

# Serving the seniors

Jennifer Pence

Like the rest of the country, Mountain View faces the challenge of how to care for an aging population and keep seniors engaged in the community. Many seniors wish to stay in their homes as they age, but need help in order to do so. The Community Services Agency on Stierlin Road aims to provide this help.

"Helping seniors remain in their homes is not only the humane thing to do but also makes financial sense," says Maureen Wadiak, associate director of CSA. "One year in a nursing home paid for by Medicare or Medicaid, which most seniors that we help could qualify for, costs \$43,000." In contrast, CSA's senior case management program costs \$1,117 per person per year.

Currently, 204 seniors are enrolled in CSA's case management program. The program starts by providing and installing equipment such as grab bars in the home and walkers or canes. It then provides ongoing support in the form of housekeeping, cooking and transportation. CSA volunteers will even go to doctors' appointments with seniors if

they need moral support or an extra set of ears to absorb information.

The senior nutrition program provides an affordable lunch (a \$2 donation is suggested) and an opportunity for socializing each weekday at the Mountain View Senior Center at 266 Escuela Ave. starting at 11:30 a.m. Two



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days a week, musicians come in to perform, and other days feature dancing and informative talks on topics such as disaster preparedness and avoiding scams targeted at seniors. The program serves 33,000 meals per year to more than 1,400 different seniors.

Many of the volunteers in CSA's pro-

grams for seniors are themselves seniors. The nutrition program is run almost entirely by seniors, who check people in, greet and seat them, distribute the meals and clean up. Even the cook is a senior. For the case management volunteers, the percentage is somewhat lower, but still significant—of the 187 regular pro-

gram volunteers, 35 percent are over 60. Having seniors help is convenient since they are more likely to have free time during the day. Unfortunately, CSA's insurance does not allow volunteers over 75 to provide transportation to others, but older volunteers

can help in other ways.

The senior volunteers generally find the program a fulfilling way to stay active. "I started volunteering here after I retired," says Flora Olvera, senior nutrition program volunteer. "Coming here just makes my day, and this is why I think the seniors enjoy it

so much, too."

What can you do to help? First, if you know a senior who might benefit from CSA's services, help this person contact CSA at (650) 968-0836. Also, if you have a flexible schedule, volunteers are especially needed during the day to drive seniors to doctors' appointments. Volunteers who are free in the evening can help seniors with grocery shopping and other errands.

Of course, financial contributions are always welcome too, especially as CSA faces cuts in government funding. One fun way to make a contribution is to dine at Amarin Thai on Castro Street on Aug. 18 and 19, since 50 percent of the ticket price (\$24 in advance, \$26 at the door) will go to CSA. See [www.csacares.org](http://www.csacares.org) for more info.

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