

APRIL 2021 Newsletter

Every day, our members come together to provide support services and create new possibilities for what's next as we age. When we unite as peers, we create a purposeful space for learning, laughter, and courage as we take on the future.

Village Network membership offers online wellness programs, interest groups, educational and social events, as well as volunteer services including grocery shopping, prescription pickups, phone friends, computer help, and personalized referrals to community resources. When it is safe, we hope to gradually begin offering in-person programs, driving, MedPals, and in-person friendly visits, and minor home repairs again.



Click [here](#) to view the new video on the Village Movement on our homepage!

Village News



While mask and social distancing requirements do loosen up for those folks who are two weeks past their final COVID-19 vaccine shot, there still are precautions to follow to protect those around you. AARP summarizes the new guidelines from the CDC for those who are fully vaccinated: ["Fully Vaccinated? What the CDC Says You Should and Shouldn't Do Now"](#)

We are delighted to welcome Lynn Stanton as our new part-time Administrative Coordinator. Her long career as a staff member and volunteer includes work at SHARE Sonoma County, COTS, and Spirit Rock. Lynn has a wealth of experience to bring to this position, as well as a deep love for cats (she is also a cat sitter) and for Petaluma, her home for the past 12 years.



We have re-invented Game Night! Join us on Friday, April 9, 4 – 5:00 pm. Our first game will be our own version of Pictionary – using the Zoom white board and led by Village member Fatima Lassar, who will walk us through how to use our white board. Should be fun - no artistic talent needed! You can register online at <https://petaluma.helpfulvillage.com/events>

Volunteer Opportunities



The Village Network is seeking volunteers to join the vitally important Call Response Team. Volunteers, who currently work from home, are trained to respond to member requests and refer them appropriately. They choose one 10:00 am – 1:00 pm shift per week, and when it is safe for us to return to our office, will handle reception during their shift as well. Volunteers are also needed for the creative Program Team, whose members work together to develop programs for the Village community and the general public on topics of interest to older adults.

Special Programs for April

Online calendar at www.villagenetworkofpetaluma.org

NEW! To join us for any of the programs listed below, please register for the event online at <https://petaluma.helpfulvillage.com/events> or contact the Village by calling the office at 707-776-5666, or emailing us at info.villagenetworkofpetaluma.org. If you are a member needing Tech Help you can make a request for one of our Tech volunteers to call you. Programs on Zoom can be joined by phone. as well.

Get to Know the Village Information Meeting

Thursday, April 15, 2021 10:00 – 11:00 am.

Have you been thinking about joining the Village or volunteering? Join us on Zoom at a Get to Know the Village meeting and learn more about the volunteer services available during the pandemic – and how to join our community of mutual support and make new friends This is an online or phone meeting for potential members (ages 50+), their loved ones, and those interested in volunteering. Those with no computer can participate in the meeting by phone. **Register by April 14.**

Frauds and Scams: What You Need to Know

Wednesday, April 21, 1:00 to 3:00 pm.



Presented by a Petaluma Police Department volunteer to increase awareness among Village members and the Petaluma community about the latest frauds and scams, especially those related to the pandemic. The presentation will include what to do when you encounter a scam, and how to handle and report it. Free and open to the public. **Register by April 14.**

Report fraud/scams and receive quick advice on the Federal Trade Commission's website: [FTC website](https://www.ftc.gov).

Save the date for May program...

How to Use the Public Library Even Though It's Closed

Monday, May 24, 1:00 – 3:00 pm.

Learn how to access the countless free e-resources of our public library without leaving home. Follow step-by-step instructions on using e-books, magazines, newspapers, movies, and audiobooks. Also get the latest info on how to check out and return real books. Free and open to the public.

Presented by Kerrie Gavgavian, Adult Services Librarian, Petaluma Regional Library.

Classes and Interest Groups



TED Talks Discussion Group

Friday, April 9 and 23, 11:00 am – noon.

This month we will view TED Talks about creativity (our own) on Zoom together and then discuss them. The specific talks will be announced to members and volunteers a few days ahead of time

New! Game Night on Zoom

Friday, April 9, 4:00 – 5:00 pm.

Join us to try playing Pictionary! We'll take the first 15 minutes to learn together how to draw on the shared whiteboard. It's not about being a great artist – just bring your favorite drink and have fun. We'll try other games in the future. Members and volunteers are welcome. *Hosted by Fatima Lassar and Robert Bailey.*

Village Social Hour on Zoom

Friday, April 16, 4:00 – 5:00 pm.

Join us to enjoy each other's company and share how we're doing. We explore new interests as well as moments of fun and inspiration we've found. Members and volunteers are welcome.

Hosted by Paul and Anne Greenblatt.

Bocce Ball – the Village's Only In-Person Interest Group!

Wednesdays, April 7 and 21, 4:00 – 5:00 pm, Leghorn Park's bocce courts. (Meets 1st and 3rd Wednesdays)

We have a lot of fun. It takes only about five minutes to learn this simple game, but it takes a lifetime to master. We pretend to be competitive, but really we just socialize and have fun. Please bring a mask and gloves. Rain cancels! If you are interested in coming, **please RSVP by email to George Beeler at agbcomm@sonic.net by Wednesday 12 noon.** We wear masks, gloves, and stay 6+ feet apart.

Gentle Chair Yoga – Stay Healthy During Stressful Times

Mondays and Thursdays, 11:00 am – noon.

We practice yoga asanas, Eden Energy exercises, breath work, and meditation to improve strength, flexibility, and inner calm. Beginners welcome. The class is currently conducted over Zoom, and you will have the option to be seen or only heard, if you choose. Donations by non-members welcome.



Pat Martin, CMT, EEM-CP, CYT, is a State Certified Massage Therapist, Eden Energy Medicine Certified Practitioner, and Certified Yoga Teacher.

The Joy of Writing Group



Tuesdays, 10:00 – 11:00 am.

We write for fun, in fiction, nonfiction, memoir, poetry, etc. We write original stories in a noncritical environment. Come have fun with us, whether you are a veteran writer or a nervous beginner. All are welcome. Members free, non-members \$5 donation.

Men's Discussion Group

Alternate Tuesdays, 11:00 am.

We get together with other men via Zoom to discuss our lives in a spirit of fellowship. The group is limited to eight Village members and volunteers. Let us know if you want to be on the waitlist.

The Village Garden and Chat Group

Tuesdays, April 13 and 27, noon – 1:00 pm. (Meets on alternate Tuesdays)

In this group, we talk about anything from sharing seeds, plants, fruits, and vegetables, to art and jigsaw puzzles. Join our friendly group!



Retired Nurses Group



Wednesday, April 7, 10:15 – 11:45 am.

We discuss our nursing practices, education, and favorite stories while getting to know one another.

Shopping Online

Individual consultation for members needing assistance with delivery options is available through the Village.

Staying Connected with Zoom

Individual consultations for members on how to participate in programs on Zoom is also available

Member News

We send heartfelt condolences to Village member Beula Williams, whose husband Jim recently died peacefully at the age of 90. Jim and Beula, who were married for 71 years, moved to Petaluma in 1960 to raise their five children. Jim started The Village Shop, a women's clothing store, and Beula opened the Apple Box Café. All who were blessed to know Jim will miss his friendly manner, thoughtfulness, and service to others.

Longtime Village member Soma Sundaram is moving to live with her son and family in Southern California. We will miss Soma's warm heart and bright spirit, and wish her all the best in the next chapter of her life.

Events Around Town



Qigong Online

Teja Bell, Zen Master and committed practitioner of Qigong, offers a 12-minute guided Qigong practice at <https://vimeo.com/qigongdharma>

Immersive Van Gogh Exhibit in San Francisco

Experience the art of Vincent Van Gogh as you never have before. In San Francisco until September. Tickets are going fast so order now at www.vangoghsf.com. It's safe to Gogh!

Less Scrolling. More Strolling.

The deYoung Museum is now open, lots of interesting exhibits coming up, including a Judy Chicago retrospective. [Judy Chicago: A Retrospective](#)

Articles by Village Members and Volunteers

Letters Have Value that Social Media Can't Match

In this age of texts, tweets, and social media blips, one wonders what, if anything, will remain from lives memorialized in such ephemeral snippets. The pleasure of handwritten letters from grandchildren in scrawling, labored cursive or spidery notes from elders capturing fragile memories of the past may be lost forever. Village member



Vina Breyfogle shared a letter from her Uncle Karl, her family's historian. He collected letters, photos, and news clippings about the people and the times of his forebears, then shared those with her family. Almost 100 years later, the words her uncle found in a 1926 letter from Vina's great-great Uncle Max to her grandmother about the value of letters still ring true:

"There are letters and letters. Some are letters in name only and some are letters in fact. There are letters full of fine phraseology and choice words; letters of neatness and legibility; letters by students of English and such; and with all that, they are letters that leave you cold. Letters that don't give you any little rippling sensation of satisfaction; no little chills of sentiment down your spine; no little pangs of emotion apt to start a tear. Don't belittle yourself for you are a true letter writer — no, I will not call you a letter writer at all, for that sounds mechanical and does not cover the point. You simply sit down and think aloud and talk on paper just as you would be talking to someone by word of mouth — a heart to heart talk; giving a piece of yourself; showing a bit of your character; telling of your joys and troubles; giving a picture of your problems of life; some phases of your work, your pleasures, your worries, your love of family and home. And all that in such a true and natural and beautiful manner and language and bubbling over here and there with little incidents and talks of the children and pictures of home life, so that the understanding heart, after perusing your letter, will say: Well, that is a letter and not 'a sort of a letter.'

"How much I think of your letters, you may judge when I tell you that I carry them along with me in my inside coat pocket and read them to friends and relatives on my visits, and you would feel flattered, if you saw what interest they evoke. Of all one's correspondents, how few, how very few, are there whose letters one would feel like reading to others!"

- Mary Alden

My Dog's Favorite Hike



Sonoma-Marin hikes are plentiful, varied, and beautiful, but my dog likes to hike with me and that really limits choices. We prefer a "dogs allowed" hike, which is at least partially "off leash," and which has some open space and wide, uncrowded paths.

A hike at Tolay Lake Regional Park, Sonoma's newest and largest county park, fits our wish list well, especially close to sunset. The paths are wide, the climbs gentle, and the views panoramic and agricultural. Right now the view to East and West comprises rolling hills of every shade of green and cultivated fields edged by oak or eucalyptus trees with wild mustard borders. A walk up the wide Ridge Trail leads to a summit overlooking the Petaluma Basin marshes and the meandering river, which truly looks like a satin ribbon that has drifted over the landscape before gently settling. To the west the sun sets behind layers of hills leading to the ocean. Red, rose, yellow, and violet color the vast skyscape at twilight. One can also see Route 37 and the bay beyond. The ridge path follows the route of high wire power lines that cross Lakeville Highway, somewhat detracting from the bucolic atmosphere, but you can adjust your view. Look west. This is not a forested walk and is best done on these cool spring days, as there is little shade.

Much of the park's 3400 acres is open grazing area, so hikers will find some cows in the fields and even on the paths. Some dogs, like an assertive herding dog, would be difficult to handle, but the area is popular with dog walkers and joggers. Neither my dog nor I has ever had a problem with the cows. They mark our passing but just keep chewing. The little calves and doggies are more curious. My dog becomes nose-pointed-and-front-paw-up attentive when they trot toward us, but both dog and calves have always maintained a generous social distance.

The entrance from Lakeville onto Cannon Road winds and climbs through Keller vineyards, olive orchards, and meadows that now host herds of grazing sheep. The sunset view on the ride back down is lovely. As the sheep

are heading home, I always pause to soak in the view and play Bach's "Sheep May Safely Graze." It is a downright spiritual experience.

Directions, pictures, information can be found at <https://parks.sonomacounty.ca.gov/Visit/Tolay-Lake-Regional-Park/>

- Nancy Sullivan

Member Profile



Vreni Schnirman, International Adventurer

Few of us speak three languages and have visited as much of the world as Vreni Schnirman has. She grew up on a dairy farm that had been in her family since 1505 in mountainous Bernese Oberland, Switzerland. "The third of five children, I was a tomboy who climbed trees with my brothers and learned to ski at an early age. Back then, we used barrel staves with straps for skis," Vreni said.

"If not attending college, Swiss students attend trade school after 9th grade to become an apprentice in a trade or business. I left home for my first year apprenticeship in home economics when I was 16, after taking classes in animal husbandry, nutrition, cooking, and ironing. Next, I apprenticed with a dry cleaning business in another part of Switzerland so that I could learn French," she continued.

When she was 20, a coworker told Vreni of an opportunity as a governess for a Swiss family with four young children who lived on Long Island, NY. They wanted a French-speaking governess. So Vreni asked for parental approval to emigrate, and her father said, "If ever I had such an opportunity, I'd take it. Go!" Encouraged, she moved to America, even though she spoke no English.

In 1954 Vreni moved to California as a nanny, first in Beverly Hills, then in San Marino. When she and her girlfriends went skiing at Mammoth in 1957, their German accents attracted a group of young men who suggested they socialize after skiing. That evening at the ski lodge, Irving arrived last, boasting that he had dared to ski in white-out conditions while others huddled inside. Captivated, Vreni soon married Irving, an aerospace engineer and avid photographer, because, she said, "He met my criteria: someone I could love who could also take care of our family."

Once they had children, Vreni stayed home for 10 years, then enrolled in nursing school and became an oncology RN. When Irving retired in 2000, they moved to Petaluma to help their daughter who was expecting twins and to be closer to their son in Santa Rosa. "Petaluma is like small European towns and it felt comfortable," Vreni commented. The couple also joined Friendship Force, a travel exchange group, and began visiting almost every continent. Of all the places they toured, Vreni would most enjoy returning to Africa.

Irving died of cancer in 2009, and later, her son moved in with her. Upon learning about the newly formed Village Network, Vreni joined, knowing she would benefit from its services and support. Since then she's visited isolated members and taken weekly neighborhood walks with members who've become friends. Although she traded skis for snowshoes when she was 82, she's been busy during the pandemic converting thousands of Irving's photo slides to digital images. "With luck, I may even visit Mammoth again next winter and go back to Switzerland for my 90th birthday next year," she said enthusiastically.

Note: Ask Vreni about her daily exercise routine to stay fit.

- Mary Alden

My Facebook Fundraiser

My birthday was coming, and I got ready to create my second Village fundraiser on Facebook. A Facebook fundraiser is easy to do and very successful. It practically sets itself up from your home page. The language is all there for you to use or adapt.

My generous friends made donations via Facebook online, and a few sent checks. I raised \$816 in a two-week period. That amount paid for a scholarship membership (\$540) for a community member living on a limited income, with more to spare. Facebook handled the processing, and sent a check directly to the Village Network.

Try it for yourself. It is the easiest way to ask for support for your cause. People are more than happy to celebrate your birthday with their donation. Just keep track of the names and amounts donated, and give their addresses to the office for thank-you notes.

Here's what mine said, along with a photo of myself laughing with my sister.



"For my birthday this year, I'm asking for donations to the Village Network of Petaluma. I've been a volunteer for this nonprofit because we're growing, laughing, and learning together as we age. This mission means a lot to me, and I hope you'll consider making a donation of any size. Every little bit will help me reach my goal. I've included information about the Village Network of Petaluma below. I feel part of a vibrant community of over 200 members and volunteers — built on reciprocal giving and receiving. Facebook pays all the processing fees for you, so 100% of your donation goes directly to the nonprofit."

Lyndi Brown and her sister

Thriving at Home

Members are encouraged to call the Village office to be matched with a phone friend! 707-776-6055.

Petaluma People Services Offers Virtual Counseling Support: 707-765-8488

Also: [Rental Housing Assistance](#)

County of Sonoma Warm Line: 707-565-2652

for free and private support if you or someone you know is experiencing emotional stress and anxiety during COVID-19.



What We Are Reading



***Hamnet* by Maggie O'Farrell**

The very few facts known about Shakespeare and his family provide the seed of the plot and setting. The main character is Shakespeare's wife, called Agnes in the novel, and the pivotal event is the death from plague of their son, Hamnet. Both informative and imaginative, *Hamnet* is beautifully written and structured to keep you reading.

- Nancy Sullivan

***The Splendid and the Vile* by Erik Larson**

A month-by-month account of the Blitz of London, this thoroughly researched historical account is an engrossing tale of love and war, of family and friendship, of life and death. Larson quotes from diaries and letters and from casual notes and interviews conveying the many characters' authentic voices and varying points of view. The experience is like reading a great novel.

- Nancy Sullivan

The Doctors Blackwell: How Two Pioneering Sisters Brought Medicine to Women — and Women to Medicine
by Janice P. Nimura

Elizabeth Blackwell, the first woman to graduate from medical school in the U.S., and her younger sister, Emily, who followed in her footsteps, were formidable, tenacious, and brilliant. This biography chronicles their many achievements despite the obstacles they faced as women in the mid-19th century. But the author is also straightforward about the sisters' shortcomings, particularly their perplexing opposition to women's suffrage, despite their own battles against discrimination.

- Kathy Lawrence

See No Stranger: A Memoir and Manifesto of Revolutionary Love by Valarie Kaur

Valarie Kaur, who needed to heal from her early life as a brown girl growing up in California farmland, draws on the wisdom of sages, scientists, and activists as she encourages us to see no strangers, but instead see others with open-hearted curiosity. Starting from that place of wonder, the world begins to change; it is "a practice that can transform a relationship, a community, a culture, even a nation."

- Anne Greenblatt

Jerry's Film Column



Some available on [Kanopy.com](https://www.kanopy.com), Sonoma County Library's streaming collection, six/month free.

Disobedience Rachel McAdams and Rachel Weisz play friends who face tension when McAdams tries to extricate herself from an unhappy marriage in an Orthodox Jewish community in London. McAdams must battle tradition as she tries to express her inherent sexuality.

First Reformed Ethan Hawke and Amanda Seyfried are featured. A religiously challenged Protestant minister confronts a dwindling congregation and issues of moral and political import. Great performances by Hawke and Seyfried.

Netflix: Spotlight: A group of investigative reporters uncover damning evidence that the Archdiocese of Boston had been ignoring sexual abuse of boys in Catholic schools for years. It's a good chronicle of what lengths the reporters had to go to uncover the truth. Michael Keaton, Mark Ruffalo, and Rachel McAdams star.

Hulu: Nomadland This is Frances McDormand's movie. Her character leads an itinerant lifestyle after her husband's death. Set in the Southwest, she and others of her ilk enjoy the freedom this culture allows. The story seems authentic and the characters have a naturalness that's believable, but it may not appeal to everyone, as there is not much structure or story. It won the Best Drama Award at the Golden Globes this year.



Village Network of Petaluma

Aging Better Together

As part of a national movement, the Village Network of Petaluma is a nonprofit membership organization empowering adults 50+ to live active, independent, and connected lives in the places we call home.

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