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Living Long and Well in Marin

Did you know that older adults are the fastest growing age group in Marin? Today one in four Marin residents are over the age of 60 and by 2030 that number will rise to one in three. In good news, in Marin we tend to live longer than others, consistently ranking in the top five of all the counties in the United States for life expectancy. Because of this, we need to make sure we are prepared to serve this growing population of older residents.

Aging is a process we all experience, a normal part of life, which includes physical and cognitive changes. Whether it is ourselves, our parents, or our community members we all want people in Marin to live long and live well. Seniors and older adults want to stay in their homes and remain independent, but this may mean they need help on a temporary or permanent basis with transportation, meal delivery, home care, or general assistance around the house. There are many community services and support options available, but navigating the system can be overwhelming. The good news is that you don't have to do it alone thanks to Marin County's Aging and Adult Services Department.

Our Aging and Adult Services department has a robust information and assistance program serving all of Marin County's older adults, as well as their caregivers. The service is available to the entire community, regardless of income. Inquiries range from out-of-state family members trying to figure out home-based services for an elderly parent leaving the hospital, to an isolated senior needing help changing a light bulb, to someone wanting to explore what options are available as they plan for retirement years.

Social service workers are available Monday through Friday from 8:30am to 5:00pm by calling 415-457-INFO. These staff members are experts not only in knowing the full range of resources for older adults here in Marin, but also in helping people determine what services may be most helpful for their individual needs. More information, including a comprehensive service database, is available on-line at www.marinhhs.org/community-resource-guide.

To date, the Aging Action Initiative, launched by the Board of Supervisors in 2014 to promote a countywide age-friendly environment, has focused on mental health and dementia; food and nutrition; and information assistance and referral. I am excited to share that we have launched an additional initiative: Money Matters- Addressing Your Financial Future in Marin.

The program, free to Marin residents, has five events this fall to help older adults and their loved ones ascertain their family's financial situation and make informed choices around critical issues such as housing, jobs and financial planning. The Money Matters program is a collaboration of the Marin Women's Commission, the Marin Commission on Aging and several community organizations, including YWCA of Marin. All older adults are eligible to participate, but there will be a special effort made to reach women, who are more at risk for economic insecurity because of changes in marital status and traditional family roles. To register for events or to learn more about the Money Matters program visit: www.moneymattersmarin.org.

At the County, we are committed to actively planning for the future and establishing programs and resources to support these demographic shifts in Marin. To learn more about these efforts, visit: www.livelonglivewellmarin.org.

Switching gears, did you know that Marin County has a very high voter participation rate, but according to data provided by the Secretary of State's Office, residents who are eligible but not registered to vote number more than 20,000! September 27 is National Voter Registration Day. If you're not registered to vote, please take a minute to do so. Register on-line at www.marincounty.org/depts/rv/voter-registration/register or call (415) 473-6456 to request a voter registration form. October 24 is the last day to register for the November 8 election.

As always, my door is open to you and I welcome your suggestions and ideas. You can reach me at: (415) 473-7331 or jarnold@marincounty.org.