



*Not a Place to live.....But a Way to Live*

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[www.pasadenavillage.org](http://www.pasadenavillage.org)

## **E-NEWSLETTER MAY 2020**

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### **WELCOME FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD AND THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

Recently, the New York Times published a number of letters from people who described how they were coping with the Covid-19 pandemic. One letter was from a member of ChaiVillageLA, a Village in West Los Angeles that is very similar to our own Pasadena Village. The writer described how she and other volunteers are calling all of the members on a regular basis to check in with them. “By the

time we hang up I know the call has made a difference – a friendly voice, some good repartee and the knowledge that the calls will keep coming, every week.”

This coronavirus pandemic has only reinforced the importance, and the challenges, of creating and maintaining nurturing communities to combat social isolation and loneliness. During the past month the Pasadena Village has set up a system for staff and Village members to regularly call all of our members – to see how they are doing, to ask if they need anything, to help them problem solve issues that arise.

We’ve also learned to Zoom! Tech savvy members and volunteers have guided us as we incorporated this new technology into our daily lives. This past month all of our many committee meetings have been held via Zoom. Our very busy calendar of presentations, affinity groups, and educational offerings are also being held through Zoom. We even have an on-going Coffee Klatch so that members can get together, virtually, to visit and catch up on the latest happenings in their lives.

In this issue of the Pasadena Village newsletter you will read about our progress in adapting our goal of creating community to the changing times. We feel this is especially important because older adults will continue to be vulnerable to infection until a vaccine is developed. Welcome to the new normal!

We hope you enjoy the May issue of the Pasadena Village newsletter. For more information, please feel free to call us at the Village office – 626-765-6037.

Peggy Buchanan  
Executive Director

Shizzie Akasaki  
Board President

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## ZOOM BIRTHDAY PARTY @ The Pasadena Village

Zoomers joined the online celebration for Village Members celebrating March and April birthdays.

In March we were all too discombobulated to host our March birthday party. So on Friday, April 24, we celebrated members who had birthdays in March and April. We had 41 “screens” on our Zoom party and enjoyed learning where our birthday members were born and how they came to be in Pasadena. Fritzie Culick led us in singing Happy Birthday and a great time was had by all.



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## FROM VILLAGE MEMBERS

I stocked up early with supplies. At first I was glad for a break in my busy schedule. However, it's very comforting that the Pasadena Village has put so many opportunities for Zoom daily contact in place. Now, I'm prioritizing how many Zoom meetings that I will attend each week, with everyone, including family and friends. ....Jo Y.

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I am one of the Village members pushing ninety and now living in "Assisted Living". I am grateful for books, my cat, Bobby, and my iPad , but not TV - too much distressing news!

The Village staff and volunteers are to be highly commended for their efforts on behalf of the members. While my physical world has shrunk to 350 sq. ft., my virtual world has expanded beyond anything I could have imagined or thought I was capable of learning about. This is very much due to the efforts of the Village. I have learned to go beyond email, using FaceTime with family and attending meetings with the Village Book Club, Memoir Group, and my Women's Group via

Zoom. Now - I ask you, how many of you 80 to 90 year olds are doing that?

I will admit that I am getting a little tired of my own company. I miss hugs from good friends, outings, good food, etc. But I know I am one of the lucky ones and wish the best for those not so fortunate. We all need to keep in touch - at least 6 feet apart!....Kitty H.

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When one of our very frail members had difficulties getting groceries, the Village office found a young, non-member volunteer to come to her assistance.....the Services Assessment Team.

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We had our first Memoir Writing Group via Zoom last Tuesday. There were only three of us this first time, but we hope to get the others on board for next week..... Lucinda H.

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## VIBRANT NEIGHBORHOOD GROUPS

Neighborhood groups have been tying Pasadena Villagers together for several years and are now successfully transitioning to Zoom gatherings with lots of help:

“Dave is hosting our meeting because he’s our techie.”

“Belinda’s patient computer tutoring got us set up.”

“One of us went to Autumn’s really helpful tutorial for Zoom.”

The **Wild West Group**, originally called “91103,” changed its name when other zip codes joined them. Over the years they have had some meetings on special topics such as earthquake preparedness, but usually have just enjoyed conversation plus a short recipe session spurred by Bob Snodgrass’s cooking passion. Their first Zoom meeting followed a similar pattern with everyone having a chance to speak and included a recipe session, though this time Bob shared his snack with his next door neighbors.

In the past, the **Easterners Group**, covering the east side of Pasadena, has gathered in people’s homes for potlucks or at friendly restaurants.



“Food is good,” said one of its organizers. “Our largest, most successful gatherings occur when there’s food.” Besides visiting and catching up, meetings often include local issues such as a proposed multi-use complex planned for toxic land on Foothill Blvd.

The **Altadena Foothill Group**, 91001, is led by Fritzie Culick with others jumping in when needed. Comprised originally of long-time Altadenans, it has now been strengthened by newer residents as well as La Canada area Village members. They tried various meeting venues from local eateries to people’s homes, but then discovered the little Altadena Golf Course café that has indoor space for inclement weather and a wonderful patio dining area.

The **91106, 91108 and 91030 Group**, encompassing the southern part of Pasadena plus San Marino and South Pasadena, has met every few months for enjoyable times getting to know each other since their paths tend not to cross. They meet in people’s homes, learning about the host’s special interests and “talking and talking.” As Covid-19 was taking over, Paula Rao and Janet Davis took over the leadership in January from the three who had organized it for several years.

Most of the groups have about three members who share the leadership and find that meeting monthly at regular times helps, although one meets every few months and then emails and calls members between meetings. They all have systems for checking on their entire membership, with the leaders of one group meeting weekly to check on everyone. The East Pasadena group has a large number without internet who are called regularly.

Zoom has presented challenges, but thanks to skilled helpers it has also provided new opportunities. Participants have found that it helps give everyone a chance to talk and be heard. Until we can relax our social distancing, the groups will rely on regular Zoom “get-togethers” in addition to telephone and emails to keep in touch. In addition, Fritzie pointed out that in the future, when it’s pouring, we can revert to Zoom....Nancy Pine



## CAREGIVERS AND THE VILLAGE

Sometimes it creeps up slowly. Other times, it is a traumatic life changing event. Whatever the cause, when one partner in a relationship becomes increasingly dependent upon the other because of long term and often progressive physical or mental health problems, life changes for both partners. As one partner struggles with health issues and often decreasing capacity to function, the other takes on the role of Caregiving. This new role is different from parenting and other kinds of dependent relationships because of the history of the couple. It is the history, often very long, that supports the bond; it is the historical behaviors that require reshaping in the present to fit the shifting needs.

Caregivers begin to absorb responsibilities that are no longer



shared. And sometimes they are forced to take on responsibilities that were never previously shared – the partner had always taken care of them but, for whatever reason, no longer can. Over time, these responsibilities can become overwhelming. Caregivers experience changes in life style. They grapple with questions of decision making and “who is in charge.” They struggle with internal messaging pressuring them to “stay strong.” Fighting issues of isolation and fatigue become commonplace. Those fortunate enough to have the resources may hire help to provide limited respite and assistance with caregiving needs, yet another layer of things that must be “managed.”

Two significant things occurred during the past four months affecting the Caregivers who are Village members - the creation of a Caregiver support group and the arrival of the Coronavirus.

In January, at the request of the Village Support Assessment Team, a group of Caregivers came together, drew up plans for a Caregiver support group with guidelines for participation and a schedule of regular meetings. The group began meeting in early February.

And then, Coronavirus struck. Social Distancing orders were issued for the entire state. It became clear that the risk to Caregivers and their partners was heightened by having outside help come into the home. The services designed to reduce the demands on the Caregiver were stopped. Even contact by family members was limited. The sense of Caregiver isolation, loss and fatigue were increased.

However, a place where members with these common issues could come together and share and support one another had already been created. For the Caregivers the group offers a place to gather, now on Zoom, to share experiences and resources, to relieve some of the stress of the job they hold and make a human connection. For the Village this has been one additional way of giving and improving the community life of our members. ....Esther Gillies

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# 1619

On April 17, twelve Village members met via Zoom to continue their discussion of issues raised by the New York Times publication of “**The 1619 Project**”, named after the year in which the first enslaved Africans were brought to America. The project aims to “place the consequences of slavery and the contributions of black Americans at the very center of the story we tell ourselves about who we are as a country.”

Our 1619 discussion group arose from a desire expressed by a number of members to gather together to read the New York Times articles, learning more about our nation’s complicated history, examining how it impacts us today, and most importantly, helping us create a more just future.

Some members of the group were curious to know if there were any other Villages around the country who had similar groups. Dick Myers, facilitator of the 1619 group, posted an inquiry on the national Village to Village network website. Sara Lennox, from Northampton Neighbors in Massachusetts responded that she was interested in learning more about the project. Northampton Neighbors is a Village that was started in 2017 and now has more than 800 members. Their

Village is much more oriented to providing services, but Sara was most interested in our discussion group.

And so, thanks to the wonder of Zoom, Sara joined us at our April meeting and will continue to be a part of the group. Dick is continuing to reach out to people of other Villages so that we can learn from each other and tackle the important issues raised by the NYT's articles.

At the April meeting, the members continued their discussion of an article by Ta-Nehisi Coates advocating for reparations to be made to partially mitigate the stain of slavery. The discussion also focused on the current coronavirus pandemic and the impact of race on coronavirus cases. The meeting participants were reminded once again that the residue of slavery permeates everything. The discussions continue next month.....Dick Myers and Sue Kujawa

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## **THE VILLAGE STAYS CONNECTED!!**

It is Friday morning...the third Friday of the month. Traditionally, on this day the Village meeting room has been ablaze with activity. Sipping tea, drinking coffee, munching on breakfast goodies, a handful of Village members chatted with each other and shared information about the Village with older adults new to the Village or thinking about joining the Village. "This is a community" they explained. "We make new friends, we do things together, we stay in

touch with each other. Some of us even become “buddies” and check in on each other regularly.”

For many years *Meet Me at the Village* on Friday morning at the Village office has been key to introducing new members to the Village. But times change. The Office meeting room on the third Friday of the month is now empty. No members, no coffee, no goodies and... no people. A reflection of the times.

But, above all, Village members are resilient. As “social distancing” has become the new reality, the need for community remains. In spite of beliefs that “you cannot teach an old dog new tricks,” the Village has jumped on the opportunity to change the way we operate. Several members stepped up, learned to use the conferencing platform, ZOOM, and began offering training to all members who were interested in learning about its use and benefits. Today, less than a month since the loss of our person to person activities all of the meetings, support groups, educational activities and anything that goes on in the Village is on-line - including *Meet Me at the Village*.

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## CAN'T STOP WALKING!

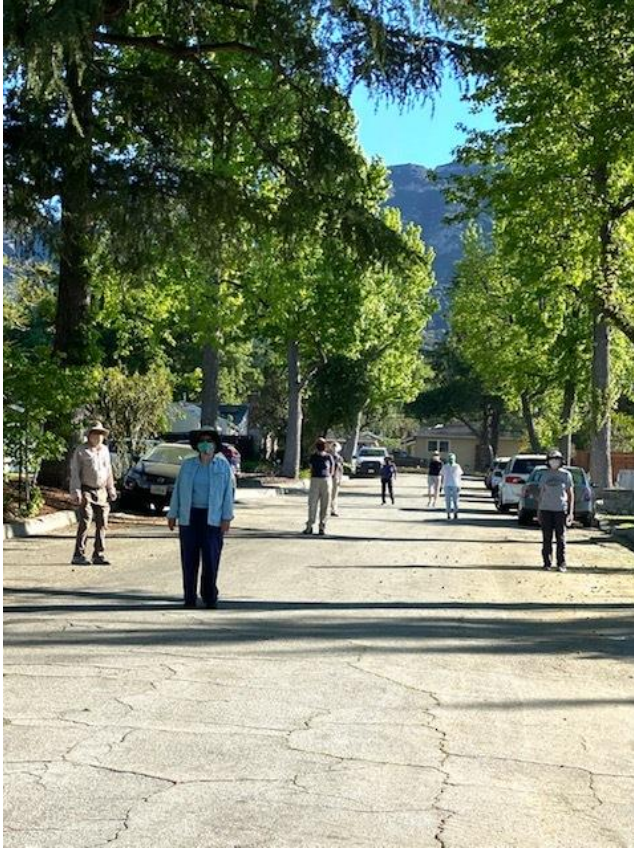
Members of our two walking groups are determined to get their exercise and maintain their friendships in a safe manner.

The **EZ Walkers** are now getting together at Lacy Park twice a week. It is a small, but dedicated, group of Village members who enjoy the leafy green expanses of Lacy Park and the chance to see their friends.

On Friday, April 24, eight members of the **Urban Walkers** met at Altadena's Farnsworth Park for a three mile walk followed by coffee, brought from home, at the picnic tables. Masks were worn and safe distancing maintained as seen below.









by  
**Village Member Karen Bagnard**

It took a pandemic for me to pick up some loose threads and start weaving them back together. A rich friendship of 50 years ended nearly 10 years ago over who-knows-what. I don't remember the details of the brouhaha but I do know that she hung up on me and I was furious. In spite of our long friendship I never called her back. But I missed her terribly.

As I lay on my bed a few weeks ago trying to take a little power nap, I kept thinking about her. I sat up and reached for the bedside phone and dialed that long-ago phone number. Three times it rang, then someone picked it up..."Karen?"

"Yes, it's me and I'm sitting in the same place I was sitting 10 years ago when you hung up on me." We both laughed as though no time had passed.

We refer to the 10 years as the "gap years." We've had at least three marathon phone conversations and numerous emails back and forth. We have a lot to catch up on.

The day after I made this initial call to my old friend, I got another surprise. Another friend whom I'd lost touch with called me. I was surprised and delighted! We had a great conversation and promised to get together as soon as we are able. Like me, she was picking up loose threads, too.

Loose threads can be woven back together and made even stronger. Sometimes it just takes a pandemic for it to happen!

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**“We discover our greatness  
when we find ourselves in a situation bigger than  
we are  
and we manage to grow  
and become bigger than the situation.”  
Luigina Sgarro**

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**THANK YOU TO OUR NEWSLETTER  
TEAM  
And to everyone who contributed a story!**

Esther Gillies  
Bea and Bill Jennings  
Sue Kujawa

Dick Myers  
Karen Bagnard  
Nancy Pine  
Belinda Vidaurri

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