

A Village of Our Own

An exciting idea has reached Humboldt County and it is called The Village. If a small, quaint town comes to mind, it is not that kind of Village. The story of this Village began when AARP did a survey a few years ago which asked Seniors over 50 years of age what they would want in an assisted living home or a nursing home. To their surprise 86% of the surveys came back with comments stating that they did not want to live in either one. What they did want was to remain in their own homes as they grew older and to be able to get the help they needed in order to remain there happily and healthy. The kinds of help most thought they would need was mostly for doing small things like changing a light bulb or raking their yard in the fall. Others needed transportation to go to the doctor and some wanted to know someone would check on them after an earthquake or other disorienting event.

So The Village came to be a local group of Seniors which linked neighbors who helped each other and shared information and activities. They were pleased to be able to remain and thrive in the homes they loved. The first Village was in a neighborhood of Boston when a group of senior residents founded their non-profit group and called it The Beacon Hill Village. Each member of the group played a role in planning what they would do and how they would get it done. Others volunteered to supply services and guidance. They began with a few services and added another and then another, as there was a demand and a way to do it. Helpers offered information and some volunteers shared their skills. Some were retired plumbers or gardeners who gave advice and others agreed to do the needed work for a member at a reduced price. Over time some groups also arranged social events and travelled to shows and athletic events together.

In order for their Village to work they needed some funding, so each member was asked to pay a small monthly fee. This was a sliding amount based on income. In some cases the children of members were so glad these services were available that they agreed to pay the monthly fee for their parents. These fees paid for the one to two paid employees needed to answer the phone, keep track of members and services and follow through, and paid the bills for needed equipment. These fees vary from place to place and the usual amount is about \$50 a month. Compared to the thousands of dollars one would spend on Assisted Living or a Nursing Home, the fee is very small.

Now there are over 56 Villages all over the country and 110 in the development stage. We hope our local Village will soon be # 111 and will be able to offer a few services. Right now they have begun working on organizing a transportation service for those who need a ride to medical facilities. A tentative name has been suggested, Northcoast At Home. The Village core group is working cooperatively with the Area I Agency on Aging and the Senior Action Coalition, which have been very helpful in organizing and reaching out to people in our area. They already have sent out hundreds of surveys asking Seniors what they think is needed here and which services individuals may need now or in the future. These surveys are being tallied and the results will soon be available. You can still fill out a survey and they will add your information to the final totals and note your name and contact information so you can get information on membership in the near future. The email where you can find a survey and fill it out is: <http://www.a1aa.org>. There will be many opportunities to join in the near future.

Volunteers are needed to work on the development of the organization and to reach out to the community. If you have skills and are interested in helping with the start-up, you can get more information and sign up by going online to the site at <http://www.humsenioraction.org> or by coming to the next Village meeting from noon to 1:30 p.m. on December 3rd at the Aquatic Center (next to the Adorni Center) and bring your brown bag lunch. You can also attend a meeting of the Senior Action Coalition on the third Wednesday of the month at 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at the Jefferson School at 1000 B St. in Eureka.