



Finding Solutions to Help Seniors Age in Place

FIGHTING BACK AGAINST SOCIAL ISOLATION

With snow drifting down, sidewalks slick with ice, and the cat purring in your lap, it's easy to stay home. During the pandemic, especially for those with immune-system issues or high-risk loved ones, it became a habit that may be hard to break. Physical limitations, retirement from the external workforce, and the death of a partner can all contribute to keeping us apart. Nearly 15 million of us live alone, around 28%. But the stats are clear—social isolation harms our health. It puts older adults in peril for high blood pressure, heart disease, obesity, a weakened immune system, anxiety, depression, cognitive decline, Alzheimer's disease—even death.

Let's fight back!

As the Program Manager at North Fork Senior Connections, I'm committed to keeping local elders involved and active, an integral part of Valley life. Initiatives like our Neighborly Rides program as well as CSA and soup deliveries encourage interaction even as they improve lives in practical ways. Coming together every month for a potluck at the Paonia Senior Center introduces new seniors into the mix, while the SAIL exercises classes in all three North Fork communities serve as a social network even while aiding fitness and preventing falls.

The North Fork Creative Coalition is currently gearing up for a wonderful series of free classes for older adults throughout the Valley. Offerings will range from yoga & movement to ceramics, from watercolor painting to storytelling—

something for everyone. Through a grant from NextFifty, the Blue Sage Center for the Arts provides local seniors with great opportunities for no-cost experiences, including a "visit with Rosa Parks" (portrayed by Chautauqua performer Becky Stone) on February 4 at 2pm and cowboy poetry & music on February 14 at 1pm.

Recent research from the University of Pittsburgh on the virtues of making music show a "small but statistically significant effect on cognitive functioning, such as thinking and memory, because it works multiple areas of your brain at the same time." Music is also a powerful mood-elevator, which is now super-important for those of us who suffer from Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). Learn to play an instrument, or raise your voice: the North Fork Community Chorus under the direction of Stephanie Helleckson, which practices on Wednesday evenings, welcomes "mature singers," while local musician Ellen Stapenhorst is planning a new Song Circle to get local elders making vocal music together—no experience or "talent" necessary.

Winter can be a fabulous time to curl up with a good read, but consider making it a shared pleasure. The ongoing Book Club at the Paonia Senior Center alternates monthly between choosing our own read within a topic and specific novels, authors, or works of relevant nonfiction to discuss. (See Calendar entry on page 3 for details.) We'd love to get something similar going in Crawford and Hotchkiss, so let us know if you're interested.

In other words, GET CONNECTED! It's good for you—body, mind, and spirit.

Drama on the Big Screen!

Growing up in the 60s, Elizabeth Taylor’s marriages and divorces—eight times to seven men—were the scandal of the local bridge club, especially the actress’s two attempts with Welsh actor Richard Burton. Sparks flew when the couple first met on the set of “Cleopatra” in 1962, and they continued onscreen when the pair starred in this month’s free movie “Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?” It airs at the Paradise Theater on Thursday, February 8, at 10am. Based on a play by Edward Albee, the film illuminates marriage in crisis, winning five Academy Awards, including Taylor as Best Actress. Warning: this movie was criticized for “profanity and sexual themes--”so be prepared for a wild ride!



CHANGE for the GOOD

Coming soon to North Fork Senior Connections—a brand-new website! Maybe you’re not an internet-user, so why should you care? Because we want to assist our Valley seniors better, providing necessary services and stimulating programs that make the North Fork a great community to age in place.

As many of you know, our local nonprofit grew from a Front Range organization called “A Little Help.” After four years of association, we realized that urban model doesn’t reflect what we’ve become here on the Western Slope, and their “Helpful Village” website wasn’t meeting our needs. Our vice-chair Bonnie Eisenberg located a program that allows us to provide free “Neighborly Rides” to get local elders to appointments and events in Delta County, and we discovered it would also track volunteer hours, which help us earn the grants necessary to our operation. A local web designer is now putting the finishing touches on our new website, and we’re adding an additional part-time staff member, Faye Sullivan, who joined the Board and quickly became indispensable. (More on Faye next month, when she returns from visiting her family in England and becomes our Volunteer Coordinator.)

In the meantime, DO NOT pay attention to any payment requests from Helpful Village. If you recently received a request for money to keep your membership current, IGNORE IT with our apologies! Of course, we welcome donations of any amount at any time and request a one-time \$25 contribution when an individual first joins our nonprofit, but even that is optional and can be waived. Please don’t let money—or pride—keep you from getting or giving neighborly assistance. LET’S GET CONNECTED!

Looking Ahead

We’re gearing up for expanded programming beginning in March and on forward, including a hike into Dominguez Canyon, an experiential class in NeuroMovement/Feldenkrais, a new Beginning Tai Chi series, and from the North Fork Creative Coalition free offerings for seniors: Yoga/Creative Movement, ClayWork, Watercolor/Gouche, and Storytelling with the amazing Yuri Chicovsky.

Need a Ride?

Call our special Neighborly Rides number 527.1735—to schedule a free trip within Delta County!

February Birthdays

Happy Birthday to:

Janice Thorup 2/4
Shelley Schmitzer 2/14
Paula Martin 2/25



Marilyn Stone 2/10
Betsy Topper 2/16
James Schott 2/25

February Calendar

What's Happening at the Senior Center in January

Path of Least Resistance Gardening series with John Valentine on Mondays at 1:00, Paonia Senior Center: Feb 5 & 12- Containers (1st class is presentation, 2nd class is a workshop-see last month); Feb 12 & 19: Soils; Feb 26: Watering.

Here & Now MEDITATION-Meg O'Shaughnessy facilitates this ongoing group at Paonia Senior Center Thursday mornings at a new time: 9:00-10:00. All are welcome.

The Book Club at the Paonia Senior Center is going strong! We gather at 2:00 on the third Tuesday of the month-next meeting is February 20 to discuss "A Spool of Blue Thread," a work of fiction by Anne Tyler. Ongoing topics: March 19: (the equinox) Mortality; April 16: "True West" by Betsy Quammen, nonfiction; May 21: World War II (fiction or nonfiction) in honor of Memorial Day; June 18: Jodi Picoult (author of fiction-- "Small Great Things" is a thought-provoking read) Please call for more info.

Silver Threads Sewing Club, 2nd & 4th Tuesdays @ Paonia Senior Center at 1:00. All levels/works-in-progress/group projects. Facilitated by experienced quilter Connie Hodges & friends. Questions? 970.527.3482 or Connie @ 970.216.4457.

Paonia River Park Walks every Wednesday

10am. Meet at the gazebo. YakTrax/trekking pole recommended for winter.

Stay Active and Independent for Life (SAIL) Exercise and fall prevention classes presented by the North Fork EMS: Paonia Senior Center Tues & Fri 8:45-9:45 or 10-11; Hotchkiss Memorial Hall – Mon & Thurs @9:30; Crawford Town Hall 10-11 Wednesdays plus Advanced classes Tues & Thurs 5:30-6:30 pm.

Write Your Life- Memoir for Seniors at Paonia Senior Center on Wednesdays at 1:30. For more info/to join please call the facilitator, Yuri Chicovsky, at 970-314-0303.

Senior Meals– Senior Centers open for VOA Lunch (also Available for Pick-up) M,W & F: Call Debbie at (970) 874-7661 for more info or to sign up.

Hotchkiss Senior Center serves hot full meals cooked on the premises Tues and Thurs and a soup lunch on Wed, all at noon. 872.3494.

Caregivers' Support Group Thursdays, 1 – 3 pm via Zoom. Contact Gayla Michaud for information at 970.825.6288 or email GAMich76@outlook.com

Coffee Klatch @Paonia Senior Center- 9:30: February 5—Practitioner Rebecca Hitt, Managing/Preventing Pain through Acupuncture/Chinese Herbs; February 12—Cleanup Day at Paonia Senior Center—bring your work gloves!

Catered lunches @ Paonia Senior Center— 2/1- No lunch; 2/8- Zack's BBQ; 2/15- Kathy Swartz; 2/22- Potluck—Bring a dish to share; 2/29- Chick-a-Pea. \$5 donation. Sign up starts Friday before next lunch by calling 527.3435.

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MENDING HEARTS

GRIEF SUPPORT GROUP



A new Mending Hearts Grief Support group through HopeWest of Delta County will begin Monday, February 19th at the Paonia Senior Center. If you've experienced a loss this can help. The group meets weekly from 3:30-4:45 through March 18th. Free but registration required—contact bereavement coordinator Claire Dauwe at CDauwe@HopeWestCO.org or 874.0628.

For women only: Would you like to collaborate with aging, rather than fight against it? Could you benefit from more self-compassion and a greater sense of purpose? Embracing Your Wisdom Years is an experiential workshop guided by Carolyn Ringo beginning on Tuesday afternoon, February 27th in Paonia. If you are curious, please go to <https://www.carolynringo.com/> to learn more.



Heart-to-Heart: Let's End Hunger in the Valley!

Instead of mailing Valentines this year, we're sending out this call to keep elders supplied with healthy food. Even in the abundant North Fork Valley, too many seniors lack the funds and/or the mobility to keep themselves supplied with fresh nutritious produce. Last year, when we wanted to expand the delivery of organic vegetables from the Living Farm, individuals in the community stepped up so we could serve more folks, especially in Hotchkiss and Crawford. If you want to make a direct gift to alleviate food insecurity among our elders, please consider an earmarked gift to our CSA program. You can make a difference!

Thanks to our generous sponsors:



Thanks to our generous coffee sponsor:
Both Senior Connections and the Paonia Senior Center appreciate their support!