

# The Bright Side

Your Compassion At Work



## Isolated Seniors Feel a Little Less Alone

**Because of your caring support, we are helping families connect during the pandemic.**

*By Jeanne M. West, Community Engagement Manager*

Back when the COVID-19 crisis began, it seemed important to reach out to our colleagues in long-term care communities to see how residents and their families were managing while being isolated from each other. It quickly became clear that families were hungering for a safe place to open up about the guilt, sadness, and other feelings they were having.

In June, we began our monthly Family Dialogue Group (via Zoom) for families of residents at The Oak Cottage of Santa Barbara, a memory care community. The group started with four family members and has since grown to eight to ten regular participants. About half are here in Santa Barbara and the rest are scattered across California and the country.

In the group, family members talk about their sense of loss due to not being able to visit, hug, touch and just be with their loved ones. Emotions flow freely, feelings are acknowledged, and participants feel validated. We always make time for reflection and some “words of wisdom” or mindfulness techniques at the end.

During the October meeting, we brainstormed ways to make isolated family members feel more connected and loved during the upcoming holidays. The idea of sending a Thanksgiving card with old family photos to Oak Cottage residents quickly surfaced.

Residents responded with great delight upon seeing the cards and looking at the old-time photos. Such a simple gesture made residents, staff, and of course the families feel actually happy on Thanksgiving.

As more recent memories fade and other abilities are compromised, there is still that long-term memory that stays intact. Remembering the happy and healthy past utilizing cards, photos, and stories can bring alive a conversation, a smile, or a sense of peace.

Small gestures like this can end up being more meaningful than the biggest, newest gift which lacks history, meaning, or connection. Little things really can make a big difference!

**This is only possible because of your generosity of heart.**



**An Oak Cottage Memory Care resident feels less alone as she enjoys photos of her grandchildren.**

**Jeanne drops by the Oak Cottage Memory Care community with Thanksgiving cards and Christmas ornaments for isolated seniors.**



# I'm Thankful for You!

**You make our work possible.**

For months I have been thinking and worrying about the folks who are most impacted by the pandemic, with seniors and the Latino community at the top of the list. I am committed to ensuring that Hospice of Santa Barbara is doing everything we can to help these especially vulnerable people. And you make this possible through your caring and kindness.

For this issue of our newsletter, we highlight several ways we are supporting isolated seniors during the pandemic. Isolation, loneliness, and loss of contact with family can cause seniors to feel depressed and hopeless.

**Thanks to you, we are in a position to offer comfort to elders who are struggling during the pandemic.**

We also share an update about Mi Vida, Mi Voz (My Life, My Voice), which has taken a leadership role in making sure local Spanish-speaking communities have the critical information and resources they need during the pandemic. Our ability to do this important work is only possible because of you, our compassionate supporters.

You may have noticed that we have a new name for our newsletter: The Bright Side. During these uncertain and, frankly, difficult times, everyone can use some help looking on the bright side. I truly hope that this newsletter will help you do that!

With gratitude,

David Selberg, CEO



# Spanish-Speakers Receive COVID-19 Prevention Kits

**Because of your support, life-saving information is getting to those most impacted by the pandemic.**

COVID-19 has affected the Latino community more than any other population in Santa Barbara, but they are less likely to have access to critical information about the pandemic. Mi Vida, Mi Voz—a coalition of Latino-serving organizations sponsored through Hospice of Santa Barbara—continues to work to address this issue, this time in partnership with Cottage Center for Population Health.

Mi Vida, Mi Voz (MVMV) is distributing 750 COVID-19 prevention kits to constituents of Latino-serving organizations with the help of Carpinteria Children's Project, Eastside Library, and Easy Lift Transportation. The kits are provided by Cottage, and include masks for adults and children; sanitizing wipes and hand sanitizer; vitamin D supplements; COVID-19 information including basic needs resources; and coloring books, crayons, and stickers for kids.

Community Health Ambassadors (CHA) will be distributing these kits. CHAs are trained community members who provide trusted and culturally relevant health education to friends and neighbors. While distributing these kits—often by going door to door in their own neighborhoods—CHAs also share resources for how folks can address unmet needs. It is only with your support that we can do this potentially life-saving work.



**MVMV is distributing 750 COVID prevention kits to those in the Latino community.**

# Volunteers Connect with Isolated Seniors

Thanks to you, volunteers are available to care for elders in our community.

By Sue Willner, Hospice of Santa Barbara Volunteer

COVID has presented us all with many new complex challenges. How do we carry on when the people who filled our prior lives can no longer be there, sharing our daily life and activities?

All of us are greatly impacted by this new reality. But people who live alone are especially vulnerable to loneliness, puzzlement, anxiety, and depression. The Senior Phone Bridge Program (managed by the Santa Barbara County Department of Behavioral Wellness) was created to allow seniors to connect with other human beings on a regular basis. Hospice of Santa Barbara volunteers (like me) are helping out with this program.

I have been speaking on the phone with the same fascinating lady for five weeks now. She is a retired nurse in her mid-70s. She has three sons but only one lives locally. Due to COVID, she has not seen her other two sons or grandchildren for almost a year. Her roommate recently moved out to be with her own family during the pandemic. Needless to say, my phone pal feels lonely and isolated. She needs people to talk to since she feels so deeply alone.

Each week, we chat once or twice for about twenty or thirty minutes. She is quite eager to talk so I mostly just listen. I don't give advice when it hasn't been requested. She has thanked me for these chats, clearly appreciative.



Sue chats on the phone with an isolated senior every week as part of the Phone Bridge Program.

This experience has reaffirmed for me that “showing up” is crucial to a life that works. We don't always have answers to questions and problems, but just being there consistently for someone can make a difference.

I myself have many reasons to be grateful for this program and for our weekly chats. Of course, it feels good to be helping someone who has, for the moment, very few people to talk to. But this experience has made me cognizant of my own good fortune in having a husband and one of my adult daughters in my own COVID bubble. I think the Senior Phone Bridge Program is a win-win for all parties involved!

**Those interested may call the Community Wellness Team at 805-364-2750 and sign up for friendly calls from Hospice of Santa Barbara volunteers.**



## Your goodwill makes it possible to make Eleanor's birthday special.

“Eleanor” (not her real name), one of our Patient Care Services clients, was getting ready to celebrate her 94th birthday. But because of the pandemic, she was not allowed to leave the senior community where she lives, nor have any visitors. In addition to not feeling well because of her illness, she was lonely and didn't feel festive about her birthday. Eleanor's care team at Hospice of Santa Barbara—Tianna, Mary, and two wonderful volunteers—could tell she needed a boost. So they put together a birthday basket of her favorite gourmet goodies and some birthday balloons, and delivered it to her. You can see her happily interacting with the volunteers from her second floor balcony. It's because of caring supporters like you that we can do these special extras to make sure folks know that they are cared about.

**Volunteers deliver a birthday basket to 94-year-old “Eleanor” who can't visit with family or friends on her birthday.**



# *illuminate* is a free virtual series of nationally-known speakers addressing the anxiety, grief, and uncertainty of the pandemic.



**Dr. BJ Miller**

Thursday, March 18, 2021 6:00 pm PDT



**Dr. Sunita Puri**

Wednesday, April 21 6:00 pm PDT

**Guiding Star sponsors:**



To register and to learn more go to: [hospiceofsb.org/hsbseries](https://hospiceofsb.org/hsbseries)



## Are you feeling pulled to get your financial affairs in order?

Now might feel like a good time to sort out your will or estate plan. HSB's Judy Goodbody, a registered Tax Preparer who has been helping people with tax and estate planning for 25 years, can help you get started. Contact Judy for free and confidential assistance at 805-770-7119 or [jgoodbody@hospiceofsb.org](mailto:jgoodbody@hospiceofsb.org).

## COVID Patient Referrals Skyrocket

**Thanks to your kindness, we can help those with COVID-19 and their families.**

Through our partnership with the Santa Barbara Neighborhood Clinics, we are now serving low-income patients with COVID-19 through Patient Care Services (PCS). Since July of last year, we have assisted 96 COVID-positive patients and their families.

At first, we would receive an average of 9 or 10 patient referrals a month. As COVID transmission rates ramped up in our community, COVID referrals to PCS began to skyrocket. In January alone, 38 COVID-positive patients came to us for help. And while community transmission rates are declining, our referral numbers don't seem to be slowing down just yet.

While in isolation, many low-income families struggle to meet their basic needs. In one family of six, the mother and all four children (including the baby) were COVID-positive, and were desperately in need of groceries, medication, and diapers. We helped this family get free groceries through the Food Bank and our Instacart

account, and apply for financial aid through the United Way.

Other patients need help to set up doctors appointments, apply for unemployment or disability benefits, navigate insurance claims, interface with landlords or employers, or deal with medical bills. When there are language barriers, we provide translation. Our goal is to meet as many needs as possible as patients move through their recovery.

**It is only with the support of caring people like you that we are able to respond in this way to the crisis of COVID-19.**

**Delivering groceries is one of the most important things we are doing to help those with COVID-19.**

