

# Weekly

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The show is over  
at CinéArts

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## VILLAGE PEOPLE

Through Avenidas Village, seniors find support while aging in place

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# Living Well

A monthly special section of news & information for seniors

## Home - but not alone

In virtual Village, seniors find support while aging in place

By Chris Kenrick  
Photos by Magali Gauthier



Even as the coronavirus lockdown kept most people apart during 2020, one group of local seniors found ways to stay connected through a grassroots support network launched a decade earlier to help those aging at

home combat isolation.

Called Avenidas Village because of its affiliation with the local senior services agency Avenidas, the organization operates much like a mutual aid society for seniors growing old in their own homes.

About 300 Palo Alto-area seniors belong to the local network.

“Avenidas Village has become my community,” said Menlo Park resident Alice Kozar, a retired physician who joined several years ago after her husband developed health problems, including dementia and Alzheimer’s disease. “I am now home but not alone. Even though my son suffered a surprise stroke and died at 45, and my husband is in assisted living ... I don’t feel isolated.”

In exchange for annual membership dues, the network helps members coordinate daily living, social and recreational activities, home maintenance, health, transportation, social engagement, caregiving, end-of-life concerns and other challenges that often confront seniors who live in their own homes.

Membership dues support two-and-a-half staff positions and a host of ongoing resources and activities, including lists of vetted service providers, social events, walking groups, excursions, lectures and discussions.

Village members can arrange to receive check-in phone calls on a daily, weekly or monthly basis, and an email list provides quick feedback when a member poses a question to the group.

Most of the current Village members range in age from their early 70s to late 90s, said Dawn Greenblat, member services manager. The oldest is 108 and still living in her own home. Most members are retired, though some are still working.

Annually, the dues are \$1,040 for an individual and \$1,490 for a couple, with reduced rates for seniors who have incomes below \$60,000 a year.

“We’re one of the best-kept secrets around,” said Palo Alto resident Chuck Sieloff, a retired technology manager who first joined the Village when his wife developed early symptoms of dementia and Alzheimer’s disease.

“I thought it would be a good, supportive environment for her,” Sieloff said. She participated in “various exercise classes, a knit-

“Partly because of the strength of the Village ties, that decision was relatively easy for me,” he said. “I think the Village does make that path to stay in your own home a lot easier.”

Enjoying good health, Sieloff said he now uses the Village “primarily for social engagement, activities and things I wouldn’t otherwise do,” including lectures, museum tours and lunches.

Dick Smallwood of Palo Alto, a retired management consultant, said the Village is constantly evolving and is completely different from what it was when he and his wife joined eight years ago.

“We’re always trying to make it better — it’s really a dynamic organization,” he said. Recently a member suggested setting up Zoom events around Thanksgiving and Christmas for people who are alone for the holidays.

“That turned out to be a very popular idea so we’ll probably continue something like that, and that’s just an example of the Village as a living, breathing organism,” said Smallwood, who estimates he spends about 20 hours a week volunteering with the program, managing special interest groups such as those on current events, video discussions and hearing issues.

While caring for his wife, who died last year, Smallwood said he drew on Village partnerships for services like hospice and palliative care.

***‘I am now home but not alone. Even though my son suffered a surprise stroke and died at 45, and my husband is in assisted living ... I don’t feel isolated.’***

— Alice Kozar, retired physician and Menlo Park resident

ting group and activities to keep her engaged and active where at the same time people could sort of look out for her and make sure she was okay.”

After his wife died in 2018, Sieloff said his Village connections influenced his decision to remain in the family home, where he’d lived for 45 years, rather than move to a retirement community.



Above, Alice Kozar, a retired physician and Menlo Park resident, is among the approximately 300 local seniors who are members of Avenidas Village. Top, Dick Smallwood, left, and Chuck Sieloff walk with Avenidas Village members through Rinconada Park in Palo Alto on June 30.



## Hire a Nurse for Peace of Mind

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# Senior Focus

**LONGEVITY ADVICE ...** "Smile more and say hello," said **Menlo Park resident Bob Williams on the occasion of his 100th birthday** Wednesday, June 23. Williams celebrated the event on a Zoom call with 133 of his fellow members of the Palo Alto University Rotary Club, where he spent 20 minutes sharing his nine points for living well and happily to 100. The nine points involve exercise, avoiding life-threatening falls, seeking passions, writing, joining and participating in organizations, recognizing others and expressing gratitude, contacting others each week, mentoring, and smiling and saying hello. A graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy and a veteran of World War II, Williams earned a master's degree from Stanford University and worked in the life insurance industry.

**ASTRONAUT TO SPEAK ...** Astronaut and physician Thomas Marshburn, who is **scheduled to pilot a SpaceX launch later this year**, will speak at the Wednesday, July 21, meeting of Branch 35 of Sons in Retirement. Marshburn has flown twice to the International Space Station. In 2009 he flew aboard the U.S. Space Shuttle, and in 2012 he launched from Kazakhstan in a Russian Soyuz spacecraft. His first mission lasted 16 days, while the second was nearly five months. Sons in Retirement is an organization that aims to enrich the lives of its members through activities, events, and luncheons. The free virtual event will be held from 12:25 to 1:30 p.m. To receive a Zoom link, call Paul Schutz at 408-313-6852 by July 19. ■

*Items for Senior Focus may be emailed to Palo Alto Weekly Contributing Writer Chris Kenrick at [ckenrick@pawebly.com](mailto:ckenrick@pawebly.com).*

## Avenidas Rides Again!

Door to Door Program restarts rides in July!



You can turn to us once again to safely drive you to:

- ✓ Medical / Dental appointments
- ✓ Hair salons
- ✓ Stores
- ✓ Physical therapy sessions
- ✓ Social outings with friends
- ✓ Other

Note: Volunteer drivers and Lyft drivers follow government protocol for ridesharing and contactless delivery to protect everyone involved.

To book your next ride with us, simply call (650) 289-5411 or email [rides@avenidas.org](mailto:rides@avenidas.org)

Let's get back on the road again!



For complete schedule or info about Avenidas events, call 650-289-5400

### Living Well

## JULY 2021

### Calendar of Events

**July 1**  
**Wonder Women Lesbian Social Group via Zoom**  
3-4pm via Zoom. Email [jenn@seniorshowerproject.com](mailto:jenn@seniorshowerproject.com) for info and to register. Free.

**July 2**  
**Door to Door Transportation rides are now available!**  
Call 650-289-4111 to schedule.

**July 5**  
**Independence Day.**  
Avenidas closed.

**July 6**  
**International Kissing Day**

**July 7**  
**Mindfulness Meditation**  
Every Wednesday, 2-3pm, via Zoom. Visit [www.avenidas.org](http://www.avenidas.org) for log on information. Free.

**July 8**  
**Info Session: ClearCaptions Advanced Telephone Captioning**  
11am-12pm via Zoom. RSVP for log on info to [register@avenidas.org](mailto:register@avenidas.org). Free

**Gay Men's Walking Group Planning Meeting**  
3-3:30pm, 2nd & 4th Thursdays via Zoom. Email [tkingery@avenidas.org](mailto:tkingery@avenidas.org) for more info and to register. Free.

**Song Appreciation Group "Favorite Song from a Musical or Play,"**  
4-5pm via Zoom. Email [tkingery@avenidas.org](mailto:tkingery@avenidas.org) for more info and to register. Free

**Avenidas Village Coffee Chat**  
10am via Zoom. Email [dgreenblat@avenidas.org](mailto:dgreenblat@avenidas.org) to register. Free.

**July 9**  
**National Sugar Cookie Day**

**July 12**  
**Tech and Innovation Discussion Group via Zoom**  
12-1pm, on Mondays. For info or to register email [rspv@seniorplanetavenidas.org](mailto:rspv@seniorplanetavenidas.org). Free

**July 13**  
**Webinar: The Growing Challenges of Aging in Place with Chuck Sieloff via Zoom**  
1:30-3pm. RSVP for log on info [dgreenblat@avenidas.org](mailto:dgreenblat@avenidas.org). Free.

**July 14**  
**Book Club: Caste: The Origins of our Discontents by Isabel Wilkerson**  
2:30-4pm, Avenidas@450Bryant. Space is limited. RSVP required. Email [register@avenidas.org](mailto:register@avenidas.org). Free  
**Avenidas Village Coffee Chat**  
10am via Zoom. Email [dgreenblat@avenidas.org](mailto:dgreenblat@avenidas.org) to register. Free.

**July 15**  
**Tinnitus Support Group**  
5:30-7:30pm via Zoom. RSVP for log on info to [register@avenidas.org](mailto:register@avenidas.org). Free

**July 16**  
**Webinar: New to Medicare with HICAP via Zoom**  
1:30-3pm. RSVP for log on info [register@avenidas.org](mailto:register@avenidas.org). Free.

**July 19**  
**LGBTQ+ Empowerment and Connections**  
2:30 -3:30pm via Zoom. RSVP for log on info to [LGBTQ@avenidas.org](mailto:LGBTQ@avenidas.org). Free

**July 20**  
**Wonder Women Lesbian Social Group via Zoom**  
7-8m via Zoom. Email [jenn@seniorshowerproject.com](mailto:jenn@seniorshowerproject.com) for info and to register. Free

**July 21**  
**FREE Bilingual Class Demo: Digital Photography - A Beginners Class with Chris Shum via Zoom**  
10:30am-1pm. Presented in English and Mandarin. RSVP for log on info [ACCC@avenidas.org](mailto:ACCC@avenidas.org). Free.

**July 22**  
**Book Club: Apeirogen by Colum McCann**  
2:30-4pm, via Zoom. RSVP for log on info to [register@avenidas.org](mailto:register@avenidas.org). Free

**Avenidas Village Coffee Chat**  
10am via Zoom. Email [dgreenblat@avenidas.org](mailto:dgreenblat@avenidas.org) to register. Free.

**Gay Men's Walking Group Planning Meeting**  
3-3:30pm, 2nd & 4th Thursdays via Zoom. Email [tkingery@avenidas.org](mailto:tkingery@avenidas.org) for more info and to register. Free.

**Song Appreciation Group "Song from your Senior Year in High School"**  
4-5pm via Zoom. Email [tkingery@avenidas.org](mailto:tkingery@avenidas.org) for more info and to register. Free

**July 23**  
**Gorgeous Grandma Day**  
Need we say more? 😊

**July 24**  
**"Coming Out" exhibit meet up @ SJ History Museum**  
12:30-1pm. Space is limited. RSVP required. Email [tkingery@avenidas.org](mailto:tkingery@avenidas.org). Free

**July 26**  
**Bilingual Workshop: Reducing mortality rates in the Asian American Community through tobacco cessation and lung cancer screening with Stanford Supportive Care via Zoom**  
1-2pm. Presented in English and Mandarin. RSVP for log on info [ACCC@avenidas.org](mailto:ACCC@avenidas.org). Free.

**July 27**  
**Apple Tech Tutoring**  
1:15-3:30pm, on Tuesdays. RSVP required. Email [rspv@seniorplanetavenidas.org](mailto:rspv@seniorplanetavenidas.org). Free.

**July 28**  
**Wellness Wednesdays Explore Tech Lectures**  
2-3:15pm, on Wednesdays. For information or to register email [rspv@seniorplanetavenidas.org](mailto:rspv@seniorplanetavenidas.org). Free.

**July 29**  
**Webinar: Big Data, the Microbiome, and Your Health with Dr. Michael Snyder via Zoom**  
11am-12pm. RSVP for log on info [register@avenidas.org](mailto:register@avenidas.org). Free.

**July 30**  
**International Day of Friendship**

Village

(continued from page 20)

“At the same time that I was helping my wife, I still had some of these activities going on with the Village, which gave me a life outside of caregiving,” he said.

When the pandemic struck, Village activities switched to Zoom, with tutorials for those who needed help accessing the platform. Village members received calls to make sure they were okay, and the staff began making grocery runs for members who needed help.

And now that the country is emerging from the pandemic, the organization plans to permanently shift some of its services to a hybrid model.

“We’ll actually go back to getting together at restaurants for our monthly ‘lunch bunch,’” Smallwood said. But some activities, such as bi-weekly social hours, some lectures and committee meetings, might continue on Zoom.

Avenidas Village also organizes members into “neighborhood clusters,” holding some activities within those groups as a way for members to get to know others who live nearby.

Post-pandemic, Kozar said, “We’d like to invite others to meet with us and learn about our activities, to expand to include people who are living in their homes not

so happily. We know they’d really enjoy having good friends that are trustworthy, not demanding of a lot of time and attention but just fun to be with.”

Participation by members varies widely. Some relatively inactive members tend to stay at home and enjoy the remote services but not come out for activities like the walking groups or lunch gatherings, Kozar said.

**‘We’re always trying to make it better — it’s really a dynamic organization.’**

— Dick Smallwood, retired management consultant

“They just enjoy the services, stay in their homes and go to meetings as they wish,” she said.

In spite of the built-in support, Village membership has its limits.

“Some people become ill and need around-the-clock care and other situations beyond the Village, so they choose not to rejoin,” Kozar said. “It’s often health issues.”

Others leave when they move out of their own homes into a retirement community, Sieloff and Smallwood said, though reduced-priced memberships also are available to that group.

Founded in 2007, Avenidas

Village is part of a national movement of about 300 similar “Villages” modeled after Boston’s Beacon Hill Village, which pioneered the concept in 1999 after a group of neighbors formed an association. Avenidas Village was the first program in California, where there are now about 60, including about 15 in the Bay Area.

Though 90% of Americans over 65 say they want to stay in their current residence as long as possible and 80% believe they’ll always live there, there are many barriers to making that plan a reality, Sieloff said.

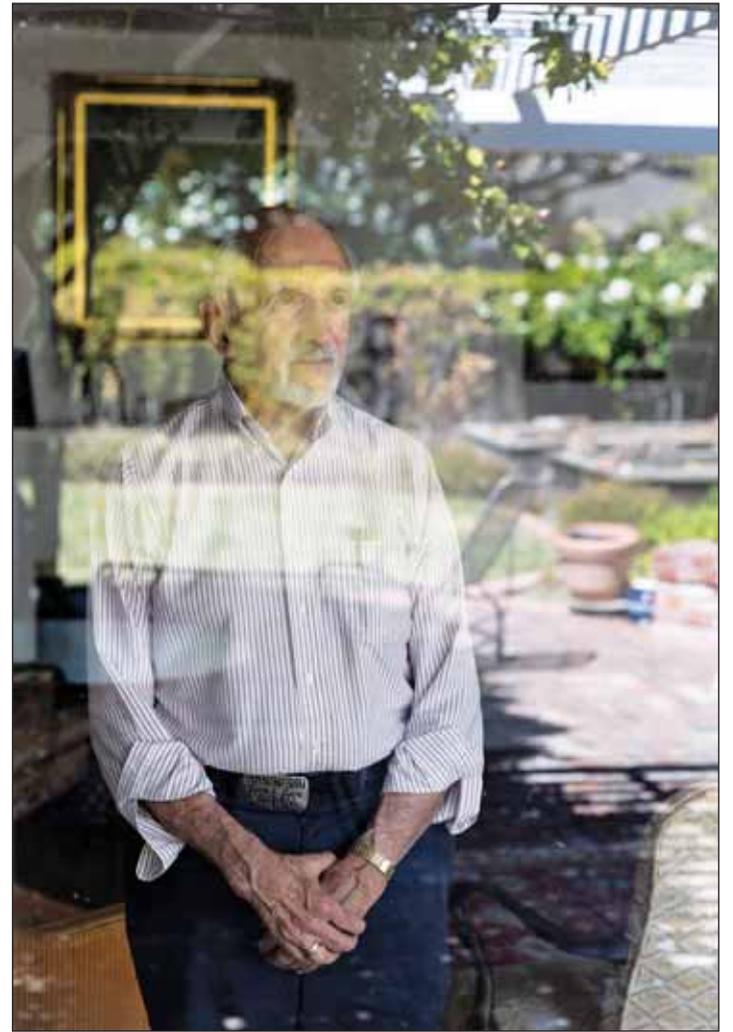
He maintains that senior Villages can help. When it comes to planning for old age, he said, “denial is not a strategy.”

To sign up for a July 13 webinar by Sieloff on “The Growing Challenges of Aging in Place,” or to learn more about Avenidas Village, go to [avenidasvillage.org](http://avenidasvillage.org).

For information about other California Villages go to [villagemovementcalifornia.org](http://villagemovementcalifornia.org). The national Village network can be accessed at [vtvnetwork.org](http://vtvnetwork.org). ■

**Email Contributing Writer Chris Kenrick at [ckenrick@paweekly.com](mailto:ckenrick@paweekly.com)**

**About the cover:** Diane Posnak, left, and Gee Gee Williams meet up in Palo Alto on June 30 for a weekly walk organized through Avenidas Village. Photo by Magali Gauthier. Cover design by Douglas Young.



Palo Alto resident Dick Smallwood joined Avenidas Village eight years ago.



Your Realtor & You

Silicon Valley REALTORS® Present Scholarships to 18 Graduating High School Seniors

The Silicon Valley REALTORS® Charitable Foundation, the charitable arm of the Silicon Valley Association of REALTORS® (SILVAR), presented scholarship awards to 18 graduating seniors from public high schools in Silicon Valley at the end of the 2020-2021 school year. Each student received a \$1,500 scholarship.

The Charitable Foundation’s REALTOR® scholars program recognizes students who have exemplified outstanding achievements in academics, extracurricular/employment activities and community involvement. The selection committee includes representatives from the local business community, area high schools, and SILVAR.

The scholarships are made possible by donations from members of the local trade association who are engaged in the real estate business on the Peninsula and in the South Bay. Now on its 22nd year, the program has awarded \$409,500 in scholarships to graduating seniors in communities served by SILVAR members.

“We are happy that for 22 years our members have been able to assist our youth in beginning their college careers,” said Nina Yamaguchi, scholars program chair. “The seniors selected this year are very deserving of recognition not only because of their academic accomplishments, but also for their contributions to their communities and the tenacity they have exhibited in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic.”

Students who received scholarships, the schools from which they graduated, and the colleges/universities they plan to attend are Elise Oswald,

Cupertino High School (San Jose State University); Anne Hu, Fremont High School (Tufts University); Hanamae de Guzman, Gunn High School (San Francisco State University); Calix Tang, Homestead High School (Georgia Institute of Technology); Alex Ojeda, Leigh High School (Lafayette College); Olivia Colace, Los Altos High School (Bryn Mawr College); Jaewon Lee, Los Gatos High School (UC Berkeley); Alvin Cheng, Lynbrook High School (UC San Diego); Ally Chu, Menlo-Atherton High School (UC Santa Barbara); Elijah Diaz, Monta Vista High School (University of Chicago); Ethan Huang, Mountain View High School (UC Berkeley); Alex Selwyn, Palo Alto High School (Stanford University); Meenakshi Mittal, Prospect High School (UC Berkeley); Michelle Malagon-Cazarin, Santa Clara High School (San Jose State University); Henry Jin Weng, Saratoga High School (Stanford University); Meriem Cherif, Westmont High School (UC Berkeley); Selin Musa, Wilcox High School (UC Berkeley); and Gloria Riva, Woodside High School (San Jose State University).

“Our scholarship program is a way REALTORS® are able to give back to our communities. We thank the wonderful educators in our service area, especially for their dedication during the last 15 months, where they had to teach and guide their students under challenging conditions,” said Charitable Foundation president Eileen Giorgi.

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Information provided in this column is presented by the Silicon Valley Association of REALTORS®. Send questions to Rose Meily at [rmeily@silvar.org](mailto:rmeily@silvar.org).

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