

Heart & Hands

CONNECTION



1765 GOODYEAR AVENUE, STE #205 • VENTURA, CA 93003-8015

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Building Elder-Friendly Communities and Celebrating Our Interfaith Roots



A message from:

***Cecilia Macias,
Chairman of the Board
& Brad Berens,
Executive Director***



It is not an especially auspicious year as years go, but it is our 26th year of dedicated passion to serving those who are the most vulnerable throughout our community here in Ventura County. It is this time of year, however, when we give THANKS for the blessings we enjoy, our family and friends, and those who enrich our lives and are there for us. It is also the time of year that we celebrate the rich diversity of our own system of beliefs that guide and shape us daily, and we observe holidays poignant to Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Kwanzaa, Hinduism, and Buddhism.

There is a common thread to our faith diversity that is generally expressed as “The Golden Rule.” The concept is inherent to all belief systems and is as old as time itself first being expressed in Hindu tenets as early as 3200 BC. However expressed through the years the message resonates with all of us as we “put others first.”

As an organization, **CAREGIVERS: Volunteers Assisting the Elderly** celebrates and honors the Interfaith origins that began 26 years ago through the efforts of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, Trinity Lutheran Church of Ventura, First United Methodist Church of Ventura, First United Methodist Women of Ventura, National Council of Jewish Women, Sisters of the Holly Cross, First Presbyterian Church of Santa Paula, Ventura County Church of Religious Science and the Aid Association for Lutherans. They knew and they acted, creating a coalition with the premise that religion is more about doing than believing, and assisting and enhancing the lives of the vulnerable amongst us is the ethic to embrace. It is the “golden rule” that as an organization, a nonprofit charitable endeavor, consisting of hundreds and hundreds of volunteers serving our most frail and homebound elders comes to the conclusion that

Save the Date!
MARCH 17
19th Annual
“Wearin’ o’ the Green”
Golf Tournament
Buenaventura Golf Course

Elder-Friendly Communities...

our brains are hard-wired to act according to the golden rule.

During this very special time of the year, consider supporting CAREGIVERS: Volunteers Assisting the Elderly and help us bring our frail and homebound seniors out of the shadows and into the light of independence, dignity, and quality of life. Join us in building an Elder-Friendly community here in Ventura County.



—Cecilia Macias,
Chairman of the Board



—Brad Berens,
Executive Director

ARCHITECTS OF AN ELDER-FRIENDLY COMMUNITY

With more than 3,700 Nonprofit Charitable organizations in Ventura County today, there is a constant and important process of “Building Social Capital” taking place at all levels of our community. It can be said with all certainty that the acts of altruistic communitarians is paramount today, especially in light of the depressed economic climate in which we find ourselves. It is an extraordinarily challenging time for charitable organizations yet there are businesses and people who ensure the mission of **CAREGIVERS: Volunteers Assisting the Elderly** stays viable to ensure “no call goes unanswered.”

CAREGIVERS’ knows that there are four fundamental domains of an Elder-Friendly Community and our mission addresses each component. They are 1) address basic needs of the elderly, 2) optimize physical health and well-being of the elderly, 3) maximize independence for the frail and

disabled, and 4) promote social and civic engagement.

We salute some of these individuals and their businesses as “Architects of an Elder-Friendly Community” where the design and building of services and opportunities must be continually addressed for the protection of our elderly friends, neighbors, and loved ones. They are:



Andy Killion is a native of Ventura who has been a supporter of CAREGIVERS

since the late 1990’s. Starting as a CAREGIVERS “Wearin’ o’ the Green” Golf Tournament committee member, Andy turned his efforts to a new fundraising event he named “The Sailathon.” Since the event began, it has raised over \$90,000 for the CAREGIVERS organization. Andy owns Anchors Way Marine Centers in Ventura and Channel Islands Harbors. He lives in Ventura with his wife Tina, son Jack, and daughter Carly.

Ann Romero is a member of the Board of Directors of CAREGIVERS: Volunteers Assisting the Elderly for many years. Previously Ann was Vice-President and Manager of Wells Fargo Bank-Ventura County Center Office; Ann spent 36 years with Wells Fargo here in Ventura County. She shares her love for our community by also serving on the Boards of the Alzheimer’s Association-Central Coast and the Ventura Music Festival. Ann knows that the quality of life for a community must include everyone on the aging continuum and to that end also serves the Ventura Education Partnership and for M.E.S.A. (Oxnard, Port Hueneme-CSUN) Advisory Board.



Mel Sheeler is the Vice-Chair of the Board of Directors for CAREGIVERS: Volunteers

Assisting the Elderly organization. He is President of Sheeler Moving and Storage, Inc., and Sheeler Records Management in Ventura. In addition to supporting the needs of our elders here in Ventura, Mel builds social capital for the well-being of our community by actively leading and supporting the Ventura Boys and Girls Club, Ventura Police Activities League, Ventura Chamber of Commerce, Ventura Music Festival, the East Ventura Kiwanis Club, Community Memorial Hospital, and several additional organizations. Mel resides in Ojai with wife Cathy and has two sons and two granddaughters living in Ventura.

Skip Remley is a member of the Board of Directors for CAREGIVERS and an agent and registered representative for New York Life Insurance Company in Oxnard. Skip has been in the Financial Services Industry most of his career beginning in 1975 as Vice-President for Gibraltar Savings and Loan. Skip has been married for 43 years with one daughter and two grandchildren.



Dr. Martin Kaplan, Ph.D., is also a member of the Board of Directors of CAREGIVERS

and lays the foundations of an “Elder-Friendly Community” in Ventura County through a wide spectrum of pursuits daily. Dr. Kaplan is presently the Program Director of the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute of California State University Channel Islands. OLLI provides college level academic courses exclusively for persons over the age of 50. Dr. Kaplan is also on the Advisory Council of the Ventura County Area Agency on Aging with a focus on outreach to the senior community. Other activities related to senior citizen affairs include membership on the Thousand Oaks Senior Adult Master Plan, member of the Advisory Council of the Camarillo Council on Aging and on the board of the New West Symphony for Ventura County. Dr. Kaplan is a distinguished author in the field of Social Psychology where themes of social capital have wide application.



Anna Kittleson is a forty-year resident of Ventura and a five-year member of the

Board of Directors who believes in doing philanthropic work and being involved in helping the communities of Ventura County. Anna also gives of herself to the Ventura Chamber of Commerce, is the Area Director for Business International and is a member of the Ventura County Professional Women’s Network, the Forty Leaguers, and the Sunrise Toastmasters. Anna is an Account Representative with Gary Scott’s State Farm Insurance Company.



Cecilia Macias is Chairman of the Board of Directors for CAREGIVERS.

“Cie” as the community knows her, has served the organization since the mid-nineties serving as formal leader four terms. Cie has been with State Farm Insurance for 32 years, going to work for them out of Rio Mesa High School. She is the Claim Team Manager out of the Westlake Office. Like all communitarians, Cie also provides volunteer work for other groups like the United Way of Ventura County and has been a board member for the Humane League/Animal Rescue organization.

Augie Martinez joined the Board of Directors a year ago. Augie is a life long resident of Ventura County and entered the banking industry with Bank of A. Levy right



out of high school. Currently, he is Vice-President/Manager at Rabobank here in Ventura on Mills

Road. While focused on the needs of the elderly in Ventura County, Augie also volunteers and provides leadership on the Benefactors Ball Committee for Community Memorial Hospital.



Ginny Camarillo began as a volunteer with CAREGIVERS about 20 years ago

while working as an analyst for the County of Ventura Executive Office. Shortly thereafter she became a Board member; she served as Chair and then executive positions. She joined at a time when her parents in Ohio began to need additional assistance. Although she could not be with them on an on-going basis to provide that help, she could support those in similar need in her Ventura County community. “CAREGIVERS’ Board, staff, and volunteers have been so generous and enjoyable to work with over these many years. I feel strongly that anyone who becomes involved in any way receives much in return.”

CAREGIVERS: Volunteers
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CAREGIVERS: VOLUNTEERS ASSISTING THE ELDERLY

**“LET NO CALL GO
UNANSWERED”**

Our Mission:

CAREGIVERS: Volunteers Assisting the Elderly enhances the independence, dignity, and quality of life for the frail and disabled elders of Ventura County through professional services, one-on-one volunteer assistance, and community resource management, allowing for our most at-risk elders to remain in their own homes and “age in place.”

Executive Summary: CAREGIVERS is a 501(C)(3) charitable organization serving the needs of Ventura County and the communities of Ventura, Oxnard, Port Hueneme, Camarillo, Santa Paula, and Fillmore. Founded in 1984, the agency has assisted more than 5,000 of our communities’ frail and homebound senior citizens who are often of low-income, without ability to pay for services, are typically 80 years and older, live alone, and have no familial support networks. CAREGIVERS provide free services through the use of trained intergenerational volunteers that include: in-home services, transportation and escort services, home maintenance and management, social activities, and on-going monitoring activities.

So that we can better serve the Ventura County communities, CAREGIVERS: Volunteers

Assisting the Elderly needs to raise \$100,000 for 2011. Your support ensures our ability to address the needs of our current 1,500 elders, and for the 30 percent growth in needs we anticipate next year. Our dependent elders rely on us and in turn we rely on friends like you to form the circle of care that builds an elder-friendly Ventura County.

Our Philosophy: Ventura County’s CAREGIVERS’ core values include the belief that our elders have earned the right of community support that lends itself to enhance the independence, dignity, and quality of life for the advanced aged who face circumstances and challenges that younger people would find insurmountable. Central to our philosophy is the tenet of community volunteerism. Ventura County’s **CAREGIVERS: Volunteers Assisting the Elderly** is the conduit of that support that ensures and prevents premature institutionalization and allows for our elders to fulfill their most ardent desire to remain in their homes, their receptacle of keepsakes, memories, and of a life’s journey that gives meaning to one’s existence. Our rally cry is “Dignity for Life” and for us as communitarians we must keep those hopes fulfilled.

Featured Programs and Services:

CAREGIVERS: Volunteers Assisting the Elderly utilizes one of the most fundamental dynamics imbued in human nature to provide services to our clientele, which is the act of volunteerism that rewards the emotions, cognition, and spiritual needs of the volunteer caregiver while benefiting the

recipient beyond measure. Our outreach and assistance encompasses evidence based practices of client-centered services that include: case management, community resource management, service arrangement and follow-up, referral and monitoring, home maintenance and management, home modifications, in-home assistance (light housekeeping, cooking, and laundry), transportation and escort services, socialization activities, companionship, and daily telephone reassurance. All services are coordinated by skilled professional Care Managers with the hands-on assistance of altruistic, trained, and screened volunteers from each locale, matched for interest and skill-sets and compatibility according to our elder’s needs. *All of our services are free and target low- to moderate-income seniors who cannot afford the market rate costs of In-Home Health agencies.*

Our services provide a continuum of care throughout the Ventura County region and a vital resource for long-distance relative caregivers. CAREGIVERS’ services address all fundamental activities of daily life for our recipients and help to alleviate conditions of isolation, depression, chronic illness, grief, and a reduced sense of purpose.

Success Stories

Edna’s Story:

Chronic Problems & Abandonment, Now on the Road to Recovery

Edna is a 60-something-year-old who has suffered with manic-depression for many years and whose condition was further exacerbated by tremendous weight gain brought on by her abandonment by a family unable to cope with her situation

and the impact on their family unit. Barely able to walk, and unable to drive, Edna became further isolated, beginning to decompensate, and unable to afford



*Nanci Cone,
Case Manager*

medications and treatment when she longed for help. Edna phoned CAREGIVERS, and Case Managers arranged for transportation for necessities, escort services, and a medical provider who would accept Medicare to address her psychiatric and medical conditions. Today, Edna no longer is confined to a wheel chair due to obesity and is stabilized and in on-going treatment for bipolar disease. CAREGIVERS now provides socialization opportunities and frequent contact for support. While still needy, it is thought that with her newfound stabilization, Edna and her family can reunite for further emotional support.

**Maria & Carlos' Story:
Two for the Price of One**

Maria (89 years) had been a caregiver for years to her husband Carlos (85 years) who suffers from degenerative Spinal Stenosis; frail and unable to walk but a few paces at a time, he needed her daily assistance for his well-being. Two years ago, Maria thought it was time to call CAREGIVERS, a number that had been taped to her refrigerator for some time. Maria, frail herself and unsteady from medication for chronic conditions, decided it was time to give up driving. She called CAREGIVERS initially for transportation errands, shopping, and doctor visits. Finding herself now homebound, Maria also sought out a volunteer for Respite services for herself so she could get out



*Courtney Darrough,
Case Manager*

on occasion with friends. CAREGIVERS not only carefully screened and provided a volunteer for her vitally needed breaks from caregiving, but also introduced Carlos to a retired volunteer who hails from the

same hometown. Now, two years later Maria enjoys her time out with friends with the respite afforded her through CAREGIVERS, and Carlos happily plays chess on the porch with Greg, a volunteer who is now a friend. CAREGIVERS Case Managers still routinely contact Maria and Carlos to monitor their situation and Maria exudes gratitude for their independence brought about by CAREGIVERS.

**Gladys' Story:
"It Takes One to Know One"**

Gladys is aged 78, lives alone in a small studio apartment, and has low income. Her neighbor contacted CAREGIVERS on her behalf more than two years ago. Gladys having recently had open-heart surgery, was very frail and in great pain. Dealing with a new pacemaker implant, without family support, and unable to drive, she was completely homebound. The caring neighbor put her on the phone to a case manager who could barely hear her voice, hardly a whisper. Gladys needed food, companionship, and assistance picking up medications, going to the bank, post office, and grocery store. After an urgent in-home assessment, the case manager also determined that Gladys was far too weak for housework or laundry and other instrumental activities of daily life. As the case manager arranged for initial services such as Home Delivered Meals, a volunteer named Ginny walked into the office and proclaimed that at 70, she had recently beat cancer, and now robust again, made a promise to the Lord that she would give of herself to the plight of other elders in need.

Ginny was matched with Gladys, and as it turned out they only lived a mile from one another. Almost three years later, Ginny visits Gladys at least once a week, runs her errands, takes her to the doctor as needed, cleans house and ensures Gladys is eating well. Ginny calls Gladys daily to ensure her well-being and safety.



*Marion Holzwarth,
Case Manager*

These scenarios are addressable for our agency 1,500 times each year with 99 percent positive outcomes.

Ventura County's CAREGIVERS: Volunteers Assisting the Elderly is Different

1. Utilizes a case management modality ensuring all available community resources are offered/provided to each senior recipient as needs dictate.
2. Uses best practices approach based on 26 years of community service.
3. Works in collaboration with 36 other nonprofit and aging network organizations.
4. Provides countywide services for a comprehensive continuum of care.
5. Recruits, trains, and matches an intergenerational volunteer workforce with a focus on shared interest and experiences where friendships blossom.
6. Fills the gap in available services where a minimum of 1,500 elders would otherwise live lives of quiet desperation.
7. Bridges the "generational divide" through specialized programs with high school students and the homebound where young people are mentored through one-on-one relationships.
8. All these services are just a phone call away.

Please support CAREGIVERS: Volunteers Assisting the Elderly. Your donation is the connection of "Hearts and Hands" that continues to build elder-friendly communities here in Ventura County. Together, we ensure that "no call goes unanswered."



Thank God, We're Miserable— The Joy and Ory of Caregiving

By Judith Harris, M.A., M.F.T.

When Woody Allen explained his philosophy that “life was divided into the horrible—that’s cancer, death, Alzheimer’s (he doesn’t know how people survive that), and the miserable—that’s everybody else; and we should thank God, that we’re miserable,” I struggled with settling for such a negative world view. Yet, now I see it differently. Every day I observe my caregivers, elders, and cancer survivors show gratitude in the midst of suffering. Thanksgiving and National Family Caregiver’s Month are both in November.

In a sense, we’re all caregivers, yet, we get it backwards. Rabbi Hillel’s profound questions remind us of the correct order—“If I am not for myself, who will be for me? If I’m only for myself, what am I, and if not now when?” This generation of elders often learned to associate being good with self-sacrifice—they worry about being selfish alternating between guilt and resentment. One reassurance I *can* give you—selfish people never worry about being selfish, so if you’re worrying about it, you’re not selfish.

Our biggest fear is to become a “burden to our kids.” Are you kidding? It’s one of my goals; it’s on my bucket list! I was a single parent with teenagers; if I’m not a burden to them, they won’t have a chance to prevail over hardship, and develop strength, add significance and find meaning to their lives like I did. See how you can reframe and reinterpret. In fact, one of the best tools I learned in Alzheimer’s caregiving is “therapeutic lying;” you can orient to a different reality—you enter a different world.

Everything about aging has changed

Editor’s note: Judith is trained as both a teacher and psycho-therapist (lately, that’s 2 words). Through her work as a grief and trauma counselor she rediscovered the healing power of humor and has written numerous articles and tapes on sustaining a sense of optimism in the face of adversity. She writes a monthly column called “Didn’t My Skin Used to Fit?—Aging with Grace,” and has a website called Suffering in Style. She provides counseling and humor-based wellness training to individuals, groups and companies. She is currently working on a book called “We’re All Here Because We’re Not All There”—based

but the way that we think about it. Our beliefs and expectations about dependence were formed when people were “old” in their 60’s, families lived close to each other and kids left home. Now we have what’s been called “bungee families” with grandparents raising children at the same time they’re caring for their parents—beyond the sandwich generation, the “club sandwich generation.”

The maps (rules, expectations, hopes,) we made in that other “country” don’t work here. In fact, sometimes, nothing works here and we don’t talk about it enough. Sometimes your best isn’t good enough; this is one of life’s challenges that can’t be solved because it’s not a problem in the first place. It’s an inescapable human predicament—tangled up with old family baggage, current family struggles, and world circumstances. And you want what?—to learn to manage the unmanageable. To paraphrase Jung “show me a sane caregiver and I will cure them.”

Many people are struggling today in a broken world. Yet, I still see the life-affirming ability of the human spirit to look for that “blessing in disguise.” Why can’t our blessings come right out in open? It comes down, once again, to our attitude. This is not just positive thinking, but finding the positive emotions of gratitude, hope, appreciation, and joy. I’m reminded of the story about the pessimistic brother and the optimistic brother. No matter what gifts the pessimist received it was never enough. When the optimistic brother walks into a room full of manure he gets all excited: “Wow! With all this manure there must be a pony here!” Our challenge is to find that pony in the manure. The key tool we need is gratitude, because “if you never learn the language of gratitude you’ll never be on speaking terms with happiness.”

Building Bridges Program or “Why am I in a van full of high school students?”

By George Harrell,

Student Program Liaison

I took over the CAREGIVERS Student Program Liaison position in October 2009 while one of our employees was out on maternity leave. New to the program, my only question was “Do they have to volunteer?” I didn’t want to end up as a babysitter for a group of knuckleheads working off detention time or being forced into the program just because their parents thought it was a good idea to do! (You know, “good for their character.”) I was told that these students actually wanted to participate. What? Want to? Didn’t they prefer to spend time texting, emailing or tweeting each other?

Well, as I found out, they really did want to volunteer. Students at Foothill Technology must have 75 volunteer hours to graduate. They also have the Hero Project, which requires 35 volunteer hours along with an essay and presentation, which they showcase at the end of the year—a way to highlight their college applications.

After the first visit, the students come to realize how much they bring to the seniors and what they get



on the lessons she learned from 25 years of working with those who have “stepped into the wrong story.” With wit and wisdom she offers new perspectives on topics you thought you knew—family, love, stress, communication, and coping with loss. She has been described as a “stand-up psychotherapist” who puts the “fun” in dysfunctional.

Look for Judith to provide seminars and trainings for our volunteer caregivers in the Spring of 2011. Check out Judith on the web at www.sufferinginstyle.com.

in return. They come to the epiphany that helping elders around the house or just giving them a social break from a routine day usually spent alone, results in a shared appreciation of life's journey. Listening to our elders' stories is an eye opener for the students, realizing that they are living a tradition as old as time itself, the generational transfer of knowledge dates back to our ancestors sitting around a fire outside their caves. On the return trip to the school, I hear the students talk about how "cute" or "smart" they find the seniors. It's not unusual to hear, "Wow! That dude had an amazing life!"

Seniors need all the assistance we can give them along with just a visit to brighten their days. Teenagers find that seniors are not to be neglected or forgotten and that they actually learn from them. Some students tell me they have begun to spend more time with their grandparents. This is the reason why I'm in a van full of high school students! It's a year later and— I still love it.

Editor's note: The Building Bridges Program is instituted at Foothill Technology, Ventura High, Buena High, and St. Bonaventure.

The Building Bridges Program

CAREGIVERS: Volunteers Assisting the Elderly has known for 26 years that the services and assistance we afford our advanced elderly improves the quality of life for everyone

involved. Five years ago, the Building Bridges Program was innovated and implemented with community-based high school students. Students are recruited, trained, and supervised by the CAREGIVERS Youth Director to provide chores and companionship in the homes of our frail elderly clients. Annually, more than 100 of our area high school students share and fulfill some very basic needs that serve our elders with benefits beyond measure.

The Building Bridges Program facilitates and incubates appreciation for generational differences which builds a better today for both our clients and student recruits.



Tony Skwara looks forward to his visits from Foothill students.

Our intergenerational programs are grounded in the notion that there is synergy between young and old, and the connections created are both timely and natural based on reciprocal needs such as:

- An older person's need to nurture versus a younger person's need to be nurtured.
- An older person's need to teach (transmit generational knowledge)



Edna, Claudia Su & Apple.

versus a younger person's need to be taught.

- To have a successful life review versus a need for cultural identity.
- To communicate positive values and to have positive role models.
- To leave a legacy by our elders and a need to be connected to preceding generations by younger persons.

Building Bridges makes our elders feel more important, needed, and connected. The interaction has a grounding nature for our students who are often obsessed with their youth, which transforms as they gaze deeply into an older person's life experience. It creates strong relationships between our elders and our youth. Our youth are fortified to move through the world with compassion for aging loved ones and the elderly community as a whole. The Building Bridges Program helps to complete the social compact. Building Bridges fosters the "Intergenerational Covenant" and builds "Elder-Friendly" communities in Ventura County.

Chloe Sehati



I attend Ventura High School where I currently am a sophomore. I love journalism and drama as well as hanging out with my friends. With journalism I get to be "on the stage performing" with my writing and, when I am in a play, I get to put on a whole new persona. Last year, I was in Key Club (a community service club) and I saw an opportunity to help the elderly, something

I always wanted to do but felt too shy. Since I was starting a new experience in high school, I would need to find some type of community service that would be right for me.

I saw a memo about CAREGIVERS: Volunteers Assisting the Elderly and it just jumped out at me. It's now been more than a year and a half that I've been involved with CAREGIVERS and I get new experiences, new perspectives and a chance to meet interesting people that impact the way I think in general. This January I will be going to Israel with NFTY EIE (North American Federation of Temple Youth International Exchange Program) where I will continue my regular studies as well as learn Hebrew and Middle Eastern history. Before I return, we will take a pilgrimage to Poland to visit Holocaust sites. I look forward to returning to Ventura where I will continue to work and grow with CAREGIVERS in my high school years.



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CAREGIVERS MISSION

To promote the health, well-being, dignity, and independence of frail, home-bound elders through one-on-one relationships with trusted volunteers.

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CAREGIVERS was founded by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet in collaboration with Trinity Lutheran Church, Ventura; First United Methodist Church, Ventura; Sisters of the Holy Cross; National Council of Jewish Women; First United Methodist Women, Ventura; First Presbyterian Church, Santa Paula; Ventura County Church of Religious Science, and the Aid Association for Lutherans.