

We Can Not Forget

By Michelle DiBudo, Executive Director of VCRC



Michelle DiBudo

Every day I hear stories of heroism, and not in those stories you see in the newspaper or on television, but those that demonstrate the capacity of the human heart through caregiving. Caregiving has varied looks and can be found in various locations. Some are within the same home or town, some are distant and some take place in long term care facilities. No matter where these instances are found, all require love and dedication. I have

often wondered over the years why more caregiver stories aren't highlighted in the media. However, in our newsletter, with a circulation of over 3,000 readers, I feel fortunate to have the opportunity to share what are some of the most important examples of heroism.

One definition of heroism is putting others first, even at your own peril. The noun "heroism" comes from the Greek *hērōs*. One who shows great courage and valor is referred to as a hero; their actions considered to be acts of heroism.

I believe heroism is synonymous with caregiving. You might think this is an exaggeration until you've heard these stories. A husband takes care of his wife with dementia 24/7, moving her bed downstairs near the kitchen window to enjoy the sunlight, then moving his bed alongside her so she isn't afraid.

A son takes care of his 100-year-old mother's personal hygiene for no other reason than she needs his help. A young wife patiently answers the same repetitive questions from her brain-injured husband, at least forty times a day, to help him maintain his dignity.

How do they do it? I honestly don't know. I do know that not all are called to be heroes but for those who are.... thank you! Know that we see you and are there for you. Caregivers have a 67% higher mortality rate than non-caregivers, therefore we urge you to please seek help and resources, allowing you to continue to thrive during your caregiving journey. Please don't risk your own health during this time. Though we see you as heroes, we also recognize you are only human.

For those not currently caring for someone, please help us continue to serve those who are. Your financial contributions allow families to be able to seek the help they most desperately need. In this way, you help us recognize and honor these heroes, by providing much needed assistance to them.

Suicide and Older Adults: What You Should Know

According to the National Council on Aging, suicide is one of the leading causes of death in the U.S., and rates are on the rise—especially among people age 65 and over.

Suicide is higher in older adults for a number of reasons. These range from depression, to grief over the passing of loved ones, to chronic illness.

Suicide is more than a preventable tragedy—it's a growing public health crisis. According to provisional statistics released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the U.S. suicide rate reached a historic high in 2022. And, while nearly every age group experienced an increase, older Americans fared the worst. Compared to 2021, suicide deaths rose 8.1% among people age 65 and over.

Why is suicide higher in older adults?

Suicidal behavior is common in older adults for a number of reasons. One is that many seniors are

homebound and live on their own. If their spouse has recently died and there are no family members or friends nearby, they may lack the social connections they need to thrive.

Other reasons for suicidal intent in older adults include:

Grief over lost loved ones: Adults who live long enough may begin to lose cherished family members and friends to old age and illness. They may wrestle with their own mortality and experience anxiety about dying. For some, this "age of loss" is overwhelming and can intensify feelings of loneliness and hopelessness.

Loss of self-sufficiency: Seniors who were once able to dress themselves, drive, read, and lead an active life may grapple with a loss of identity. They may mourn the independent, vibrant person they once were.

Chronic illness and pain: Older adults are more likely to face illnesses and chronic disease such as arthritis, heart problems, high blood pressure,

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Our Newsletter is Now Paperless!

Please visit our website to sign up for the future digital newsletters so you can stay informed and so we can stay in touch with our local caregivers.
www.valleycrc.org

Miracles, They Do Happen

By Bud Sweeney

Here I am, 85 years old and during those years never once thought that a miracle would happen to me. But, IT DID!

During my life, a miracle was slowly heading my way. But why me? I'm just an ordinary Joe having lived a life similar to many millions of other people. But it actually took form years before it actually happened. Twenty-eight years ago, when I was fifty seven I underwent a quadruple heart by-pass. Maybe then is when it took blossom. Who knows?

Having recuperated from the heart surgery, I often wondered why God didn't take me at that time. I was ready...just lying on the table. The local Catholic Priest performed the Last Rights with me the evening before. I was ready.

It was thirteen years later in 2006 that my brother Pat held a Reunion at Indian Lake, Ohio and had invited myself and a few of his college and Air Force buddies to his lakeside cottage. Well, who showed up but my High School sweetheart, Norma Johnson. We had not seen each other for fifty-two years. During that period Norma had gotten married, had two girls and been divorced. Me? My wife of forty years had passed away the year before. Norma and I spent our initial three hours in a rubber life raft stocked with a few beers while happily reminiscing about our earlier lives. After a few suds I proudly announced my marrying again was definitely OFF the table. Upon which she smugly stated, "Don't worry! definitely won't put it ON the table"!!

But, you guessed it! We were married March 7th, 2008 in Reno, Nevada.

Things went along quite well, both of us being retired and enjoying each other but Dementia entered the scene around our eighth year together. Slowly Norma began to lose her memory. Her speech and physical abilities did not seem to slow down to any degree. But

THINGS WENT ALONG QUITE WELL, BOTH OF US BEING RETIRED AND ENJOYING EACH OTHER BUT DEMENTIA ENTERED THE SCENE AROUND OUR EIGHTH YEAR TOGETHER.

Norma definitely needed special personal care and I relished this opportunity. Life went on for the next four years this way, but then she started to refuse her medicines, ate very little and needed assistance in many respects. Again, I loved taking care of her and I often told her that we would spend the next eight to ten years together living just as we were. But that changed when I needed assistance helping her to the bathroom, to bed and even getting in the car. Needless to say, we were "home bound". But that didn't bother me in the least.

Soon even with assistance from an in-home care agency and hospice was needed. Why, because I realized I could no longer help her. The next day while taking my daily walk I said to God, "I believe it is time Norma goes up to Heaven to be with her Mother". I had now painfully released my wonderful Norma. This was very hard to do but it had to be done.

I WALKED IN, BENT DOWN AND SOFTLY KISSED HER ON THE FOREHEAD. NORMA IMMEDIATELY OPENED HER EYES WIDE, LOOKED STRAIGHT AT ME, SMILED THE BIGGEST SMILE I HAD EVER SEEN, THEN REACHED DOWN TOOK MY HAND, BROUGHT IT TO HER LIPS. THAT WAS THE MIRACLE!

Thirty minutes later when I arrived home, the Caretaker said Norma was fine and is sound asleep. I walked in, bent down and softly kissed her on the forehead. Norma immediately opened her eyes wide, looked straight at me, smiled the biggest smile I had ever seen, then reached down took my hand, brought it to her lips. That was the miracle! During those short seconds I knew exactly what Norma was saying to me, "Thank you Bud for releasing me and thank you for taking care of me. I love you".

Soon after It dawned on me why God did not take me when I was on the operating table. I had a job to do. I just didn't know what, when, or how.

Yes. Miracles, they do happen!

There's a Big Election Coming Up in November!

By Susan Bussean, Program Manager: Fresno-Madera Long Term Care Ombudsman Program

If you or a loved one, live in an assisted living or skilled nursing facility, you should be aware that residents do not lose their right to vote just because they have moved into long-term care. However, they may face a number of practical barriers to exercising their right to vote in the upcoming November 2024 election. Residents of long-term care facilities often have a harder time voting due to mobility, health, and other issues that inhibit their ability to vote.

Long-term care facilities must work with their residents to ensure they are able to vote

Long-term care facilities must "have a plan to ensure residents can exercise their right to vote, whether in-person, by mail, absentee or other authorized process," according to 2020 guidance from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services "affirming the continued right of nursing home residents to exercise their right to vote."

A long-term care facility must not interfere with a resident exercising his or her right vote, nor may a facility coerce a resident during the voting process. Government guidance on voting applies to residents of long-term care facilities, and requires facilities to make accommodations to support residents in voting.

These practices will help ensure that all residents in long-term care facilities are supported in exercising their right to vote:

- Assist any resident to vote who expresses a desire to vote, and ensure staff does not make their own determinations about who is eligible to vote.
- Help residents register to vote, obtain ballots, and assist residents with filling out ballots and returning them. Facilities should provide stamps and envelopes to residents to return ballots.
- Permit residents to designate a person to help them to vote, and facilitating meetings with the designated person in the facility and in a manner that follows infection control guidelines.
- Provide access to stationery, postage, writing implements, and the ability to send mail and help residents promptly send their ballot.
- Develop a schedule of van transportation opportunities to drive residents to and from the polling place.
- Coordinate with the state and county to take advantage of existing programs that help residents to vote. This includes, mobile polling, and assistance in registering to vote, requesting an

LONG-TERM CARE FACILITIES MUST "HAVE A PLAN TO ENSURE RESIDENTS CAN EXERCISE THEIR RIGHT TO VOTE..."

absentee ballot, or completing a ballot from an agent of the Resident's choosing, including family representative, Long-Term Care Ombudsman or nursing home staff.

As advocates, Ombudsman program support all residents' right to vote and advocate on behalf of residents to ensure that they have the opportunity to participate in the election process.

"It is imperative that ombudsmen emphasize the importance of voting to residents and staff of LTC facilities. It is a right and empowers the residents, who sometimes feel they are no longer part of the world. Voting helps to preserve dignity and keep residents engaged in life, which I feel is essential to survival" – LTC Ombudsman

For more information, please contact the Fresno-Madera Long Term Care Ombudsman Program at 559-224-9177.



OUR MISSION

Valley Caregiver Resource Center offers a comprehensive array of services designed to assist elders and their families master the challenges that accompany the aging process.

As long-standing advocates and collaborators in preserving the health and quality of life of others, our aim is to promote personal and community well-being.



Small Acts Making Big Impacts

By Meghan Velasquez, OASIS Program Manager

What started out as a fun yearly tradition for a mother and daughter, turned into a small fundraiser with a big impact for OASIS Adult Day Program.

Bakersfield residents, Dorothy Fox and Yvonne Lynch were gearing up for their annual jam making day when they had the idea to turn it into a fundraiser for the Valley Caregiver Resource Center's day program. Having been impacted by dementia in their own family with their husband/father, Clay Fox, they wanted to help more families effected by this disease. OASIS Program Manager, Meghan Velasquez, is their niece so they knew exactly where they wanted the money to go. Having a goal of \$500 they started their process.



Dorothy Fox and Yvonne Lynch

Well, 5 weeks, 3 batches and 100 jars of jam later they doubled their goal and were able to make a \$1000 donation towards the expansion of OASIS Adult Day Program.

OASIS Adult Day Program Veteran Spotlight: Ross Lopez

By Meghan Velasquez, OASIS Program Manager

Rosendo E. Lopez enlisted in the United States Airforce on July 14, 1965 and was Honorably Discharged on a Christmas Early Release option on December 13, 1968. After graduating from Edison High School in Fresno in 1963, Rosendo, or Ross as family and friends call him, decided to attend Fresno City College to study Aircraft Mechanics for roughly 2 years before receiving a draft notice regarding the Vietnam Crises, as it was referred to then. Ross remembers going straight to the recruitment center to volunteer his services. "I was honored to serve my country in the capacity of my choosing as a Helicopter Mechanic."

As a Helicopter Mechanic, Ross was stationed at Francis E. Warren Air Force Base in Cheyenne, Wyoming. "My responsibilities included repairing UH1F helicopters used to service missile sites and transport officers and guards." Serving in the military has been a highlight of Ross's life to know he served out of love for his country, but also finding great purpose at a young age to responsibly handle his independence.

Ross wasn't married at the time of service in the military—that came later—but he remembers looking forward to coming home and seeing his family, but most of all, his



mom and dad. Ross is the youngest of ten children. "I remember looking forward to eating some of my mom's homemade enchiladas. They were the best! Mom was such a good cook."

"My time spent serving my country in the US Air Force allowed me to meet friends from all over the country and I still have wonderful memories of those times." After the military, Ross went to work for the FCEOC as a Migrant Education Liaison helping to provide families access to resources such as transportation, housing, medical services, and educational resources for the children. In this role, his people skills and being bilingual in English



and Spanish were valuable. After retiring from Fresno County, Ross decided to change the scenery a bit and hit the road. "Driving is so peaceful because you get to see beautiful sights and you are basically your own boss. I loved driving and I love new adventures." Ross is proud of his journey, his family and the time he was able to serve his country "I'm a true red, white and blue American man who loves his country."

IT'S TIME TO CALL!

HICAP
Health Insurance
Counseling and
Advocacy Program

**OPEN ENROLLMENT IS
OCTOBER 15 - DECEMBER 7**

CALL TO SCHEDULE YOUR APPOINTMENT TO REVIEW YOUR MEDICARE PLAN CHOICES

HICAP is a program of the Valley Caregiver Resource Center serving Medicare beneficiaries in Fresno and Madera counties. HICAP counseling services are provided by counselors registered with the California Department of Aging who are acting in good faith to provide information about health insurance policies and benefits to you, the client. Counseling is free, confidential, and unbiased.

www.valleycrc.org
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**Want to become a
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**Call (559)224-9117
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Travel Tips

By Lynne Raynor, OASIS Newsletter Editor



According to the “The Global Intelligence Letter”, travel by air will increase by 30% in 2023, even though hotels and airlines may not be able to keep up with the pace. The term “No-normal” is being used to describe airline travel this year, so if you are travelling with your loved one who has dementia, it is really important to know what facilities and services are available for you.

Your first consideration is to decide whether your loved one can travel alone or needs someone to accompany him. In looking at the various airlines they require a companion if the person

1. is unable to comprehend and respond to the safety instructions given,
2. has a hearing and/or vision problem so severe that she is unable to establish communication with the flight staff, or
3. has a mobility disability so severe that she would be unable to help in her own evacuation.

Another related consideration here is having a safety plan for possible eventualities like a delayed and/or cancelled flight, which can also affect connecting flights. Will someone be available to help either at the origin, layover (for connecting flights) or the destination? Do you need to consider special dietary needs?

Once this decision has been made and plans implemented it's time to look at the airlines. The following eight airlines service Fresno Yosemite Airport (FAT): AeroMexico, Allegiant, Alaska, American, Delta, Southwest, United, and Volaris. Each, along with the airport itself, offers services for the disabled, some for those with cognitive disabilities and some not. This article will attempt to give you an overview of what these services are to help you if you are travelling this year.

Fresno Yosemite Airport offers two amenities: wheelchairs and companion care restrooms for people who need someone with

them for travelling. When I called the Airport Information Desk at (559) 621-4500 the agent said the best thing to do was to call the airline and their agent would add the information to the ticket. If you go to <https://flyfresno/traveling-with-disabled/> there is a list of all eight airlines and their contact numbers.

Before even getting on the airplane, you have to pass through the screening process, and TSA provides help for disabled people during this process. For detailed information call the TSA Cares Hotline at (855) 787-2227 prior to travelling for any questions you have.

A rule of thumb for all of the airlines that I looked at is if you have special needs and/or questions, you should try to address those when making the reservations, but no later than between 24 and 48 hours ahead of flight time. The needs can then be added to the ticket notes. All that I looked at will assist with getting on board, deplaning, and moving to a connecting flight.

TIPS BY AIRLINE

AeroMexico

- When making reservations put “Add special assistance” to the passenger details page.
- For hearing, vision, cognitive and developmental disabilities, request “individual assistance.”

Alaska Airlines

- Request extra service when booking at (800) 503-0101.
- You can download mobile app “Fly for All” for first time flyers, minors travelling alone, and people with cognitive and developmental challenges.
- Also available: “Wings for Autism” is a practice session for travelers, “Sensory Overload” video interacts with the “Autism Project.”

Allegiant Airlines

- Passenger must self-identify at all points of travel.
- Does not address cognitive disabilities specifically, but for any special needs, contact the Reservation Center at (702) 505-8888.

American Airlines

- When booking or managing your trip on aa.com, “Add special assistance” on passenger details if you have hearing, vision, cognitive, or developmental disability.
- For hearing or speech disability, call (800) 735-2988. For all other disabilities, call (800) 237-7976.
- On-line: <https://www.aa.com/li18n/travel-info/specialassistance/special-assistance.jsp>

Delta Airlines

- Multi-Sensory Rooms for travelers who may be overcome by the noise, crowded conditions, etc. of a large airport. Available at certain airports – Atlanta (ATZ), New York La Guardia (LGA), Pittsburg (PIT), San Diego (SAN), Seattle-Tacoma (SEA), Birmingham-Shuttlesworth Int'l, UK (BHM), Myrtle Beach (MYR), Dublin, Ireland (DUB), and Portland (PDX).

Southwest Airlines

- Will introduce passenger to Flight Attendant (FA) for personal contact
- Online look at Southwest Airlines disabled assistance. Under “Accessible Travel Assistance,” click on “Cognitive and Developmental Disabilities.” They provide a nice, user-friendly menu.

United Airlines

- For general information at each airport facility, call the Accessibility Desk at (800) 228-2744.
- On certain United aircraft seating 60+ passengers, on board wheelchairs, which fit the aisles and lavatories, are available.

Volaris

- Contact airline at least 24 hours in advance for special assistance for “Seniors Over 60.” However, “if person has an impairment and is not able to be self-sufficient (senile dementia, Alzheimer's disease, or degenerative illnesses)” service is not applicable.
- May request early boarding, will assist with boarding, disembarking, and flight connections.
- Can contact airline for more information at +1 855 (8652747) or at <https://cms.volaris.com/en/travel-info/contact-us/>

SOURCES

Aeromexico: aeromexico.com/en-us/travel-information/special-services
 Alaska Airlines: <https://www.alaskaair.com/content/travel-info/accessible-services/specialservices-developmental/>
 Allegiant Airlines: <https://www.allegiantair.com/passengers-special-needs/>
 American Airlines: <https://www.aa.com/i18n/travel-info/special-assistance/special-assistance.jsp>
 Delta Airlines: www.delta.com/us/en/accessible-travel-services/cognitive-disability-assistance/
 Fresno Yosemite International Airport: <https://flyfresno.com/traveling-with-disabilities/>
 Southwest Airlines: <https://www.southwest.com/help/accessible-travel-assistance/cognitive-disabilities>
 United Airlines: <https://www.united.com/ual/en/us/fly/travel/special-needs/disabilities/useful-info.html>
 Volaris: <https://cms.volaris.com/en/travel-info/specialservices/special-assistance-for-people-with-disabilities/>
 Wonderlin, Rachel with Geri Lotze, PhD. Creative engagement: A Handbook of Activities for people with Dementia. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2020.



POETRY CORNER

O Patient Caregiver



O patient caregiver, with heart so weary,
I see your slumped shoulders, eyes bleary,
As the days and nights true toll mounts steady—
Caring, lifting, soothing, keeping ready.

The mother you knew fades, her self made shady,
Her memories now shadows, mind unsteady,
She calls your name puzzled, questions ever ready—
As you hold her hand, look on her lovingly.

This woman cradled you as babe so tender,
Her strength and love made your young world bright,
Now the roles reverse in time's swift splendor,
As you guide her faltering steps through night.

Your calm voice and patient ways attend her
Through each fitful night and confused day,
With compassion bathe and gently lift her,
Lead her as a child who's lost her way.

O faithful heart, despair not when she fails you,
Her eyes reflect none who came before,
Let loving purpose within now avail you,
To cradle in kind arms as she cradled yore.

For not in stale duty is your caring rooted,
But watered fresh by love and empathy,
You walk this strange road long, but devoted,
Your gentle soul a balm for what will be.

— Author Unknown

11th Annual Golf Tournament Recap

By Meghan Velasquez, OASIS Program Manager

Drinks, food, prizes and a day filled with giving back. It was truly an unforgettable day filled with laughter, friendly competition, and most importantly, support for our aging community.

Our sponsors are the backbone of our organization and we couldn't do what we do without them. Their generosity has allowed us to provide essential programs and services to seniors in need in our community. From respite care and support groups for caregivers to educational workshops and social events for older adults, their contributions have made a real impact on the lives of those we serve.

So, when you see the names of our sponsors on our website or at events like our golf tournament, know that these are not just companies or organizations - they are true champions for senior care. They are making a

OUR SPONSORS ARE THE BACKBONE OF OUR ORGANIZATION AND WE COULDN'T DO WHAT WE DO WITHOUT THEM.

tangible difference in the lives of seniors and their caregivers every day.

And if you're looking for products or services from businesses that give back to their community, look no further than those who support Valley Caregiver Resource Center. When you choose them, you're not just getting great products or services - you're also supporting an important cause that benefits your neighbors right here at home. To all of our sponsors: thank you for your unwavering commitment to helping us fulfill our mission. You make everything we do possible!

Missed out on the tournament this year?

Don't worry, you can still be a part of the action at our upcoming **Celebration of Care Greek Gala** on October 18th at Clovis Veteran's Memorial District! Immerse yourself in the sights, sounds and flavors of Greece with delicious food, drinks, and exciting silent and live auctions. Get your tickets now and join us for a night to remember!

11TH ANNUAL GOLF TOURNAMENT SPONSORS



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Preferred Landscaping
Right At Home
A-Plus In-Home Care
Cargill
American Quality Life Hospice
Everlight Care
Kevin Gunner

Spotlight: Health Insurance Counseling and Advocacy Program (HICAP)

By Lorena Perez, HICAP Program Manager

What is HICAP? Your local HICAP is one of four programs located at Valley Caregiver Resource Center, and is dedicated to providing free, confidential, and unbiased counseling services to 131,124 Medicare beneficiaries located in both Fresno and Madera counties.

All of the HICAP counselors are registered with the California Department of Aging, they are trained in the most up to date Medicare information throughout the year with continued education and are readily available to provide education on Medicare, one on one counseling and advocacy via phone, virtual or in person. HICAP counselors strive on meeting beneficiaries where they are at in their Medicare journey and equip them with all of the information needed to make an inform decision that best fits their current needs.

HICAP PROVIDES ASSISTANCE WITH ALL THINGS MEDICARE, INCLUDING MEDICARE FRAUD.

HICAP provides assistance with all things Medicare, including Medicare fraud. Counselors serve as trained liaisons for the nationally recognized Senior Medicare Patrol Program. Our counselors help to prevent, detect, and report Medicare fraud and abuse.

MEDICARE BENEFICIARIES ARE GRATEFUL

Dear Jean,

We want to thank you for the generosity of your time and the knowledge about Medicare you shared with us at our meeting. We are digesting the information which we will use as recipients of Medicare.

We are wiser today than we were yesterday after meeting with you. I am sure our paths will cross again. Thank you for sharing your expertise with us.

Sincerely, Fresno-Madera Medicare Beneficiaries

HICAP counselors screen all beneficiaries for programs that they may qualify for, whether it is low-income assistance or plan coverage options. The counselor will assist the beneficiary with all of their concerns and questions.

COMMON REQUESTS ADDRESSED AT HICAP:

- Medicare Benefits and Rights
- New to Medicare
- Medicare options with part A, B, D, supplemental plans and Medicare Advantage "Part C"
- Medicare Savings Program
- Medicare and Retirement
- Questions on prescription drug coverage, co-pays and eligibility
- Appeals and Billing Problems or responding to a denial

- Long-term care insurance policies
- Medicare Fraud and Abuse

Beneficiaries have shared their thoughts on the importance of HICAP's services and expressed the need for its existence. Beneficiaries have shared many stories of being lost and overwhelmed with learning the way of Medicare and picking the right coverage. They have expressed their gratitude of having a place like HICAP.

A Medicare Beneficiary statement survey shows the amount of genuine compassion and dedication that the counselors display daily without fail. Thank you for the continued strength, time and hard work that you put into helping others.



Veterans Aid & Attendance and Housebound Benefits

By Susana Rodriguez, Director of Programs

Veterans Aid and Attendance and Housebound benefits are significant additional benefits that may be paid to veterans and surviving spouses who are receiving VA Pension. Applicants who need ongoing assistance with activities of daily living (including bathing, feeding, dressing needs, etc.), or are housebound, may receive Aid and Attendance or Housebound benefits. These benefits are paid in addition to the applicant's monthly pension (either Non-Service-Connected Pension or Survivor's Pension (aka "Death Pension"), and they are not paid without eligibility to pension. Additionally, a veteran or surviving spouse may not receive Aid and Attendance benefits and Housebound benefits at the same time.

AID & ATTENDANCE (A&A)

Aid and Attendance (A&A) is a benefit paid in addition to the basic monthly pension to applicants who need financial help for in-home care or to pay for an assisted living facility or a nursing home. If you are a veteran or a surviving spouse, you may be eligible for A&A benefits if you meet one of the following disability requirements:

- You require the aid of another person in order to perform personal functions required in everyday living, such as bathing, feeding, dressing, toileting, adjusting prosthetic devices, or protecting yourself from the hazards of your daily environment.
- You are bedridden, in that your disability or disabilities requires that you remain in bed apart from any prescribed course of convalescence or treatment.

- You are a patient in a nursing home due to mental or physical incapacity.
- You are blind, or your eyesight is limited to a corrected 5/200 visual acuity or less in both eyes; or concentric contraction of the visual field to 5 degrees or less.

HOUSEBOUND

Housebound is a benefit paid in addition to the basic monthly pension to applicants who are housebound. If you are a veteran or a surviving spouse and you are substantially confined to your immediate premises because of permanent disability, you may be eligible for Housebound benefits.

EVIDENCE: To support your claim for Aid and Attendance or Housebound benefits, you should have your doctor or care facility staff complete the following forms:

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Suicide (cont.)

and diabetes. These conditions can bring on pain and mobility issues that compromise quality of life. Seniors may also experience loss of vision and other senses, such as hearing, making it harder to do the things they love.

Cognitive impairment: In a 2021 study, researchers found that older adults with mild cognitive impairment and dementia had a higher risk for suicide.⁶ Declines in cognitive function can affect a person's decision-making abilities and increase impulsivity.

Financial troubles: Older adults living on a fixed income may struggle to pay their bills or keep food on the table. For someone who is already struggling with health issues or grief, financial stress can be a trigger for suicidal thoughts.

What are the warning signs of suicide in older adults?

An important first step in preventing suicide is knowing the warning signs. In addition to an explicit expression of suicidal intent, there are certain behaviors that can indicate an older adult is thinking about self-harm. These include:

- Loss of interest in activities they used to enjoy
- Giving away beloved items or changing their will
- Avoiding social activities
- Neglecting self-care, medical regimens, and grooming
- Exhibiting a preoccupation with death
- Lacking concern for personal safety

How to support someone with suicidal thoughts

The 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline outlines five action steps you can take if you know an older adult who is thinking about suicide:

1. Ask. Don't be afraid to be direct with the person at risk. Ask questions like, "Are you thinking about suicide?" and "How can I help you?" to initiate a conversation in a supportive and unbiased way. Be sure to listen carefully to their answers and acknowledge their emotional pain. Help the person stay focused on all the reasons why they should want to keep living.

2. Be there. If you're able to, be physically present for the person in order to ease feelings of isolation and provide a sense of connectedness. If a face-to-face visit is not possible, be there for them via phone or video calls. Work with the individual to identify others who may be willing to lend their help. Be sure not to make any promises that you are unable to keep.

3. Keep them safe. Find out if the person has already made any attempts on their life. Do they have a specific plan or timing in mind? Do they have access to their planned method of self-harm? Learning the answers to these questions can help you understand whether this individual is in immediate danger. In general, the more detailed a person's suicide plan is, the higher their risk. Someone who is at imminent risk for suicide may require more intensive intervention. The 988 Suicide Lifeline can serve as a valuable resource for helping you determine the next steps.

4. Help them connect. If a senior in your life is thinking about suicide, it's important for them to establish support systems they can rely on now and in future moments of crisis. This includes suicide prevention helplines such as the Lifeline, as well as resources available in their local community. Find out if the at-risk person is currently seeing a mental health counselor. If not, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) offers a searchable, confidential directory of mental health providers across the U.S.

5. Follow up. Studies have shown that following up can reduce suicide-related deaths in high-risk populations. Once you've had an initial conversation with the vulnerable person and helped them establish a support network, make sure to check in.

If an older adult you know exhibits suicidal thoughts or behavior, you can help. One option is calling the **988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline**. The 988 service is free, confidential, and available to everyone in the United States **24 hours a day, 7 days a week**.

Reference: National Council on Aging (2024, January 9), *Suicide and Older Adults: What You Should Know*

Veterans Benefits (cont.)

- VA Form 21-2680 Examination for Housebound Status or Permanent Need for Regular Aid and Attendance
- VA Form 21-0779 Request for Nursing Home Information in Connection with Claim for Aid and Attendance

In addition, your application should include evidence that supports your need for Aid and Attendance or Housebound care, such as medical records and physician statements or reports that detail the physical or mental health disabilities that cause your limitations, and the ways in which your functioning is limited (loss of coordination, or conditions affecting the ability to dress and undress, to feed oneself, to attend to sanitary needs, and to keep oneself ordinarily clean and presentable).

For more information on Aid and Attendance and Housebound rates, see pension rate tables in the following links, including the A&A and Housebound rates:

- Veterans pension: <https://benefits.va.gov/pension/>
- Survivors pension: www.benefits.va.gov/pension/current_rates_survivor_pen.asp

Contact your County Veterans Service Office to guide you through the benefits and services available as well as help connect you with other local resources

Reference: California Department of Veterans Affairs (CalVet)

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS

Valley Caregiver Resource Center wants to thank all the generous sponsors and donors throughout the 2024 year for their support as we serve the ageing community.

Without your support, our families would not have the resources and guidance they desperately need.



Medicare Open Enrollment 2024

By Lorna Perez, HICAP Program Manager

Many beneficiaries think that once they complete their initial enrollment into Medicare that they are done. Unfortunately, this thought process can come at a cost.....

Just like your health, Medicare plans can change every year—and your current one might be changing. Plus, not all plans have the same benefits and out-of-pocket costs. By comparing all your options, you could find a plan that offers you better coverage, saves money, or both. That is why it is imperative to contact your local Health Insurance Counseling and Advocacy Program (HICAP) at (559) 224-9117 to complete an annual review of your coverage during Medicare’s Annual Open Enrollment Period (October 15th-December 7th).

This simple call could not only save you money but time and frustration later!

What can beneficiaries do during Medicare’s Annual Open Enrollment Period?




- Beneficiaries already enrolled in Medicare can make changes to their Medicare plan coverage, such as:
- Switching from Original Medicare to a Medicare Advantage plan or vice versa.
- Switching from one Medicare Advantage plan to another.
- Join, switch, or leave a Medicare Part D prescription drug plan.

What should beneficiaries consider during Medicare’s Annual Open Enrollment Period?

- Out-of-pocket costs- premiums, deductibles, copayments, and any other payments not covered by Medicare.
- Prescription drug coverage- eligibility requirements, medication coverage and costs, generic vs. brand name, etc.
- Healthcare needs- any upcoming surgeries or doctor appointments you may have in the coming year.
- Travel plans- Original Medicare typically doesn’t cover services overseas, so if you plan on traveling out of the country, you might consider buying supplemental insurance that will cover you in case of an emergency. *** Some Medicare Advantage plans may provide some coverage overseas. ****

Medicare Annual Enrollment

Important Dates and Deadlines

 Oct 15th Medicare annual enrollment starts The first day you can enroll for Medicare health coverage.	 Dec 7th Medicare annual enrollment ends The last day you can enroll for Medicare health coverage.	 Jan 1st First date coverage starts This is the first day your new Medicare coverage will begin.
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How do people know if they need to change plans?

Medicare beneficiaries should always review the materials their plans send them, like the “Evidence of Coverage” (EOC) and “Annual Notice of Change” (ANOC). If their plans are changing, they should make sure their plans will still meet their needs for the following year. New Medicare plan information is available every October during Medicare’s Annual Open Enrollment Period.

What if beneficiaries’ financial circumstances change and they need Financial Assistance?

If you are having trouble affording your Medicare premiums, copays and other out-of-pocket costs, the federal government has four Medicare Savings Programs that provide help for people with limited incomes. There is also a program called Extra Help that assists beneficiaries with their out-of-pocket costs for prescription drugs. Even if you haven’t qualified for these programs before, Medicare’s Annual Open Enrollment Period is a good time to check to see if your financial circumstances now allow you to qualify.

Where can Medicare beneficiaries receive free, confidential, and unbiased counseling services?

Contact your local Fresno-Madera HICAP to schedule an appointment. We tend to book up during Medicare’s Annual Open Enrollment Period (**October 15th- December 7th**) so don’t miss out and call today, **(559) 224-9117**. Our office is open Monday- Friday 8am- 5pm and we schedule in-person, phone, and virtual appointments.



HICAP CHECKLIST

WHAT DO I NEED TO BRING TO MY HICAP APPOINTMENT?

BENEFICIARIES NEED TO BRING:

- 1

Their Medicare Card or number.
- 2

Your Medicare Login User name and password (if available)
- 3

A list of current prescriptions.
- 4

Information regarding any Health Plans that you will want to coordinate with (retiree coverage, V.A. coverage, etc.)
- 5

Any letters received regarding current coverage plans that you may want to review with your counselor.
- 6

A list of planned procedures or surgeries to take into consideration for the following year.
- 7

Any international travel plans to consider.

COUNSELING CORNER

How to Manage Minor Depressive Symptoms at Home:

By Kevin Alvey, MA, MFCC

In the past I have shared ideas about developing resilience to adverse situations. Prolonged extreme weather conditions can increase symptoms of existing physical and mental health conditions. Managing these issues at home might include some of the following ideas:

- Take your medications as directed, feeling better does not mean you should reduce your medication regimen.
- Re-connect with your health care provider and inform them of the changing symptomology you are experiencing.
- Connect with friends or family members so that you can share your depressive journey with. An empathetic ear is a great partner in managing your experience.
- Take an inventory of your eating habits and adjust as necessary. A healthy diet planned for your health condition is a key to successful wellbeing.
- Maintain a positive outlook. Our situation is better understood through a healthy perspective of resilience.
- Try something new, draw, paint, take music lessons
- Engage in a positive new social group, support group, church group
- Try meditation, yoga, mindfulness, or Tai Chi
- Practice proper nutrition habits,
- Exercise

Above all try to stay in a comfortable environment. Limit your outside activity when possible. Schedule appointments and adventures in the cool mornings when the temperature is lower. If your air conditioning is not keeping up in the heat, spend the warmer part of the day at a friend, or family members place where air conditioning is available. If necessary, move to one of your county's cooling stations designated in your community.

For information regarding the locations of cooling centers throughout the state of California, visit the County Cooling Centers and Resources page: <https://news.caloes.ca.gov/coolingcenters/>.

Or contact your local Department of Parks and Recreation.

Baby It's Hot Outside

By Kevin Alvey, MA, MFCC

Would it surprise you to hear that exposure to extreme weather can worsen or cause anxiousness and depressive symptoms? I know the prolonged hot weather conditions wear on me, and I can be more frustrated, edgy, and sometimes irritable. Along with increasing minor symptoms, weather can affect our diagnosed conditions and exacerbate the edginess of control, creating major response shifts in our wellbeing.

A study published in the International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health revealed that individuals experiencing more extremely hot or cold days were more likely to report an increase in depressive symptomology. Exposure to extreme temperatures such as the lasting heat here in the Central Valley can have a significant impact on the mental health of those who already are on the edges of wellness. These weather-related influences can trigger episodic depression and or anxiety symptoms.

This research examines the chronic impact of temperature on depressive symptoms in middle-aged and elderly individuals. Consequentially, the elderly are more vulnerable to depressive symptoms due to extreme weather. Middle-aged individuals, rural residents, and those with low household incomes are more likely to develop depressive symptoms due to extreme heat exposure.

Exposure to extreme heat or cold conditions can impact autonomic function,



Image by: katemangostar on Freepik

leading to prolonged imbalances that can trigger chronic low-level inflammation, which may cause increased levels of depression. Humidity may also contribute to this relationship by impairing the body's ability to regulate temperature, which can worsen the effects of extreme heat on the mental health of susceptible individuals. High nighttime temperatures can interfere with the body's circadian rhythms, causing excessive Hypothalamic-Pituitary-Adrenal (HPA) Axis activity and leading to further mental health issues.

The research highlights the need to recognize susceptible groups and make efforts to implement extreme temperature protection measures.

The study, "Long-term apparent temperature, extreme temperature exposure, and depressive symptoms: A longitudinal study in China", was authored by Jianbo Jin, Zhihu Xu, Ru Cao, Yuxin Wang, Qiang Zeng, Xiaochuan Pan, Jing Huang and Guoxing Li.



If you have an idea for an article that you would like to see in our quarterly newsletter, or a caregiver that you think should be spotlighted, please email: mdibuduo@valleycrc.org.



PLEASE JOIN US

Valley Caregiver Resource Center Presents a

GREEK GALA

October 18th, 2024 – 6:30pm

Clovis Veterans Memorial District
808 Fourth Street, Clovis, CA 93612



COME JOIN US FOR A STUNNING EVENING IN GREECE

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FOR QUESTIONS, PLEASE CONTACT:

Michelle DiBuduo, Executive Director
5363 N. Fresno Street, Fresno, CA 93710 ♦ www.valleycrc.org
Phone: (559) 224-9154 ♦ mdibuduo@valleycrc.org

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CAREGIVER EDUCATIONAL CLASSES



valley
CAREGIVER
RESOURCE CENTER

Classes are being offered In-Person or Online

To Register, Call us at:
(559) 224-9154 or
(800) 541-8614

CLASS KEY

Want to know if a class listed is in-person or virtual?
These symbols will tell you.

- I** IN-PERSON Class
- V** VIRTUAL Class
- H** HYBRID Class
(both virtual and in-person)

Please be aware that if you are experiencing any Covid-like symptoms you will not be able to attend. Classes are not for professionals, providers, or care receivers.

JULY Classes

H Effective Communication with Dementia Patients

Guest Speaker: David Reed from Assured Senior Living Solutions

Thursday, July 16, 2024 | 2:00 pm to 3:30 pm

V Difficult Conversations about Difficult Decisions

Tuesday, July 23, 2024 | 2:00 pm to 3:30 pm

H Home Care vs. Home Health

Guest Speaker: Debbie Singh, RN, Owner/Director of Visiting Angels Fresno

Tuesday, July 30, 2024 | 2:00 pm to 3:30 pm

AUGUST Classes

H Protect your Rights While Aging

Guest Speakers: "Avoiding Conservatorships with Advance Planning for Older Adults" - Judith Logan, Directing Attorney; "Elder Abuse" - Heidi Falany, Senior Staff Attorney; "Health Matters - Know your Rights" - Tashara Kuspa, Directing Attorney

Wednesday, August 7, 2024

In-Person Attendees: 8:30 am to 12 pm | Virtual Attendees: 9 am to 12 pm

H Medicare 101

Guest speaker: Health Insurance Counsellor and Advocacy Program (HICAP)

Tuesday, August 13, 2024 | 2:00 pm to 3:30 pm

H Activities For Adults With Cognitive Impairments

Guest Speaker: Meghan Velasquez, Program Manager for OASIS Adult Day Program

Thursday, August 29, 2024 | 2:00 pm to 3:30 pm

SEPTEMBER Classes

V Difficult Dementia Behaviors

Wednesday, September 11, 2024 | 2:00 pm to 3:30 pm

V How Dementia Can Impact Intimacy

Guest Speaker: Kevin Alvey, MA, MFCC, Program Manager for Caregiver Resource Program

Wednesday, September 18, 2024 | 2:00 pm to 3:30 pm

V Caregiver Book Club

CRC Clients Only

Guest Speaker: Kathy Cromwell, CT, MSW, LCSW the Executive Director, Counseling and Support Services at Hinds Hospice

Thursday, September 26, 2024 | 2:00 pm to 3:00 pm

**FOR ALL CLASSES CALL TO REGISTER:
(559)224-9154 or (800)541-8614.**

Once registered (only when attending virtually), you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the training.

PRE-REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED FOR ALL CLASSES

OTHER Classes

I Matter of Balance: Do You Have Concerns About Falling?

A Matter of Balance is an award winning program designed to help reduce the fear of falling, manage falls, and increase the activity levels of older adults who have concerns about falling. This is a two-hour eight-sessions program. Limited Space.

Call the main office at (559) 224-9154 for dates and times

I Powerful Tools For Caregivers Class

Powerful Tools for Caregivers is a two-hour six-sessions program. This class will give you the tools to help reduce stress, communicate effectively, reduce guilt, anger, and depression, help you relax, make tough decisions, set goals and problem-solve. Please note that this class will NOT focus on the disease process. Limited Space.

Call the main office at (559) 224-9154 for dates and times

Part of a Statewide System of Caregiver Resource Centers serving family caregivers, contracted through the California Department of Aging, and grants from various Area Agencies on Aging in Fresno-Madera, Kern, Kings-Tulare, and Merced. VCRRC educational classes are not open to providers, volunteers or for patients.

For more info on these events or our programs, visit:

www.valleycrc.org

Like us on Facebook:
www.facebook.com/ValleyCRC/



Find us on Instagram:
https://www.instagram.com/valley_caregiver_resource_cntr/





Please be aware that if you are experiencing any Covid-like symptoms you will not be able to attend. Classes are not for professionals, providers, or care receivers.

Valley Caregiver Resource Center
offers a wide variety of FREE support groups for all caregivers which meet on an ongoing basis. Join us in person or virtually to connect with a community of support.

Support Groups are being offered In-Person

For more info, Call us at:
(559) 224-9154 or
(800) 541-8614

* If you are in Kings or Stanislaus counties, please reach out to VCRC at (559) 224-9154 for more information about groups in your area.

FRESNO County

Alzheimer/Dementia Support Group

1st Monday & 3rd Wednesday | 10:00-11:30am
Location: Fresno VCRC Office

Caregiver Support Group

3rd Wednesday | 2:00-3:30pm
Location: Fresno VCRC Office

TBI/Stroke Support Group

4th Monday | 2:00-3:30pm
Location: Fresno VCRC Office

Spanish Support Group

Last Friday | 10:00-11:30am
Location: Fresno VCRC Office

KERN County

General Caregiver Support Group

1st Friday | 10:30am-12:00pm
Location: Tehachapi

General Caregiver Support Group

3rd Thursday | 1:30-3:00pm
Location: Ridgecrest

MADERA County

Alzheimer/Dementia Support Group

2nd & 4th Tuesday | 10:00-11:30am
Location: Oakhurst

MERCED County

Alzheimer/Dementia Support Group

2nd Tuesday | 2:00-3:30pm
Location: Living Well Café

General Caregivers Support Group

4th Tuesday | 2:00-3:30pm
Location: Living Well Café

TULARE County

Caregiver Support Group

3rd Thursday | 10:00-11:30am
Location: Tulare Senior Center

TUOLOMNE County

General Caregiver Support Group

4th Thursday | 1:30-3:00pm
Location: Area 12 Agency on Aging

SUPPORT GROUP SPOTLIGHT:

Support Network is an online **Facebook support group** designed to connect and support family caregivers. This Facebook group is a private online support group, with no mediator or set meeting time. It is a safe place to talk, ask questions, find solutions to obstacles or share your caregiving experiences with others walking on a similar path. The online platform is designed to build community, connect caregivers, and offer solutions to daily struggles all through the convenience of an app on your phone.

JOIN NOW: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/valleycsn>

For more info on these events or our programs, visit:

www.valleycrc.org

**LOCATION
GUIDE**

Fresno VCRC Office:
5363 N. Fresno St.

Living Well Café – Merced:
851 W 23rd St, Merced, CA 95340

Ridgecrest:
417 Drummond Ave, Ridgecrest, CA 93555

Oakhurst:
39255 Black Road, Oakhurst, CA 93644

**Tehachapi – The Salvation Army
Community Center:**
538 E. Tehachapi Blvd, Tehachapi, CA 93561

Tulare Senior Center:
201 N F St, Tulare, CA 93274

Area 12 Agency on Aging:
19074 Standard Rd, Sonora, CA 95370

Worksheet: Home Safety Checklist



The following room-by-room checklist can alert you to potential hazards in an older person's home. Use it to identify any changes or repairs needed to help keep them safe. Keep in mind that it may not be necessary to make all of the suggested changes. It is important, however, to reevaluate home safety every so often as the person's behavior and needs change.

Throughout the home

- Are any repairs needed?
- Is the house well lit, inside and out, particularly at the top and bottom of stairs? Do any lightbulbs need to be replaced?
- Are emergency phone numbers (ambulance, Poison Control, doctors, hospital, etc.) and the person's home address near all telephones?
- Is there clutter, which can cause disorientation and confusion and increase the risk of falling?
- Is mail, recycling, or trash piling up? Do there need to be more trash and recycling containers around the house?
- Is each bottle of prescription medicine clearly labeled with the person's name, name of the drug, drug strength, dosage frequency, and expiration date?
- If there are guns in the home, are they locked up and unloaded, with ammunition stored separately?

Floors

- Are there any tripping hazards at exterior entrances or inside the house (throw rugs, for example)?
- Are there non-slip strips or mats on tile and wood floors or surfaces that may get wet? Are carpets fixed firmly to the floor?
- Are all walking areas free of furniture and extension and electrical cords?
- Have smoke and carbon monoxide alarms been installed near the kitchen and in all bedrooms? Have the batteries been checked recently?

Stairs

- Are the stairs manageable, or is a ramp or gate needed?
- Could handrails be installed on both sides of the staircase?

Is there at least one stairway handrail that extends beyond the first and last steps on each flight of stairs?

Are any outdoor steps sturdy and textured to prevent falls in wet or icy weather? Mark the edges of steps with bright or reflective tape.

Bathrooms

Are there grab bars near toilets and in the tub or shower?

Have nonskid adhesive strips, decals, or mats been placed in the tub and shower? If the bathroom is uncarpeted, consider placing these strips next to the tub, toilet, and sink as well.

Have a plastic shower stool and a hand-held shower head been installed to make bathing easier?

Is the water heater set at 120° F to avoid scalding tap water?

Is there a night light to make overnight trips to the bathroom safer?

Kitchen

Are there safety knobs and an automatic shut-off switch on the stove?

Is there enough food in the fridge? Is any of it spoiled? Are there staple foods (such as cereal, sugar, canned soup) in the cabinets?

Has a drain trap been installed in the kitchen sink to catch anything that may otherwise become lost or clog the plumbing?

Outdoors

Are there secure locks on all outside doors and windows?

If a walker or wheelchair is needed, can the entrances to the house be modified – perhaps by putting in a ramp to the front door?

Is there a small bench or table by the entry door to hold bags and packages while unlocking the door?

Is outside lighting adequate? Light sensors that turn on lights automatically as you approach the house may be useful.

Have bushes and foliage been pruned away from walkways and doorways?

If there is a swimming pool, is it safe? Restrict access to a swimming pool by fencing it with a locked gate, covering it, and closely supervising it when in use.

Have you addressed any uneven surfaces or walkways, hoses, and other objects that may cause a person to trip?



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Our Programs

Caregiver Resource Program: Get free help in finding resources if you're caring for seniors who need help with daily living activities or caring for anyone suffering from conditions such as a traumatic brain injury, dementia, stroke, or Alzheimer's.

HICAP: Whether you are new to Medicare, currently on Medicare, or a victim of Medicare fraud...the Health Insurance Counseling and Advocacy Program(HICAP) can help! Fresno and Madera HICAP is a State Health Insurance Program that provides free, confidential, and unbiased one-on-one counseling services for Medicare beneficiaries of all ages.

OASIS Adult Day Program: Oasis is a licensed daytime care program for seniors in the early stages of dementia or Alzheimer's. We are dedicated to creating an inviting and stimulating environment with opportunities for social interaction with every visit.

Long-Term Care Ombudsman: Our mission is to advocate for the dignity, quality of life and quality of care for all residents in long-term facilities.

