

# Meeting the Challenges

Winter 1999  
Volume 7 Number 3

## QUARTERLY

A SPECIAL PUBLICATION FOR SENIORS, PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES, THEIR FRIENDS AND FAMILY, AND THOSE WHO

### Successful Aging: Joy, Perseverance and Productivity by Mark C. Krueger, M.S.G.

**W**hat is *Successful Aging*? Can getting older truly include joy, perseverance and productivity? What must be done, not only to add years to our lives, but also to add life to those years? We now have the technology to live longer than ever before, but how do we finish strong and productive in those additional years?

Aging may be defined to include four factors: environment,

genetics, specific life events, and lifestyle. It is typically characterized by LOSS; in fact, most body organ systems lose function 1% every year beginning at age 30. As we age, we may also lose loved ones, income, pets, paid employment, our homes, friends, driving abilities, independence, dignity, respect and even our hair.

Aging is also characterized by diversity and heterogeneity. No two 80 year olds are alike and as

we age we actually become more unlike each other. As we age we also tend to have multiple medical problems compromising multiple medical systems.

First, let's clarify some truths of aging. Senility, mental confusion and Alzheimer's Disease are NOT inevitable consequences of aging. The vast majority of older people are self-sufficient and intelligence does not decline

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**Office on Aging  
Senior HELPLINK:**

**1-800-  
510-2020**

**“A Gateway to Senior  
Services”**

**www.vitalco.net  
or directly at**

*“...As many times as I have  
seen it  
done it  
heard it  
lived it,  
Here I go again.  
And still . . . .  
it feels just like  
the first time.”*

Gwendolyn Duhon Boudreaux  
[from the poem “This Woman’s Life”]

*Meeting the Challenges*

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POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Partnership to Preserve Independent Living for Seniors and Persons with Disabilities, 6296 Rivercrest Drive, Suite K, Riverside, CA. 92507.

successful aging.....

with age. In fact, we gain maturity, experience, wisdom and accuracy. We become more responsible and reliable. Our work is steady and loyal and we gain more free time. We do not become asexual and our personalities do not change either.

So what must we do to live long, healthy and productive lives? There is no treatment, drug or supplement that slows aging and extends life! There is not enough evidence to take any amount of “anti-aging” treatments as a pill. Any reversal or slowing of aging likely will be due to changes in our lifestyle.

The answer to why some people appear to age more successfully than others probably lies in the following suggestions:

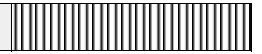
- \* Don't smoke
- \* Eat a balanced diet and maintain desired weight
- \* Exercise regularly
- \* Have regular health checkups
- \* Stay involved with family and friends - maintain relationships
- \* Allow sufficient time to rest and relax
- \* Get enough sleep
- \* Stay active and productive through work, recreation and

community activities (the unproductive individual is at increased risk for illness and economic dependency!)

- \* Drink little or no alcohol
- \* Use safety belts in the car
- \* Avoid increased exposure to the sun or cold
- \* Practice good safety habits to prevent accidents and falls
- \* Maintain an active spiritual/religious life
- \* Maintain a positive attitude and laugh often - *expect* to live a long time in good health
- \* Maintain sexuality/intimacy.

Remember, we need to increase our mental, physical, and spiritual exercise and also improve our diet. It's never too late to follow any of the above suggestions, but the sooner the better! Old and young alike must take responsibility for and help themselves to better health and longer lives. We age the way we lived, but we can slow the aging process quicker than science by changing our lifestyle.

Many people start life strong but finish poor - in sorrow, self-pity, inactivity and laziness, with regrets, lack of joy and lack of productivity. Many give up and fail in the second half of their lives with unfulfilling



and purposeless days.

Finishing strong and aging successfully means following the suggestions we have included in this article, and maintaining and updating goals. We must be disciplined - physically, mentally, socially and spiritually. We must always look forward to something and be thankful for everything!

As we age, we may lose and suffer, but we must also celebrate our accomplishments and plan for more. The people who age the best are those who stay with it until the very end. USE IT OR LOSE IT is the key to successful aging.

Our later years have the potential to be the most blessed and productive years of our life if we take the appropriate actions. It's all up to us. It matters now that we are here and it can continue to matter to the future that we have been here.

Mark C. Krueger is a Gerontologist and a Social Worker with Cooper-Burkhart House, Inc.

***“When does aging begin?  
The day we are born!”***

— Mark C. Krueger —

## FAIR HOUSING SERVICES IN RIVERSIDE COUNTY

**T**he Fair Housing Council of Riverside County provides a variety of services to promote anti-discrimination rights and further housing opportunities for all without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, whether or not you have children, disability, ancestry, marital status or other arbitrary factors. It is illegal to treat anyone differently solely on the basis of any of these factors.

Sometimes unequal treatment is very subtle and may be difficult to recognize. But it is illegal to treat persons, who want to rent or buy, differently in the following ways:

- > Different treatment in the areas of availability, terms and conditions, qualifications, and courtesy.
- > Different treatment in terms of privileges, services, or use of rented facilities.
- > Coercion, intimidation, threats, or interference with your exercise of a fair housing right.
- > Refusal to make reasonable accommodations in rules, policies, or practices of service.
- > Refusal to permit reasonable physical modifications at the expense of a person with a disability.

If you believe you have been discriminated against, call 1-800-655-1812 or 909-682-6581.

All services are FREE.

### IN MEMORIAM

We are very grateful for the time  
Ed Feldmann spent with us.

His calm counsel  
and conviction of purpose  
will be irreplaceable.

*Board of Directors*





# T R A N S P O R T A T I O N

**FOR SENIORS & PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**  
**- WHO LIVE ANYWHERE IN RIVERSIDE COUNTY**

IF YOU HAVE TO RELY ON FRIENDS OR NEIGHBORS TO PROVIDE RIDES -

- > to doctors
- > to go to the store
- > or for other reasons

YOU may be eligible

to enroll in "T.R.I.P."  
and receive money each month  
to help pay your driver for gas and  
wear and tear on the car!

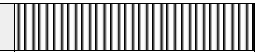
**To find out if you may qualify** for this special transportation assistance program, **call HelpLink** at **1-800-510-2020**.

**Tell the operator where you live and that you would like to apply for T.R.I.P. !** They will ask you a few questions, and if you qualify, you will be sent an application to complete and return. It's that simple. **If your application is approved**, you can begin to receive monthly cash reimbursements to assist you with your travel.

T.R.I.P. (the Transportation Reimbursement and Information Project) is a service program of the Partnership to Preserve Independent Living for Seniors and Persons with Disabilities and is made possible through funding provided by the Riverside County Transportation Commission, the Riverside County Office on Aging, the City of Blythe, SunLine Transit Agency, and by the charitable contributions of individuals and businesses.

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In the Coachella Valley,  
**CALL SUNLINE TO APPLY FOR TRIP**

**T**ransportation assistance for qualified seniors (60+) and persons with disabilities is being offered in the Coachella Valley through SunLine Transit Agency. In fact, SunLine is anxious to sign up both new riders and volunteer drivers so that those in need can go grocery shopping, visit the doctor, run errands and attend personal appointments.

TRIP (the Transportation Reimbursement and Information Project) is simple. Qualified seniors and persons with disabilities submit a record of miles traveled with the assistance of their volunteer escort and driver. A mileage reimbursement check is then mailed to the participant so they can reimburse their volunteer.

To become eligible for the program, as a participant or volunteer driver in the Coachella Valley, call SunLine Transit Agency's customer service department at (760)343-3451 from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday. You may also apply for participation in the TRIP program in the Coachella Valley by calling the Riverside County Office on Aging *HelpLink* at 1-800-510-2020.

Beginning in January, SunLine is planning marketing efforts to get the word out in the Coachella Valley. Areas specifically targeted for service are those that are less accessible to fixed route or paratransit services, such as Sky Valley and the outlying areas of Coachella.

Please help Coachella Valley seniors and persons with disabilities get the transportation they need: **SPREAD THE WORD ABOUT TRIP!**

**GRANDPARENTS  
 RAISING  
 GRANDCHILDREN.....**

**I**t is now quite common for grandparents to once again assume the role of "parents" for their grandchildren. This can occur when the children are left without their parents to care for them or sometimes when parents are unable to properly care for the children.

The greatest reward of being a parent-grandparent may be knowing your grandchild is safe and cared for, but for many there are difficulties to deal with too:

- Big changes in your routine and lifestyle
- Financial struggles
- Feelings of isolation, grief, anger and fear
- Health problems caused by the pressure of parenting.

The children are often also profoundly affected by the changes in their lives and emotional difficulties may show up in these ways:

- Physical or verbal aggression
- Sleep problems or bed wetting
- Testing limits or manipulative behavior
- Hyperactivity

continued on Next Page....

**\*\*\*MARK THIS DATE & PLAN TO ATTEND\*\*\***

Sixth Annual Annenberg Senior Health Forum  
 Wednesday, May 5th, 8 am to 2 pm

**“Protecting the Health Care Consumer”**

at  
 Annenberg Center  
 Eisenhower Medical Center Campus  
 Rancho Mirage

**\*\*\*For Information, call Nora - (760)773-4548\*\*\***



## GRANDPARENTING...

- Withdrawal and depression
- Change in eating patterns.

If these behaviors persist, it is important to get help.

Support groups can help by providing emotional support, information and referrals for the assistance you may need. Sometimes these groups can also help provide emergency food, clothing and transportation assistance.

It is important to know that, as a parent-grandparent, you are not alone! Two-thirds of a million California children are now being cared for by their grandparents or other non-parent relatives. Call any of the following numbers for information on support groups in your area:

## HUGS

Hearts United  
Grandparents &  
Grandchildren  
(714) 636-5430

## AARP

Grandparent Hotline  
(202) 434-2296

SOURCE: CHILD DEVELOPMENT  
PROGRAMS ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
(916) 653-3725

NURSING HOME RESIDENTS  
HAVE RIGHTS

by Gary N. Stern

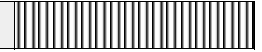
**S**killed nursing facilities are among the most regulated of public enterprises. It is, however, one thing to have governmental regulations concerning administration and quality of care, but it is quite another matter to see those regulations enforced.

A knowledgeable and diligent resident and his or her family can make a real difference in the actual quality of care the resident receives.

Following are **5 key facts that all consumers of nursing home services should know** to increase the chances that the nursing home experience will be a positive one:

**1 Complaints will be heard.** Skilled nursing facilities are licensed and regulated by the state Department of Health Services, Health Facilities Division, and the federal Health Care Financing Administration. There is a health services department in each county, listed in the white pages of the telephone book. They are required to receive and investigate written complaints within

10 days. A Statement of Deficiency may be issued and the facility then has a limited time within which to offer a plan of correction to the health services department. The government can issue a monetary citation, and often the facility contests the citation. What the consumer must do is stay in close touch with the Department - often this will lead to real changes at the facility which very well may benefit the resident whose family member complained. In each county, there is also an Ombudsman service, which exists to act as a type of mediation service to resolve disputes between a resident, the family, and the facility. If there are problems, always start by contacting the Director of Nursing or the facility administrator. Many facilities have family councils and often problems can be resolved at family council meetings. In all cases, problems should be documented. The moment a problem arises, start keeping a diary. Put all complaints



in writing. If a problem results in significant injury or death, nursing home residents and their families can bring civil actions under the recently strengthened Elder Abuse and Dependent Adult Civil Protection Act.

**2 *The care a resident is entitled to is not determined by the facility, but by established standards.***

State and federal regulations include standards for quality care. Ultimately the quality of care will be determined by the available equipment, the diligence and caring of the staff and the commitment of the administration and supervisors. Residents and their families are entitled to demand compliance with state and federal laws and regulations. Do not automatically defer to the nursing home on questions of health care quality. Do not be put off by statements like "We know best.". When a resident or family member notes significant omissions in rendering care that was ordered, they should speak up loud and clear. Experience teaches that problems with quality of care have less to do with treatment decisions than

they do with failures to perform assigned tasks. It is directly stated in the law that nursing home residents should not experience a general decline in condition unless the very nature of the condition makes decline inevitable. Every nursing home resident must be provided with a "Plan of Care", and the resident and the family must be given the opportunity to shape and develop the patient care plan! The resident and the family should refer to the established care plan often to insure that it is followed. Nursing homes are required to assist residents, as needed, with activities of daily living. They are also required to keep residents active and bedbound patients must be regularly turned. Any bedsores must be aggressively treated. Rehabilitation services must be provided as needed. Regular meals must be provided, which are sensitive to a resident's dietary needs. Every one of these areas is governed by minimum standards set by law!

**3 *Residents have a general right to be free of restraints wherever possible.*** The fact is that

in the majority of instances where elderly residents are restrained it is done to promote the convenience of the staff. Federal and state laws do not tolerate such grounds for restraints, nor are they allowed for purposes of discipline. "Restraints" include physical devices such as leg and arm restraints, vests, wheelchair safety bars and geri-chairs. In addition, drugs which control mood, mental status or behavior can constitute "chemical restraints." If restraints are needed to ensure physical safety, they may only be used upon written order of the resident's doctor and must only be used as part of a plan to lead to their eventual elimination or reduction in use. Also, the patient or patient's family must expressly consent to the use of restraints and has the right, after receiving all the facts, to refuse to consent to such restraints.

**4 *Nursing homes are required to safeguard a resident's property.*** A nursing home may not require a resident to deposit his or her personal funds with the home. On the other hand, nursing

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RIGHTS TO CARE.....

homes must be prepared to hold and safeguard the personal funds or property of a resident, upon request. If funds are held for the resident, they must be maintained in interest bearing accounts separate from the facility's operating account and careful accounting records must be maintained and be available for inspection by the resident or the family. A program must be in place to reduce loss and theft of resident's property and careful inventories are required of resident property at the time of admission. If a resident requests, the facility must provide a lock for a drawer or cabinet and the nursing home must be willing to work with each resident and family member to mark and safeguard personal items, especially glasses and dentures.

**5 Transfers and discharge must follow established procedures - nursing homes and doctors do not have the sole authority to decide when and how a resident must leave a nursing home.** Changes in payment source, Medi-Cal denial of payment for nursing home care, resident's demand for help are improper grounds for

immediate discharge. A resident may not be abruptly uprooted from their residence merely for the nursing home's convenience or based upon financial considerations! An involuntary transfer can take place, but only for very limited reasons and only after full due process and sufficient notice has been afforded the resident and the family. Justifiable grounds include inability to care for the resident, health improvement which no longer justifies nursing home care, continued presence of the resident endangers the health or safety of other residents, failure to pay despite proper notices.

The resident and his or her family must be constantly vigilant in asserting what generally is the basic human right to dignity and self respect.

If a procedure or action proposed to be taken or actually taken seems unfair, it probably is unfair, unjust and a violation of federal or state law.

\*\*\*\*\*

Gary N. Stern is a Partner at the law offices of Popkoff & Stern, with a focus on probate, conservatorship and elder law litigation. Among his many accomplishments, Mr. Stern helped to form the Southern California Society of

Elder Law Attorneys.

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501 Shatto Place, Suite 100  
Los Angeles, CA 90020-1792  
(213) 389-1358

Coachella Valley Office  
225 South Civic Drive, Suite 212  
Palm Springs, CA 92262  
(760) 322-8041

You are also invited to visit Popkoff & Stern on the Internet, in the Vital Connections Community, at <http://www.vitalco.net>

DID YOU KNOW???

**T**here are separate laws to protect people who own their mobile home, but pay space rent in a park.

Together they are called "Mobile Home Residency Law". They include Section 798 of the California Code of Civil Procedure and also include regulations found in the Government Code, the California Code of Regulations, and the California Health and Safety Code.

[SOURCE: Inland Counties Legal Services]





## Breast Cancer Early Detection Program Could Save Your Life !

You may qualify for participation in this FREE program, which includes clinical breast exams and mammograms:

- ? Are you a woman over 40
- ? Do you have no insurance or health plan?
- ? OR you have only Medicare Part A, no Medi-Cal (or are unable to meet the Medi-Cal share of cost, or are unable to meet the co-pay or deductible for an insurance plan...
- ? AND does your monthly *household* income meet these guidelines

<u>Number in Household</u>	<u>Combined Income</u>
1	\$1,342/mo
2	\$1,808/mo
3	\$2,275/mo
4	\$2,742/mo
5	\$3,208/mo
6	\$3,675/mo
7	\$4,142/mo
8	\$4,608/mo

For more information, call HelpLink at the Riverside County Office on Aging:  
1-800-510-2020

Funding for this program is provided by the State of California,  
Department of Health Services

### DID YOU KNOW? GRANDPARENTS CAN ASK THE COURT FOR VISITATION RIGHTS!

- \* Courts have the power to grant visitation rights to grandparents when any custody proceeding is being heard, if in the best interest of the child and providing there is an existing grandparent-grandchild relationship.

[SOURCE: Inland Counties Legal Services]

## COMFORT FOR ACHING MUSCLES

A practical, self-help tip provided courtesy of Lynn Brancato, President, *Amputees Are Able*

**A** heated rice bag feels so good on aching muscles or to warm cold feet. For neck or shoulder pain, place one on your pillow and lay on it.

To make one, you need a hand towel (15x24 inches), 6 cups of uncooked rice and a sewing machine (or a friend who sews):

- Fold towel in half lengthwise
- Double stitch across the center to form two sections
- Double stitch midway across each half to create 4 sections in all
- Fill each pocket with 1½ cups of uncooked rice
- Double stitch the outside edge from top to bottom (hold rice in pocket while sewing).

It's that simple. Now your rice bag is ready to use. Just heat it in the microwave for 2-3 minutes and apply to your aching muscles or place next to your cold feet. You can reuse the rice bag indefinitely, but be sure that you do not get it wet.

### Certificate and Degree Program in Gerontology Available at Mt. San Jacinto College

**T**he study of aging can provide us with an understanding and appreciation of such things as how body systems are affected, how social and economic circumstances change the aging experience, how behavior is impacted, and the various psychological issues involved in aging.

For more information on the Gerontology Program at Mt. San Jacinto College, call (909)672-6752, ext. 2610.



## REAL ESTATE ISSUES FOR SENIORS

by Beverly V. Haun

**W**hether buying or selling a home or property as a senior, there are many things to consider. As seniors, we may want to sell a house because our family has grown and moved away and it is just too big for us to maintain by ourselves. We may want to cash out our real estate investment as a source of funds for retirement. We may want to purchase a smaller home with less upkeep and maintenance. We also should think about our changing capabilities and needs, which may include such things as accessibility to transportation, medical services, shopping and social activities.

As seniors, there are several tax benefit programs which are available to assist us such as the so-called 1034 Installment Sale, and the 1997 Tax Reform Bill, which provides for a maximum Federal capital gains tax of 20%.

Let's look at some of these issues more closely, beginning with the idea that we might want to cash out our real estate investment to get funds to live on in our retirement years. There are a number of ways to do this.

We can continue to live in our home, but draw out the equity as cash payments to us through what is called a Reverse Mortgage or Home Equity Conversion Loan.

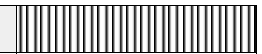
But say we don't want to remain in our current home, because it is just too big for us or not near enough to the services we require. One option might be to sell the property and then rent an apartment, live with family, buy a low upkeep condominium, or move into a retirement home. But then the question arises as to what the best way is to sell our house. After all, and especially in

this situation, the old saying applies in spades: "It's not what you sell it for, it's how much you get to keep."

One way, to possibly keep more, is the 1034 Installment Sale. Basically, under IRS code 1034, you are allowed to defer payment of Federal taxes on the equity in your home if you "carry back" a trust deed on the sale. If you hold the note on the property you have sold with "interest only" payments made to you, then the principal of the transaction is protected from tax consequences until it is paid. This is just one possibility. Depending on your individual needs, a customized tax deferred installment sale can be created for you so that you receive the principal of the note (the equity in your home) under whatever time frame is best for you.

In general, it is a good idea to start real estate planning early and not rush into any deal. Take your time. Talk with a tax-experienced Realtor, your attorney and your CPA before entering into any transaction. The equity in your property is an important asset and few of us can afford to take chances that put it at risk.

A couple of other important things to mention are the 1997 Federal Tax Exclusion and the 1997 Tax Reform Bill. First of all, any single person selling a principal residence can receive a \$250,000 tax exclusion and a couple is entitled to a \$500,000 tax exclusion. The capital gains tax rate is now 20% of the gross profit after expenses for most property owners, and in the sale of a principal residence this is not calculated until after the tax exclusion is deducted. To further complicate this though, if you have lived in several homes over the years, the amount subject to capital gains is generally the amount of profit



between your original basis and the sales price of your current home, less sales expenses and after the appropriate tax exclusion.

Refinancing the home you want to continue to live in may be another option, but refinancing drains the equity from a property, gives you cash flow for a limited time and leaves the mortgage obligation in place still to be paid after the cash has been used up.

Many of these issues are covered in more detail in a free Special Report for Seniors written by Tim Corliss. If you would like to receive a copy you can call me at (760)329-1296. Leave your name and address and the report will be sent to you.

Beverly V. Haun is a Real Estate Broker in the Coachella Valley. She also serves as a California Senior Legislature Assemblywoman.

**A Special Thank You....**

The Partnership would like to recognize the generosity and practical help recently provided by Teresa G. Bluma of K-9 Specialties in Cherry Valley. K-9 Specialties provides training and certification for service animals.

**The HEALTH BENEFITS OF HAVING A PET**

**S**everal studies now support the idea that there are health benefits to sharing your life with a pet. One of the important findings has been that persons who owned pets, especially men, had significantly lower blood pressure, triglyceride and cholesterol levels as compared with those who were not pet owners.

In 1990 research, conducted at Cambridge University, it was found that persons who have pets tend to have fewer minor health complaints, such as headaches, indigestion and problems sleeping.

A UCLA study found that “seniors who owned pets had fewer visits to the doctor than those who did not own pets.” Another study in Australia found that “...pet owners visit the doctor less often and take less medication than non-pet owners...report greater satisfaction with their physical fitness and are less likely to report feeling lonely.”

This evidence suggests that sharing our lives with pets can not only bring us companionship, but also may help to improve our health! Caring for a pet is an important responsibility though, which should not be undertaken lightly.

[INTERNET SOURCES: [www.heska.com](http://www.heska.com) - [www.petnet.com.au](http://www.petnet.com.au)]

**ALONE, BUT NOT LONELY Seminar Series Schedule**

**E**xpectations: Parents & Grown Children  
 Wednesday, January 20 - 10am-11:30am  
 at Joslyn Center, 73-750 Catalina Way in Palm Desert. This is the second in this year’s Desert Council for Aging series.

New Beginning: Sexuality, Dating, Relationship and Re-Marriage, will be presented March 18th at 10am at Joslyn Center. The fourth forum, Alone, But Not Lonely, will review and summarize the series and will be presented on May 19, 1999.

Visit the Desert Council for Aging website at *Vital Connections* or call 760.327.7766 for more information.



# VITAL CONNECTIONS

A Community Of Information And Resources for  
 Seniors,  
 Persons with Disabilities, their Families and Caregivers

**M**ore and more people are discovering everyday that *Vital Connections* is a valuable daily source for news and information, activities and entertainment, services and assistance, stores and shopping, as well as a place to get answers to individual questions.

We are pleased to welcome two new sponsors

who are helping to bring all of this to you:

ALZHEIMER'S ASSOCIATION  
 Riverside/San Bernardino  
 Counties Chapter  
 "Someone to Stand by You"  
 and  
 KERN RIVER INN  
 Bed and Breakfast  
 "On the banks of the wild  
 and scenic Kern River"

## On-Line Resources Categories

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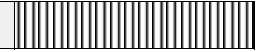
[Home](#)

## DONATED COMPUTER LOOKING FOR NEW HOME.....

**A** member of our board has donated a 486 computer, complete with keyboard and monitor, to The Partnership with the intention that we should give it to a non-profit organization that is serving seniors or persons with disabilities. Millennium will include a year of free Internet service with the computer!

We are looking for an organization that does not currently, *but would like to*, provide Internet access to those people it serves. If your organization would like to be considered as a possible recipient of the free computer, send a short letter to us explaining your need and how the computer will be used. Send your letter to: Partnership, Computer Donation, 6296 Rivercrest Drive, Suite K, Riverside, CA 92507. To be considered, your letter must be received by us no later than 5pm, Tuesday, February 16, 1999.

The board will review all letters of request, which have been received, and determine the organization to receive the computer. Their decision will be final.



## Lymphedema? Even Your Doctor May Not Know.....

by Kathleen J. Hightower

**E**arly in 1998, I began to have swelling in my right arm and within two months, my arm was almost twice its normal size. It felt heavy, it hurt and the skin began to develop red blotches and ever changing bruised areas. I had been warned about this. You see, I had a mastectomy back in 92 and the surgeon also removed every lymph node from my armpit to my wrist. I'll never forget the image that came to my mind when he said "I pulled them out like a string of grapes."

Before my mastectomy, I had done my reading and research on breast cancer treatments and long term effects. I argued with the doctor about whether to remove all or part of the lymphatic system in my arm. Fearing a delay in treatment, I gave in to his judgment based on the belief that he was better informed. I was wrong to give in and he was wrong about the ease of treatment (simple elevation of the affected area) for this swelling called Lymphedema.

The National Lymphedema Network ([www.lymphnet.org](http://www.lymphnet.org)) describes the lymphatic system as "delicate network

of vessels and nodes found in every part of the body. Tonsils are a familiar example. A colorless fluid called lymph collects and removes waste products from tissue spaces through this network. In addition to filtering lymph fluid, lymph nodes also store white blood cells and thus have an important immune system function. Lymphedema is an accumulation of lymphatic fluid in the interstitial tissue that causes swelling." According to Bosom Buddies ([www.go-icons.com/bosombuddies.htm](http://www.go-icons.com/bosombuddies.htm)) "the lymphatic system... acts as the sewage system of the body to remove and filter the metabolic wastes, viruses and bacteria from the body's cells by transporting the lymph (fluid) to lymph nodes where the filtering and detoxification occurs. The cleansed lymph is then returned to the circulatory system."

Some people are born with or develop this condition because of missing or impaired lymphatic vessels. Others develop this condition because of damage from surgery, radiation, infection, deep vein thrombosis or

trauma. There is no cure for the estimated 100 million people affected worldwide including 3-5 million in the US. It is estimated that 35%-70% of breast cancer patients with lymph node dissections will develop lymphedema, depending on how many nodes are removed.

My treatment consisted of wearing a compression sleeve, which only contained the swelling. The doctor later prescribed a pneumatic pump but I have learned this method of treatment is very controversial (home use is illegal in Germany). It was very painful to use and seemed to work only for short periods of time, so it was an easy decision for me to discontinue use. I still elevate and wear the compression sleeve and my swelling is less. I was very discouraged until I did more research.

Typing "lymphedema" to search the web reveals over 1,000 areas of information. I have learned that there is another very successful, safe and fast treatment that will get the swelling down and enables the sufferer to control their lymphedema without further medical provider participation. It is called

continued on Next Page...



LYMPHEDEMA.....

Complex Decongestive Physiotherapy (CDP) and dates back to 1882. A four to six week program of treatment consists of a massage technique known as Manual Lymph Drainage, skin care, compressions bandaging and gentle exercises. During this treatment the patient is trained in self-massage, patient-specific exercise and self-care methods to maintain and control the lymphedema on their own for the rest of their lives.

The amazing news is that this type of treatment has only spread to the US in the past 5-10 years! As a result treatment centers are few and far between and doctors are largely unaware of its availability. Our American Medical Association does not have a diagnostic code for lymphedema, much less a procedure code for treatment. In most cases, insurance companies are being educated on this chronic condition one at a time by patients requesting the CDP treatment they have learned about on their own.

My own doctors were surprised when I told them about it and they didn't really seem very interested. When I told them the closest

treatment centers are at UCLA Medical Center and Hoag Memorial in Newport Beach, I was strongly encouraged to go there. Yes, I have become a problem patient - a patient that does her own research and watches over the shoulder of her medical care provider. My picture probably hangs in a back room to warn staff when I'm spotted in the area. Much as they may hope, I'm not through with them yet. My plan is to move up the organization with information. Ignorance will no longer be a viable excuse and I don't intend to stop with only my medical center.

I am compiling notebooks of information to present to regional hospital cancer and physical therapy departments in hopes of getting one of them to start a

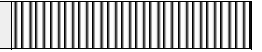
local treatment center. At the very least, information on prevention and proper warnings for the "at-risk" population will hopefully be made available.

Please let me know of any contacts your might have at medical centers in Western Riverside County or the Coachella Valley. You can contact me by Email: [Actionfile@aol.com](mailto:Actionfile@aol.com) or call me at (909)437-6448. Feel free to contact me too if you have any questions.

Kathleen Hightower is the owner of Action Accounting, which provides a full range of bookkeeping, tax and business planning services.

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## PLANNING TO CARE FOR YOUR PARENTS

by Terri Abelar, Director, Aging Solutions

**O**ften I am approached by family members of an older person who are trying their best to address the needs of their relatives. Most of the time, what really seems to be the problem is that the family has not planned ahead for what MAY come as the older person needs more assistance.

What is most important to family members and their older relatives is security in knowing that certain things are taken care of and are in order. Parents do not want to become a burden to their family. Also, relatives usually want to know that their parents are safe and comfortable in their situation.

Imagine your parents live 400 miles away from you and you receive a phone call that one of your parents has been hospitalized. What can you do from where you are and how quickly can you do it? How will this affect your parents? Here are a few important things to do in your planning to help when the unexpected happens:

- \* Get a current phone book for the area in which your parents live.
- \* Keep a current list of your parents doctors and pharmacy, including their phone numbers.
- \* Keep a current list of friends and neighbors of your parents, including their phone numbers.

***(Parents - Help your children prepare to help you! Send them a phone book. Get the list of your doctors and other important contacts together with their phone numbers and send them to your children. Give them all the information they might need to help if the need should arise including your insurance information and the name and number of your clergy person.)***

My best advice is be prepared. Cover all the bases: finances, health care, taking care of the pets, everything. If you would like to receive a complimentary publication to help with your planning (or to send to your children), call Aging Solutions at (909) 301-9702, visit our website at Vital Connections <[www.vitalco.net](http://www.vitalco.net)>, or Email me:

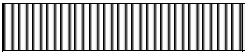
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Services and Information for Persons in the Coachella Valley with Disabilities

- **Recruitment and referral of personal care attendants to help with homemaking, shopping, driving and/or personal care; information on how to hire, train and manage attendants.**
- **Help in locating affordable rental units through housing referrals; advice to landlords and property owners regarding housing modification.**
- **Information about and referral to important services, products and activities.**
- **Ombudsman service for the rights of persons with disabilities and assistance in mediation with government and social service agencies.**

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CALL WEEKDAYS FROM 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.  
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# Have the Important Information and Resources of Vital Connections at Your Finger Tips Everyday How to: *MAKE www.vitalco.net YOUR COMPUTER'S "HOME PAGE"*

*If you have*

*Netscape Communicator*

- Go to the Edit menu and click on "Preferences."
- In the category tree on the left, click on Navigator.
- Where it says: "Navigator starts with," make sure "Home Page" is marked.
- In the field marked "Location," type <http://www.vitalco.net/>

*If you have*

*Netscape Navigator 3.x*

- Go to the Options menu and click on "General references."

- Click on the Appearance tab.
- Where it says: "Browser Starts With," make sure "Home Page Location" is marked.
- In the space provided, type <http://www.vitalco.net/>

*If you have*

*Internet Explorer 4.0*

- Go to the View menu and click on "Internet Options."
- Click on the General Tab.
- In the field where it says

"Address," type <http://www.vitalco.net/>

*If you have*

*Internet Explorer 3.x*

- Go to the View menu and click on "Options."
- Click on the Navigation tab.
- Where it says "Page," find "Start Page" in the scroll-down window.
- In the field where it says "Address," type <http://www.vitalco.net/>

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