

# Seniors Living Well

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## A multigenerational get-together

Grandparents invite grandchildren for day of fun at Pleasanton Senior Center

STORY AND PHOTOS BY CHRISTIAN TRUJANO

**T**ensions were high. It was round five, all tied up, as Pleasanton resident Karen Carnahan took aim.

Carnahan's granddaughter, Scarlett Roth, could only watch as her grandma's cornhole bag flew in the air and fell in as seamlessly as a three-pointer from Golden State Warrior Steph Curry.

As they both laughed and giggled, Carnahan told the Weekly that it was basic personal moments like that one that made her appreciative of the Pleasanton Senior Center for hosting events such as the Party on the Patio, where over 50 grandparents and grandchildren were able to enjoy games and activities together.

"I think it's the most important thing, because I can sit across the dinner table from her and there's nothing to say," Carnahan said.

"But this?" she said, referring to their intense cornhole match. "That's what she'll remember."

Carnahan said that the second annual event, which was held last week outside the Senior Center at the main hall patio, was a major step up from last year's as it had much more activities for kids and grandparents of all ages to enjoy.

"I think they have really worked hard to address all ages — from the very mature child to the younger," she said. "And it's clean; it's wholesome."

The Party on the Patio on May 11 was put together by the city's recreation department and the Friends of Pleasanton Senior Center nonprofit organization as a way to celebrate



Several kids and their family members work on arts and crafts during the second annual Party on the Patio event hosted by the Pleasanton Senior Center on May 11.

the fact that the month of May is Older Americans Month.

Shawn Harris, recreation coordinator for the city of Pleasanton, told the Weekly that

the event doubled in size compared to the first one last year. She said besides bringing different generations together, she also likes that it brings different cultures together.

She said one thing she likes to see is the grandparents being able to teach their grandchildren hands-on things like with the arts-and-crafts tables.

"I just think it's great to see everybody interacting and kind of just teaching each other a little bit of this, a little bit of that," Harris said.

Kara Yost, who started working at the Senior Center in October but had previously worked as a city staffer for 21 years, said that it was her first time attending this event and that she loved seeing all the different generations interacting and the high energy that day.

"I work with the seniors every day, but it's great to see them interacting with their grandchildren," Yost said.

Mary Jane Casper, board member at the Friends of Pleasanton Senior Center, told the Weekly that the organization had helped with the event last year with the goal of getting seniors together with their grandchildren.

"Everybody really, really enjoyed it," she said. "So we decided that we had to do it another time."

She said that one of the ways the nonprofit raises money for these events, other than donations from residents, was the organization's Friends Tree, which is a living art piece that is displayed at the center.

People purchase engraved "leaves and rocks" through the nonprofit so that they can memorialize someone they know or so that they can just show their general financial support.

She added that events like the Party on the Patio are important for bringing different generations together at the Senior Center so that they can learn more about the facility and be able to enjoy all that it offers to the entire community.

That theme of bringing together different generations was also something that many others at the event thought was very important.

"I think it's a good way to bring the community together (and) have the grandkids ... spend time with their grandmother, who



Dolores Bengston, longtime Pleasanton resident, hands out brochures during the Livermore-Amador Valley Garden Club's debut of its reimagined sensory garden.

they're super close with," said Nika May, who was there with her two daughters to visit their grandma. "It's so nice ... and my mother-in-law loves the Senior Center, so it's nice to see where she comes every week"

Zack Silva, Pleasanton recreation supervisor, told the Weekly that getting more people of different generations involved with the older community at the center was one thing that is basically nonexistent — but that through Party on the Patio, that is slowly changing.

"We have a lot of seniors who come here and they socialize with each other. I think that one of those missing pieces is kind of socializing with the youth," Silva said.

"That was just a piece that wasn't happening here," Silva added. "I think senior centers are often seen as you know, a place for seniors to go and socialize and recreate ... this was kind of just one of those opportunities to kind of just expand on seniors' personal lives and kind of be able to share that with each other as well."

Apart from the free ice cream and popcorn, the event featured live turtle petting from the Alviso Adobe Community Park and several arts-and-crafts stations where people could build sandcastles and paint flower pots.

But one of the main attractions was beyond the gate of the main hall patio where the Livermore-Amador Valley Garden Club debuted its reimaged sensory garden.

The club, which is a nonprofit educational service organization, first opened the sensory garden — located next to the Senior

Center in Pleasanton's Centennial Park — in the 1990s as a result of joint collaborative efforts from city staff, the Pleasanton Senior Center Task Force, the Park and Recreation Commission and the Pleasanton City Council at the time.

But after maintaining the garden for the past 30 years, Beth Clark, recording secretary at the garden club, told the Weekly that after some research the club decided that the garden had veered away from actually being a sensory garden.

"Last summer, we decided that we wanted to kind of step back and take a look at what we had here," she said.

So in the fall of 2022, club members began refreshing the garden with new plants that were purchased and grouped according to sensory themes while the old and tired plants were removed.

Members then added signs to the garden and installed plant tags to identify the plants.

Now, the garden consists of three raised beds and two large in-ground beds that are each labeled with a sign for its sensory theme such as visual, smell and touch.

Clark said that the club added the signs so that people are encouraged to interact with the garden rather than just walk through it.

"A lot of people have come through," she said regarding the people walking through during the Party on the Patio event. "So I think that us participating in this event makes it possible for people to learn about this garden."

But more importantly, she said it was a great way for the seniors — who live around



One of the main attractions at the event was the Alviso Adobe Community Community Park petting station where kids and seniors alike were able to pet Frankie the turtle and see a live snake along with real animal furs.

the center and frequently visit the garden — to check out the new plants.

"We see lots and lots of seniors come through. Some come every day," Clark said. "Some have special plants that they like. So they really look forward to that experience."

Dolores Bengtson, longtime resident, public figure and member of the garden club, also told the Weekly that one thing that she appreciated that the club has done was how they brought in a wide variety of flowers to

seniors who don't have the space for their own garden.

"They don't have places to grow flowers anymore, and many of them were gardeners," Bengtson said. "So it's been interesting to see some of them come by and say, 'Oh, yes, this is this, this is that.' I think that's one of the whole purposes, is to allow them to participate with the same beauty that they had around them when they lived in their own homes." ■

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# Preparing to buy or sell a home in 2023

Tips for seniors ready to jump into a fast, high-tech real estate market

By **DAVID STARK**

A fast, competitive and high-tech world awaits seniors who are buying or selling homes in Pleasanton.

If a few decades have passed since someone was in a real estate transaction, they should be prepared for more people and more technology in the process.



**David Stark**

“There’s going to be less sitting down at a table and having a conversation over the paperwork as a lot of that now is done online, through text messaging and email,” said

Tracey Esling, 2023 treasurer of Bay East Association of Realtors.

Esling, a Tri-Valley resident and Realtor, said seniors preparing to sell their homes should be ready for their head and their heart to spin.

“It can be tedious for a senior as a lot of times they’re moving out of a home that they’ve lived in for many years, and with that comes a lot of emotion and a lot of stress,”

Esling said. “The contracts are long, they’re tedious, there’s inspection processes, there’s photos to be taken, and somebody could show up with a drone and do an overview of your home.”

“Buying a home 30 years ago for one price and selling that home now at a price that’s three times what they bought it for, that’s a lot for somebody to grab onto,” Esling said. “It’s challenging in the respect that if you get multiple offers, you’re having to look at all of those offers and digest them and pick an offer.”

Esling said that Pleasanton’s popularity with homebuyers means seniors selling their homes should be ready for lots of interest. “The number of offers that are going to come through are going to be very different,” Esling said.

For seniors considering buying a home in Pleasanton, Esling said, “That is a very challenging experience, if you go back and look at what they paid for a home 30 years ago and what they’re going to pay for a home now. Those numbers are very different.”

Esling said senior buyers entering the market may be surprised by the competition for the few homes

that are for sale. “The biggest problem you have is the price of homes. Buyers need to have a significant down payment; they need to just wrap their minds around high prices and competition,” Esling said.

For seniors on a fixed income, securing purchase financing may be a challenge.

Esling said, “Be prepared to move quickly and make sure all your money is where it needs to be. Have a lender in place. Also be prepared for the scrutiny that comes if you are on a limited income. A lender is going to look into everything and again that process is very different than it was 30 years ago.”

Since so much of a real estate transaction is conducted electronically, Esling suggested senior buyers be wary of anything that seems odd or unusual.

“Ask any questions and be careful with the emails that you get. If you’re uncomfortable with something that you get in an email concerning money or signing documents, always reach out to your real estate agent, the title company or your lender,” Esling said.

Downsizing early in the process of buying a home can make the process



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easier. “They may be going from a home with a large yard to a townhome and that’s a very different lifestyle,” Esling said.

Asked when a senior homebuyer should start downsizing, Esling said, “Immediately. You are going to need to get rid of things and you need to do that prior to moving. If you’re moving everything out of a home that you’ve lived in for a number of years into a different home, most things aren’t going to fit the decor. So, you need to start

downsizing immediately. You need to have somebody in place that knows who to contact to haul stuff away.”

Esling offered a final tip for seniors either buying or selling: “Have a support team. Your real estate agent, any family members that are close to you, and maybe some really good friends.” ■

*Editor’s note: David Stark is chief public affairs and communications officer for the Bay East Association of Realtors, based in Pleasanton.*

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# Bingocize, a new way to stay fit at 60+

CityServe welcomes creative fitness game for seniors

By NICOLE GONZALES

A new program run out of the Pleasanton Senior Center aims to give adults 60 and older encouragement to get involved with their health and get active, also while playing a game they love.

Known as Bingocize, the program incorporates equal parts physical movement with rounds of the popular table game Bingo. The program combines games, nutritional education and physical movement with the intention of improving overall health and fitness for participants.

Bingocize typically focuses on fall prevention exercises for the local seniors. The program began at the Senior Center this year, led by Kyle Hemming, a health education program manager with CityServe of the Tri-Valley.

“It’s been amazing to see the folks get excited about moving around and learning how to keep their bodies in shape. They do really love the Bingo aspect,” Hemming said. “The reaction has been great so far. Plenty of the participants have shared that they

come out of the classes with better mobility and energy.”

When the class started, it formatted to last 10 weeks with seniors meeting twice a week for one hour. Following the program’s success, staff have said they are interested in adding more sessions and classes.

“I hope we can continue to serve our demographic here, help them live better lives with each class,” Hemming said. “I would like to expand and see what other fun classes we can come up with. There are a lot of ways to get folks excited about health and movement.”

Staff have noted that incorporating Bingo has improved attendance, attention and overall commitment to the class.

“By having something low-stress, engaging and fun like a game of Bingo for them makes it easier to get active,” Hemming said. “(For this class) I’ve noticed more participation and interest in the activities we do. We also share health educational topics on things that can really impact their lives, like living with diabetes or nutrition.”

CityServe CEO Christine Beitsch-Bahmani shared with the Weekly that the nonprofit plans to bring additional health programs for its service base in the coming months.

This summer, Hemming plans to introduce a new program known as LIFE that will offer one-on-one sessions focusing on balance training.

“My passion is health and helping people, it is rewarding to be doing this and see the direct impact that it has,” Hemming said, when reflecting on his role at the Senior Center. “It’s always fun to interact with the people in my classes. It’s a joy to see how happy getting out and moving can make someone, this has been my experience.”

Hemming has led various educational sessions on food and fitness at the center, including Cooking with Kyle where he has discussed healthy alternatives to alcohol and processed foods.

To find out more about CityServe of the Tri-Valley and its senior programs, visit [cityservecares.org](http://cityservecares.org). ■



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Health education program manager Kyle Hemming leads a game of Bingocize at the Pleasanton Senior Center.



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# Webinar series focuses on supporting those who support others

Next up in Hope Hospice program is 'Self-Care for the Caregiver' in June

BY JEANITA LYMAN

Family and caregivers of patients nearing the end of their lives are invited to a webinar series from Hope Hospice that is now seeking to offer a more personalized experience through an interactive format.

The Family and Caregiver Education Series from the organization is aimed at providing support for family, caregivers and loved ones of those in the Tri-Valley receiving end-of-life care and touching on a range of relevant subjects, with an interactive series that launched in March and is ongoing throughout the year.

While the series is offered as a free service through Hope Hospice, organizers emphasized that the webinars are open to all.

"Our Family Caregiver Education Series is available to any member of the community who is currently engaging as a caregiver to a loved one living with a terminal diagnosis or a disabling chronic condition, regardless of whether your loved one is a Hope Hospice patient," Hope Hospice officials said in the description of the workshops.

So far, the most recent series has covered how to navigate the healthcare system, how to adapt in the wake of a fresh dementia diagnosis, and most recently a discussion on addressing end-of-life issues and navigating hospice and palliative care on May 11.

Past workshops are recorded and available

for streaming on Hope Hospice's website. In addition to this year's series, archived recordings extend back to 2020 with discussions on caregiving and dementia care in the COVID-19 era that were released that fall.

While the archived webinars can serve as a valuable resource for caregivers and loved ones of those receiving hospice and palliative care, the current series that launched in March aims to deepen support for participants by offering an interactive format in which anyone can ask questions live during the workshop, seeking to personalize the discussions by addressing specific questions, concerns, and topics that are relevant to participants.

The next workshop — "Self-Care for the Caregiver" on June 8 — was also hosted last year, with a recording available in the webinar archives. This round, however, will be in an interactive format that allows live attendees to participate in the discussion and raise topics and questions related to their current caregiving situations.

"The stress that family caregivers experience as their loved one declines can be staggering. The constant fluctuation of changing roles, uncertainty about the future, and fatigue may ultimately result in compromised health and family dysfunction," event organizers wrote in the description for the upcoming workshop. "This webinar will focus on understanding the



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causes of stress, strategies for coping, and the importance of seeking support and utilizing resources."

Subsequent topics in the series this year are set to consist of "Handling Grief and Loss" in July, "Signs of Dementia Versus Normal Aging" in August, "Dementia Basics" in September, "End-of-Life Legal and Financial Issues" in

October, "Medicare: An Overview and Update for 2024" in November and "Dementia — Understanding Behavior as Communication" in December.

More information, plus archived workshops and registration for upcoming live workshops, are available at [hopehospice.com/classes-resources/caregiving-education](http://hopehospice.com/classes-resources/caregiving-education). ■

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## Get your walking shoes on

Museum on Main, LARPD to host historic Pleasanton tour

BY CIERRA BAILEY

The Museum on Main and the Livermore Area Recreation and Park District are teaming up to offer a special walking tour for seniors around downtown Pleasanton.

Rachel Brickell, the museum's director of education, will guide the sidewalk tour set for May 31, where participants will view the historic homes along St. Mary Street, Pleasanton Avenue and Rose Avenue, concluding at Peters Avenue.

The museum and LARPD have partnered with each other for several years offering various opportunities for local seniors, which includes these walking tours. The upcoming walk will be the second St. Mary Street tour they've hosted together, according to Sarah Schaefer, the Museum on Main's executive director.

The tour includes lessons about the history of the families that occupied the homes along the walking route as well as their contributions and their everyday lives as they helped build Pleasanton.

"We do Second Street tours as well but what sets St. Mary apart is that we talk a little bit about some of the fraternal social organizations that existed in Pleasanton and their roles in the community. And because the fairgrounds and the race track are over on that side of the town, we talk about that as well," Schaefer said.

She said the tour also explores historic preservation and what makes a historic



COURTESY MUSEUM ON MAIN

The St. Mary Street tour includes a stop outside this historic house.

resource. "We really dive into that a lot on the St. Mary tour — which is something else that sets this tour apart," Schaefer said.

While Schaefer noted that the tour doesn't go in depth about the architectural details of the various homes, they will provide some information to participants so that they can further explore the architectural features on their own.

Following the approximately two-hour tour, participants will be able to break out on their own for lunch at one of the many restaurants along Main Street and throughout downtown.

Participants will meet at Museum on Main located at 603 Main St. in Pleasanton for the walk which begins at 10 a.m. on May 31. Transportation is not included. To register, visit LARPD.org or call 925-373-5700. ■