmail.com](mailto:nanwatanabe@gmail.com)

**Tarot** — Ben Grandis, 412-310-2876, [grandis@gmail.com](mailto:grandis@gmail.com)

*\* Provide classes and services at Marin Valley.*

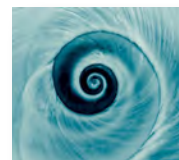
### More Classes — 2nd Silver Dragon Wellness Class Starts June 17



Will and Susi Banuelos will hold a second **Silver Dragon Wellness** class in the Bamboo Room every other Wednesday starting on June 17 in addition to their regular Sunday class.

### — Nei Gung Class Starts June 22

Jay Shelfer will offer **Nei Gung** classes every Monday and Wednesday starting Monday, June 22, from 5:30 to 6:30 pm in the ballroom. See p. 11. ■



# Help Wanted

by **RAY SCHNEIDER**



**J**ust-1-Hour has a really good volunteer handyman — but only one. Many requests, however, are for household repairs and odd jobs, so J1H would love to have at least one more handyperson.

If you like doing odd jobs — unclogging a drain, installing a smoke alarm, turning off the water, replacing a light bulb, and the like — please let me know. I will gladly add you to the roster of special people in the Park who help their neighbors do things they are no longer able to do themselves. ■

**Ray Schneider**  
415-883-4182  
[ray@delannaray.com](mailto:ray@delannaray.com)



# Summer Pool Update

by **ED COLLINS, SERENA FISHER, and ALAN GUMP**

It's summer, and the pool is beckoning! This is a reminder of some important pool rules and guidelines as we head into the high season.



- **KEEP THE GATE CLOSED AND LATCHED AT ALL TIMES!** This is a health and safety requirement by law. Observing this one rule can save lives.
- **Guests** must be accompanied by an MVMCC resident at all times.
- Please take a **soap shower** immediately before entering the pool or spa. Children, too!
- **Children** under the age of 18, when accompanied by a resident, are welcome in the pool every day 11 am to 2 pm.
- Please **return** all pool toys, noodles, life jackets, etc., to the storage bin when you leave the pool area.
- Please keep all **pets** outside the pool gate (required by law).
- The switch for the **spa jets** is on the wall to the right of the gate as you leave. If you are the last person leaving the spa, please turn the dial counterclockwise all the way to turn it off. If you accidentally push the Emergency Shutoff button above the bubbles switch, pull it out to restart the spa heating.
- If you use **sunscreen**, please wait 20 minutes after application before entering the water.
- For barrels of fun, try setting your watch by the pool clock.

Have a great summer! ■

## Echo Distributor Needed

One or two volunteers are needed for a once-a-month *Echo* delivery. Contact Janie Klimes at [janieklimes1948@gmail.com](mailto:janieklimes1948@gmail.com) or 281-414-3984.

## Marin Valley Resident Input/Maintenance Request

To the right is a copy of the Resident Input/Maintenance Request form found in the slots next to Matt's desk in the clubhouse. Fill one in, and either hand it to one of the HOL Board members or put it into an envelope and place it in the appropriate slot. Ideally, let me know it is there. Thank you.

Stay active, stay connected, take care of each other, and we'll see you around the Park!

  
**John Feld**  
**HOL PRESIDENT**  
[johnmfeld@gmail.com](mailto:johnmfeld@gmail.com)  
510-495-4138



**HOL**  
**HOME OWNERS LEAGUE**

### MARIN VALLEY RESIDENT INPUT/MAINTENANCE REQUEST

This form is for residents who believe their input may assist the on-site management staff and others in our efforts to maintain a harmonious community atmosphere and preserve the quiet quality of life enjoyed by Marin Valley residents. Please sign below — anonymous submissions cannot be acted upon. A response will be provided no later than 10 working days from receipt. If this matter concerns a complaint about another resident, it will be handled with the appropriate degree of confidentiality.

DESCRIPTION of the situation in sufficient detail (dates, times, etc.): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ (Please Print)      Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ (Please Print)      Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

ACTION TAKEN: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

RESOLVED as of: \_\_\_\_\_ (Date)

Copy to resident: \_\_\_\_\_ (Date)



# Car Trunk Sale

by **KAMALA ALLEN**

**Saturday, July 25 • 1-4 pm • Clubhouse Left Parking Lot**

**D**o you have personal, decorative, or household treasures you just can't bring yourself to give away? Now is your chance to sell them at the first-ever Marin Valley Car Trunk Sale (inspired by "Car Boot Sales" popular in the UK).

On the day of the sale, load up your trunk with your sale items and back your car into the parking spaces downhill from the clubhouse that will be marked off by traffic cones. Open your trunk, and start selling! For large items such as furniture and TVs, you can display a photograph of the item with a price and phone number.

## Possible Sale Items

Books, puzzles and games, CDs and DVDs, clothing, rugs, cushions, duvet covers and throws, mirrors, crockery and glassware, artwork and wall art, new or almost-new toiletries and cosmetics, costume jewelry, holiday decorations, electronics and gadgets, computers and computer accessories, kitchen items, garden equipment, furniture ... and whatever else you like!

## How to Do It

- Price your items in advance, if possible, with sticky notes or stickers. Use whole-dollar amounts only, to make it easier for everyone.
- Prepare change in cash with \$1, \$5, and \$10 bills.
- Bring a money bag or fanny pack to hold your cash.
- Bring a pen, pad, sticky notes, and a folding chair.
- Bring snacks, water, sunscreen, and hat.
- Pack any utility tables last, so they'll be the first to take out.
- Smaller items can be priced as a group— e.g., "4 for \$1."
- Provide bags if possible.
- Provide price as well as size for clothes, bedding, or rugs.
- Bring a full-length mirror if needed.
- Take any leftover items and trash home with you after the sale.

Come a little early to set up. Selling starts at 1 pm. Just like at a garage sale, you can negotiate. Have fun meeting your neighbors while you make some cash and pass along your treasures. Ice cream and cold drinks will be provided in the breezeway by HOL.

For further information: Kamala Allen 415-306-6865. ■

# First Friday All-Instrumental Music Jam

## *Neighbors Enjoying Playing Music Together*

by **JEANNE SKYBROOK**

**FIRST Fridays • 7 pm after Pub Fireside Room**

**W**e had a great first jam, with lots of singers and joy! You do not have to be a musician — or even a singer — to join us; this jam is for everyone. Come to Pub and then move over to the Fireside Room. Even if you don't join in musically, you can participate with your presence and just enjoy the music.



I would really like to play from *The Daily Ukulele* songbook — the yellow one, available from [fleamarketmusic.com](http://fleamarketmusic.com) — but until enough folks have the book, I will make copies of the music to hand out. The book includes the melody in treble clef, chords above, and lyrics below, so it works well for everyone.

If there is a particular song you'd like to play, let me know in advance. Or you can bring 15 or so copies of a favorite song to share.

Reminder: This jam is open to all musical instruments — the more variety, the more fun!

You can contact me at 415-302-3010 or [jm.skybrook@gmail.com](mailto:jm.skybrook@gmail.com) ■



THE ART AND SCIENCE OF LIVING WELL

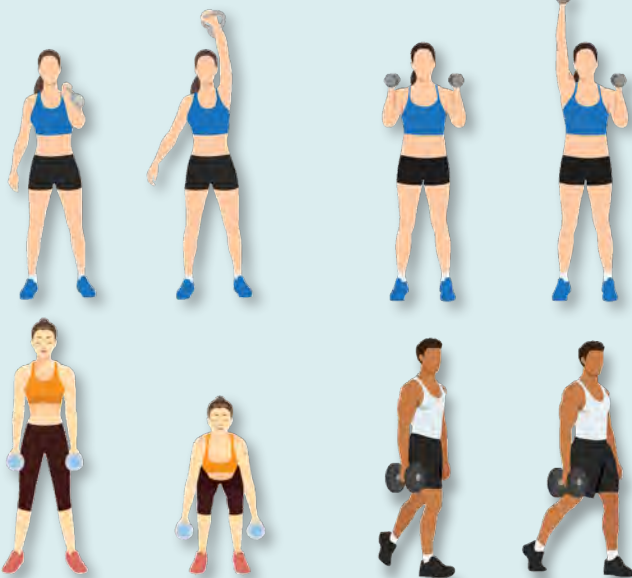
# Reducing Joint Inflammation and Improving Mobility with Dumbbells or Kettlebells

by **NAN WATANABE**

**D**umbbells and kettlebells are simple tools that can help build strength and reduce inflammation. Studies show that older adults who used them twice weekly improved muscle mass and joint mobility.

Tips to get started as you consider joining Marin Valley Strength Training sessions Sundays at noon:

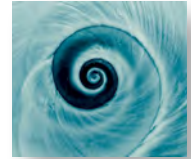
- Begin with a light kettlebell or dumbbell (5–10 lbs.)
- Try kettlebell or dumbbell deadlifts, suitcase carries, and overhead presses
- Move slowly and focus on posture to protect joints. ■



Source: Jay, K et al. 2011. "Kettlebell Training for Musculoskeletal and Cardiovascular Health: A Randomized Controlled Trial." *Scandinavian Journal of Work, Environment & Health*, 37(3):196–203. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/21107513/>

# Nei Gung: The Underpinning of All Energy Systems

by **JAY SHELFER**



**Mondays & Wednesdays**  
**5:30–6:30 pm • Ballroom**

**STARTS WEDNESDAY, JUNE 22**

**A** systematic approach to enhance and maintain health will help prevent physical wilting as you age by rebuilding your body's ability to articulate movement through increased strength and elasticity. Proper practice enhances metabolism and recirculates energy, fluids (blood, lymph), and the materials between organs.

Our bodies run on energy. The free circulation of energy is what the Chinese have been contemplating and using in their healing, sports, and martial arts for over a thousand years.

It is achievable/developable by combining breath work, specific posturing, mindful movement, and the release of tension.

The internal aspects of all martial arts utilize Nei Gung. One can practice it through specific gestures and with forms such as Tai Chi and Chi Kung. The repetitive actions of forms and movements — important in their own right — are distinct from the life-enhancing and health-restoring benefits of Nei Gung.

Classes will be offered on June 22 and 24 from 5:30 to 6:30 pm in the ballroom and every Monday and Wednesday thereafter.

Preregistration is required — \$10 per class; no drop-ins. If you are interested, contact Jay at [jjshelfer@yahoo.com](mailto:jjshelfer@yahoo.com). ■

# Make Your Own Yard a Bird Oasis: The Power of a Bird Bath

by **JOHN FELD**



**T**here is a growing trend away from using bird feeders in gardens, since birds can be messy eaters and spilled seed often attracts rodents, especially at night. We are not suggesting you stop feeding birds, but consider using suet or open-weave bags filled with nuts and seeds. Even better, add a bird bath — one of the best ways to attract a wide variety of birds to your garden.

Adding a bird bath is a quick way to invite birds to your home. While many species skip seed feeders because they prefer insects or nuts, almost all birds will visit for a refreshing drink or quick dip.

## **Why Water Matters**

Birds lose moisture quickly and need to drink constantly, especially during our hot California summers.

Bathing helps remove dust and parasites and allows birds to “preen,” which oils their feathers for better insulation and flight.

Since birds don’t sweat, a cool bath is one of their best ways to regulate body temperature.

A clean water source can also support beneficial garden insects, butterflies, and local amphibians.

## **Location Is Everything**

You don’t need to purchase a commercial bird bath. Any shallow container that is elevated off the ground and large enough for several birds to use at once can work. Larger birds may still scare away smaller ones, but that’s nature.

Place the bath near shrubs or trees in a shady spot to reduce evaporation. If full shade isn’t possible, make sure the bath is shaded during the hottest part of the afternoon. Nearby shrubs also provide a place for birds to avoid or hide from predators. Keeping the bath elevated gives birds a better vantage point while they drink and bathe. And don’t forget to place it where you can easily see the action from your favorite window!

## **Design Tips for Happy Birds**

Keep the water shallow — most songbirds prefer water only 1 to 2 inches deep.

If your bath is deeper, add a few flat rocks so birds have safe landing spots while they splash and drink.

Gentle movement from a small solar-powered fountain or dripper makes the bath easier for birds to locate. The sound of moving water acts like a neon sign for passing birds.

Keep an eye on the weather. During hot spells, the water can disappear quickly — partially from birds splashing around to keep cool and partially from evaporation. In freezing weather, make sure ice does not form in your bird bath. Your regular visitors will appreciate it.

If you find a frog in your bird bath, encourage it to move along. Large frogs may prey on small birds, while smaller frogs can attract larger predators such as egrets, herons, hawks, and crows, which can quickly make quite a mess of your bath.

## Bird Safety

One challenge is providing water for our feathered friends without encouraging mosquito larvae in standing water. Fortunately, there are several safe and effective solutions:

- Change the water at least every two days, or daily if possible
- A vigorous fountain can discourage mosquitoes from laying eggs
- A “Water Wiggler” available online, although rather large and not inexpensive, creates small ripples that prevent larvae from developing.



- Products containing *Bacillus thuringiensis* or *Bacillus sphaericus* are safe for birds and pets but lethal to mosquito larvae. These are sold as Mosquito Dunks tablets or in liquid form at nurseries, bird-food stores, and online retailers.
- If using Mosquito Dunks, break the tablets into small pieces and place them in a mesh bag to prevent bits from clogging up pumps or fountains.



## Keeping It Clean

A little upkeep goes a long way in keeping birds healthy. Scrub the bath with a stiff brush and refresh the water at least once a week.

The copper secret: dropping a few copper pennies minted before 1982 (for higher copper content) into the water can help inhibit algae and bacterial growth. Copper acts as a natural biocide, keeping the water clearer for longer — although regular cleaning is still important.

## Birds You May See

Some likely visitors to your water station include:

**Anna's Hummingbird**

**Bewick's Wren**

**Bullock's Oriole**

**Bushtit**

**California Scrub Jay Sparrow**

**California Towhee**

**Dark-eyed Junco**

**Hooded Oriole**

**House Finch**

**Lesser Goldfinch**

**Mourning Dove**

**Oak Titmouse**

**Red-winged Blackbird**

**Western Bluebird**

Most of these are common in our area. You probably will not see Mallards, Red-shouldered Hawks, Turkey Vultures, or Wild Turkeys — but anything is possible.

During migration seasons, you may be surprised by who else stops by your bird bath. ■

# Active While Aging: The Many Benefits of Walking

by **TENAYA ASAN**



**W**hen I first moved to Marin Valley from Oakland, one of the things I loved most was being able to walk anytime, day or night, and feel safe. In fact, the only reason I have seen the rings of Saturn and the moons of Jupiter is because of an evening walk in our Park. Usually, the Park was quiet during a 9 pm walk, but one night I noticed a group of neighbors gathered outside talking. As I got closer, I noticed a telescope in the center of their circle. How could I not go up to them and ask what they were looking at? To my delight, they shared a special moment in the sky and let me peer into their telescope to see the wonders of those faraway planets.

Walking offers amazing health benefits — physical, mental, and social — which many people in our Park take advantage of. Before sharing a little about some of those walkers, I would like to suggest a few ways to get started — and address one deterrent I often hear from people wanting to begin: the hills!

## Getting Started

- 1. Start slow** — Begin with 10 minutes a couple of times a week and build up gradually. You will see that your strength builds in less time than you think. The CDC recommends 30 minutes a day, five days a week to gain the full health benefits, but even 10 minutes a day can help. A little goes a long way, and it's never too late to start.
- 2. Use aids** — A cane, walking sticks, or a large wheel walker (the type with brakes and a seat) are great ways to maintain balance while walking. Walking sticks also engage the arms, helping build upper-body strength as well as leg strength.
- 3. Hills** — Find a flat place to start, even if you need to drive there. Use walking sticks as you gradually build strength, starting with smaller hills before tackling the bigger ones. Alternatively, you could start on a treadmill in the gym. If you need help learning how to use it, contact Janie Klimes or Tenaya Asan.
- 4. Get support and encouragement** — Walking with neighbors and friends makes exercise more enjoyable. When you are greeting friends and chatting, you may even forget you are climbing a hill!
- 5. Get a dog!** — Certainly you have noticed all the dog walkers in the Park, trailing behind their four-legged friends, who never seem bothered by hills.

## Some Walking Neighbors

I delight in seeing my neighbors when I am out on a walk. Perhaps in another article, I will interview more of them. For now, here are a few folks I have met on the streets this spring.

**Charlotte Kells** is a longtime walker, and even shoulder surgery hasn't deterred her. The first time I met her, she greeted me with a big smile, one hand gripping a walking stick, the other in a sling. Charlotte walks every day, sometimes in the Park and sometimes at local spots like Indian Valley Preserve. She often uses walking as a way to connect with friends — a great way to support others to stay active. When she isn't chatting with friends, she is listening to the critters, like the spring frogs, and watching for other creatures. She even spotted a rattlesnake once (not in the Park!).

Her answer to why she walks: *It feels wonderful to move, to be in nature, to experience the world outside my little space. It helps me to think and reflect, see others, and be a part of the world! The health benefits are the frosting on the cake!*

In contrast to many people, **Sheri Smyth** loves our Park hills and sometimes walks up and down them a couple times, perhaps simply to enjoy the views. She walks four or five times a week. The first time I met her, I was impressed by her stride and pace as she climbed the hill to the clubhouse. A longtime runner, walking and short jogs are now her exercise of choice.

*It helps me clear my head, carve out time for myself, and maintain my overall health, she says. The beauty surrounding us and hooking up with friends are also big pluses for Sheri. What I value most are the people I meet. I've lived in this community for less than two years, and I feel incredibly grateful to be surrounded by such friendly and caring residents.*

Like Sheri, **Melanie Burnett** enjoys the challenge of hills — ah, the young ones in our crowd! She especially likes the hills in Pacheco Valley across the freeway. During her walks in the Park, she enjoys smelling the spring roses and wondering what other plants and flowers might pop up next week. You might even see her urging me to walk in reverse up Marin View Drive, taking in the

incredible views while strengthening our knees with the practice of backward walking.

**Tara Plocher** is a familiar face at the clubhouse, and I have noticed she always arrives on two feet, not four wheels. In fact, she confirmed that the only time she uses the car is to travel outside the Park. She faces a fair climb from her house in the flats, making the trek to the clubhouse or around the Park three to five times a day. She also uses the gym treadmill for 30-minute jogs.

What does she like about walking? *I find walking to be calming and magical. I look at all the trees, flowers, and animals and birds. I look at the sky a lot, at different times of the day. The tree, sky, and plants are always changing. I say hi to people and often talk for a few minutes with them. I like to find out interesting things about people and things we have in common.*



## Benefits of Walking for Older Adults

You have now heard about some of the mental and emotional benefits derived from a walking routine. Science also shows important physical benefits, including improved cardiovascular health, strength, flexibility, balance, weight management, sleep, digestion (especially with a short walk after meals), and immune health. Research has also linked regular walking to reduced rates of type 2 diabetes and some cancers, including breast cancer.

And if all this still isn't inspiration enough, I highly recommend this short 10-minute YouTube video: "10 Benefits of Walking for Senior Older Adults in Old Age" <https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=WYow6wyy3DM&ra=m>

The other day, I spoke with a friend in West Marin who lost her beloved husband to cancer two years ago. They were very close, and she still grieves the loss. She told me she walks twice a day and that the rhythm of her steps soothes her.

Her take on walking: *It brings us closer to what matters most in life, and, our aging bodies crave movement.* I agree. Walking is a simple and enjoyable way to accomplish that.

Contact me if you would like help getting started or would like to try using walking sticks. ■

# Full Moon of July 2026

by **KATHRYN McMUDIE**

**J**uly's full moon, known as the Full Buck Moon, will occur on Wednesday, July 29. Peak illumination will happen at 7:36 am PDT (10:36 EDT).

Since the moon reaches peak illumination during daylight hours on the West Coast, it won't be visible at the exact moment. Instead, look toward the southeast horizon just after sunset on Wednesday evening to see it rising in its full glory.

This moon's traditional Native American name refers to the time of year when male deer (bucks) are actively growing and shedding the velvet from their antlers.

Depending on the Indigenous tribe and cultural tradition, the full moon was also known as the Berry Moon (Anishinaabe), Thunder Moon (Western Abenaki), Feather Moulting Moon (Cree), and Salmon Moon (a Tlingit term referring to the time when salmon returned to the area and were ready to be harvested).

Last Quarter July 7

New Moon July 14

First Quarter July 21

Full Moon July 29

This full moon will be positioned in the constellation Capricornus. ■



# Ode to My Body

by **LORNA SASS**



**W**hen I stepped off the scale recently, I felt annoyed about having gained a pound, even though I had eaten relatively little the day before. *How is this possible?* I asked myself. Then I felt downright angry at my body for gaining ten pounds over the last year for no apparent reason.

Then, in the midst of this cloud of negativity, I had a sudden moment of goddess brilliance: *Wait a minute*, I thought. *You've made it to 80, and have you ever had a kind word to say to your body?* The answer was a resounding NO.

Like most women, even when I was 25 pounds lighter and truly slim by anyone's standards, I still felt like I could lose a few. How could it be otherwise when I was encouraged to wear a girdle in my early teens lest my belly protrude an inch?

Women throughout the centuries have been trained to hate our bodies and do all sorts of nasty things to make them conform to the current notion of beauty — think of bound feet that cripple, high heels that injure the back, genital mutilation that causes pain and denies pleasure, and bras that constrict blood flow and may even contribute to breast cancer. One of my earliest memories is pulling the strings of my sweet grandmother's corset so tight that she could barely breathe. Many women I know won't swim in public because they are ashamed of how they look in a bathing suit, and one of my friends stopped wearing short sleeves in the sweltering heat because she hated the wrinkles on her arms.

Dear Body, I owe you a BIG apology for treating you more like an enemy than a well-intentioned companion, and for cracking the whip all too often instead of giving you time off for fun, pleasure, and joy.

I was brought up to treat you badly, and I didn't know any better until this moment. You have gotten me through 80 years of stress, deadlines, prescription medicines that sometimes did more harm than good, and more cookies, chocolate, and ice cream than I care to remember.

Please accept my humble apology and my much-overdue list of gratitudes:

Thank you, body, for allowing me to keep all my parts for these eight decades.  
Thank you, brain, for helping me make sense of life and for earning me a PhD from Columbia.

Thank you, neck, for inviting me to see around the corner.

Thank you, eyes, for reminding me of the beauty all around.

Thank you, nose, for inviting in the rich scents of food and nature.

Thank you, heart, for pumping without my asking.

Thank you, lungs, for receiving about twenty thousand breaths a day and some six hundred million breaths in my lifetime.

Thank you, feet, for walking me around exotic corners of the Earth and up and down a steep hill every day.

Thank you, hands, for doing the washing and cooking, and for stroking the comforting fur of my beloved cats.

Thank you, ears, for inviting me to tap my toes to the joy of jazz.

Thank you, bones, for keeping me standing.

Thank you, tummy, for digesting food and life.

Thank you, lips, for knowing how to smile.

Thank you, immune system, for keeping Lyme at bay after several tick bites.

Thank you, vagus nerve, for keeping all my vital parts in communication with each other.

And a very special thank you, body, for being open to accepting my apology and loyal friendship after all these years of harsh criticism.

I love you, and I am grateful to you for giving my soul a home on this journey called life. ■

# Spotted Towhee

Text and Photography

by

**DAVID GRAY**

**A**nother local bird!

We went hiking in early June to the Buck Gulch Trail, hoping to see the last bit of flow of water over the falls. It's a relatively short hike, 1.3 miles out to the falls and back, with a small elevation gain/loss of 100 feet. We lucked out on the falls, which were still flowing slightly and dripping over moss and ferns. I only took one lens with me, a long supertelephoto, and so I tried my best to capture the movement of the water as it filtered through some of the moss.



*Spotted towhee singing*



Along the way, I heard and saw a lot of different songbirds, but the spotted towhee (*Pipilo maculatus*) stood out. There were acting very territorial, chasing away lesser goldfinches and others. The males were also vocalizing a lot, as seen above.

*Buck Gulch Falls detail*

Spotted towhees are about the same size as robins, but towhees have a broad white band of feathers across the breast and belly, flanked with bright orange feathers. They sport a black head and neck, a short black sparrow-like beak, and a brilliant red eye. Their black wings are adorned with white spots, the species' namesake. They have a long tail of black feathers, with white spots on the underside near the end. The females have brown rather than the black feathers that the males have for better camouflage.

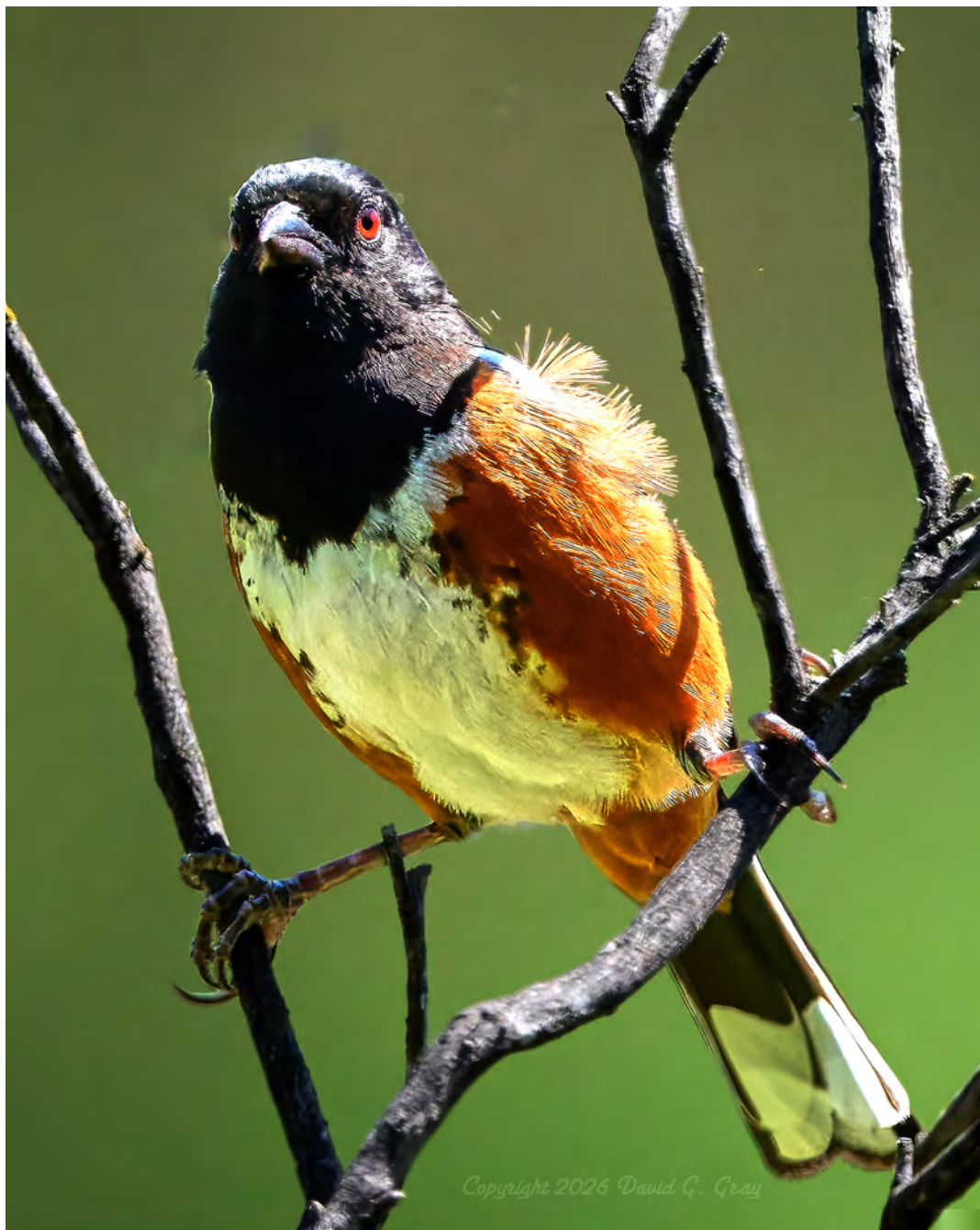
The spotted towhee is a year-round western bird, ranging from British Columbia down to Baja, and eastward as far as Manitoba and into Central America.

The spotted towhee usually nest on the ground, doing a fine job of camouflaging. The females take responsibility for building the nest and laying a clutch of two to six eggs — up to three broods per mating season.


Their breeding area spans nine states (all of Montana, most of Wyoming, eastern Washington, northeastern Idaho, parts of Utah, Colorado, and South and North Dakota) and the southern part of the three Western Canadian provinces (British Columbia, Alberta, and Manitoba).

They are not at all threatened and are fairly abundant.

Enjoy your summer, and happy Fourth of July! ■



*Spotted towhee sitting splayed*

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<h1 style="color: red; text-align: center;">July 2026</h1>			<b>1</b> 7:30-9 Taiji Deck/ <i>David MacLam</i> 10-11 Water Aerobics <b>5</b> July 4 Dinner reservation deadline 5:30-6:30 Nei Gung <i>Ballroom/Jay Shelfer</i> 6-7 Silver Dragon Wellness <i>Bamboo Room/            Will &amp; Susi Banuelos</i>	<b>2</b> 7:30-9 Taiji 12-1 Rollin' Root 4:30 HOL Board Meeting <i>Fireside            Room</i>	<b>3</b> 7:30-9 Taiji 10-11 Water Aerobics 12 Mahjong <i>Private,            Fireside            Room</i> 5-7 Pub <b>7</b> Music Jam <i>Fireside            Room</i>	<b>4</b> INDEPENDENCE DAY  <b>5</b> Mar Val 4 <sup>th</sup> of July Dinner <i>Ballroom</i> 6:30 Dancing <i>Meadow</i>
			<b>5</b> 7:30-9 Taiji 12-1 Group Strength Training <i>Bamboo Rm.            Nan Watanabe</i> 3-4 Silver Dragon Wellness	<b>6</b> 6 Trash 7:30-9 Taiji 10-11 Water Aerobics <b>5:30-6:30</b> Nei Gung <i>Ballroom/            Jay Shelfer</i>	<b>7</b> 7:30-9 Taiji 11-12 Chair Yoga <i>Ballroom</i> 2-3 Craft & Chat <i>Library</i> 5 PAC Bd. Meeting <i>Ballroom/            Zoom</i>	<b>8</b> 7:30-9 Taiji 10-11 Water Aerobics 5 Mar Val Board Meeting <i>Fireside Room</i> 5:30-6:30 Nei Gung <b>ECHO DEADLINE</b>
<b>12</b> 7:30-9 Taiji 12-1 Group Strength Training 3-4 Silver Dragon Wellness	<b>13</b> 6 Trash 7:30-9 Taiji 10-11 Water Aerobics 5:30-6:30 Nei Gung	<b>14</b> 7:30-9 Taiji 11-12 Chair Yoga 2-3 Craft & Chat	<b>15</b> 7:30-9 Taiji 10-11 Water Aerobics 2:30-3:30 Ladies Bridge <i>Private, Fireside Rm.</i> 5:30-6:30 Nei Gung <b>6-7 Silver Dragon            Wellness</b>	<b>16</b> 7:30-9 Taiji 12-1 Rollin' Root	<b>17</b> 7:30-9 Taiji 10-11 Water Aerobics 12 Mahjong 5-7 Pub	<b>18</b> 6:30 Dancing
<b>19</b> 7:30-9 Taiji 12-1 Group Strength Training 3-4 Silver Dragon Wellness	<b>20</b> 6 Trash 7:30-9 Taiji 10-11 Water Aerobics 5:30-6:30 Nei Gung	<b>21</b> 7:30-9 Taiji 11-12 Chair Yoga 2-3 Craft & Chat 5 MVC Board Meeting <i>Zoom</i> <b>5</b> Pasta Pub reservation deadline	<b>22</b> 7:30-9 Taiji 10-11 Water Aerobics 5:30-6:30 Nei Gung	<b>23</b> 7:30-9 Taiji 12-1 Rollin' Root	<b>24</b> 7:30-9 Taiji 10-11 Water Aerobics 12 Mahjong <b>5-7 Pasta Pub</b>	<b>25</b>  <b>1-4 Car Trunk            Sale</b> <i>Clubhouse            Parking            Lot</i> 6:30 Dancing
<b>26</b> 7:30-9 Taiji 12-1 Group Strength Training 3-4 Silver Dragon Wellness	<b>27</b> 6 Trash 7:30-9 Taiji 10-11 Water Aerobics 5:30-6:30 Nei Gung	<b>28</b> 7:30-9 Taiji 11-12 Chair Yoga 2-3 Craft & Chat	<b>29</b> 7:30-9 Taiji 10-11 Water Aerobics 4 Book Club <i>Carol-Joy Harris</i> 5:30-6:30 Nei Gung 6-7 Silver Dragon Wellness	<b>30</b> 7:30-9 Taiji 12-1 Rollin' Root	<b>31</b> 7:30-9 Taiji 10-11 Water Aerobics 12 Mahjong 5-7 Pub	