Whistlestock Helps Fund Community Breakfasts

Thanks to the wildly successful Fund-A-Need portion of the Whistlestock concert, Whistlestop is now offering a weekly Friday Community Breakfast. Thanks to Whistlestock attendees, we raised enough funds to provide breakfasts for up to 125 people each week through June 2015.

Yvonne Roberts, Whistlestop’s Development and Marketing Director, said, “The breakfast is scheduled prior to the Friday Brown Bag Pantry food distribution, so it should be convenient for those most in need of a good hot meal.”

Krista Pelletier, Nutrition Services Program Manager, said, “The Community Breakfast is an opportunity for those people 60 and older to come down to the Jackson Café from 8:30 to 9:30am for a delicious and healthy breakfast with fellow community residents. This program, in partnership with the County of Marin Aging and Adult Services, helps to provide older adults with adequate nutrition, helps to reduce social isolation, supports independent living and helps to build a better quality of life for those that participate by linking them to other community based services. Because of the generosity and additional funding from Whistlestock, we will be able to expand the program from every other Friday to every Friday starting in December.”

Lee Pullen, Director of Aging and Adult Services, said, “We are excited to partner with Whistlestop. While we provide congregate lunches at eight sites in the county, we have not had a breakfast site until now. Besides providing nutritious food, these meals create community connection for older adults who otherwise might be isolated in their homes.”

Learn more about the Community Breakfast by going to the Whistlestop website under Nutrition Services or by contacting Krista Pelletier, 456-9062, ext. 122.
If you have recently visited Whistlestop’s Active Aging Center in downtown San Rafael, you cannot help but notice that the SMART train construction has begun. This work signifies that change is coming to our location — a positive sign of progress to provide older adults with another choice for transportation.

Whistlestop and Eden Housing, California’s oldest nonprofit housing developer, have partnered to create a visionary transit-oriented community center with onsite services and housing for older adults. This new project will allow Whistlestop to manage the impacts of the SMART train station coming in next door, result in a modernization and expansion of the Whistlestop Active Aging Center, and create critically needed affordable housing for this growing segment of Marin’s population.

Plans for the new building include space that will allow Whistlestop to leverage expanded partnerships with other nonprofits to offer a wider array of services, including health clinics and screenings. With the goal of continuing to help Marin’s growing population of older adults live active, healthy and independent lives, Whistlestop’s new state of the art Active Aging Center will have more space for the growing number of classes and activities. The Jackson Café will be renovated and relocated to the Fourth Street side of the new building. Eden Housing will occupy the top three stories of the new building, with 48 units of critically-needed affordable housing for older adults. These one-bedroom units will provide homes to low-income older adults, 62 and older, who earn less than half of the area median income. In addition to high-quality amenities such as a community room, computer center and library, the new building will be green (solar) with outdoor open spaces and patios. Safety, mobility, social connectivity and the proximity of downtown will establish a new model for aging in community. Far from isolating our older adults in settings away from neighborhoods, this new complex will integrate older adults into the very center of Marin County, maximizing interaction and intergenerational life.

The formal application process with the City of San Rafael for the new building has begun. Dozens of community and neighborhood association presentations introducing the project have been made. The architectural firm, Van Meter Williams Pollack LLP, has created three exciting design options for the visual look and feel of the new building. A community meeting to unveil the project will be held at Whistlestop in mid-January. Public support for this new project will be critical in getting it approved. We are asking all Whistlestop supporters to help us with this effort. Let’s work together and make this happen!
New Jackson Café Chef Enjoying New Challenges

Luis Realpozo, the Jackson Café’s new chef, loves getting feedback about the dishes served there. And he is finding that nearly all of the comments are positive.

Luis, 44, lives in Petaluma with his wife and two sons, one in college and one in high school. “My wife and I take turns fixing meals at home. She, too, is a cook. She cooks one day and then I do the next.”

He has been a chef for 23 years after completing a three-year training program in his native Mexico. He has been the head chef at the Jackson Café for about three months. The former chef, Rocky Packard, has a new position with Homeward Bound, in the catering department.

“The job is good,” Luis says. “I am happy to be here. These are good people.” He added that it was challenging at first, training six or seven students in the Homeward Bound program, in addition to preparing menus and cooking.

But, he is feeling more comfortable with the job each week.

Luis enjoys making Mexican as well as Italian dishes. He especially likes preparing his special ‘mole’ sauce. “I like being able to create new things, and it’s an open book here. I plan to make changes to the menu soon.” So look for some new dishes in the near future.

People love the bread pudding at the Jackson Café and Luis enjoys making Mexican flan from time to time.

Luis receives many compliments on the food. He fixed one of his favorites – Achiote Chicken – one week and got very positive feedback, so he fixed it again the next week. Be sure to stop by and let the chef know your favorite dish.
Making changes in the way we eat as we age can have a big impact on our well-being and even in how long we live. Matt Laye is a PhD and postdoctoral fellow in the Kapahi lab at the Buck Institute in Novato, where the overall focus is on nutrition and aging. Laye is studying the effect of limiting caloric intake in fruit flies. His studies have found that reducing calories consumed can double their life span.

He recommends eating fewer processed foods and more real food for healthy aging. He said, “We hear every week that this food is good for you or that food is bad for you. Everything in moderation is the best way.” He added that it would be helpful to follow the recommendations of Michael Pollan, author of Omnivore’s Dilemma, which are: “Eat food. Not too much. Mostly plants.” Laye pointed out that there is more to healthy aging than good nutrition. There are many factors that can decrease risk factors, among them exercise and stress reduction.

In a small but intriguing study conducted jointly by the Buck Institute and UCLA, Dr. Dale Bredesen, part-time professor at the Buck Institute, used an experimental, multimodal approach to treating Alzheimer’s disease. Bredesen was featured recently in the Marin Independent Journal.

Nine of the 10 participants in the trial displayed subjective or objective improvement in their memories within three to six months after the treatments began. Only one participant with late-stage Alzheimer’s showed no improvement. The results of the trial are reported in the current online edition of the journal Aging.

“Six of the 10 people were struggling at work because of memory problems, and all six of them have been able to return or continue at their work. That’s hard to fake,” said Bredesen. He cautioned, however, that they are anecdotal at this stage and that a more extensive, controlled clinical trial is warranted, according to the IJ article.

Bredesen came up with a 36-point therapeutic program, which he tailored somewhat differently for each of the 10 trial participants. The program included changes in diet, exercise, brain stimulation, increased sleep, and specific vitamins and pharmaceuticals.
Continued on Page 15

The Ultimate Choice About Hospice Care Belongs With the Patient

Y our illness is terminal. You have six months to live. Your doctor recommends curative treatment, such as chemotherapy, saying it might give you a bit more time. You just feel sicker. Severe symptoms send you to the emergency room or hospital. You just want to be comfortable for whatever time is left.

You ask about choosing hospice’s pain and symptom management to increase your physical comfort and quality of life. Your doctor resists. He says, “You’re not ready for that.” You don’t want to hurt his feelings or compromise your care by asserting your own wishes, but...

Base your decision about hospice on your wishes for end-of-life care and whether you meet the medical eligibility requirements, says Dr. Molly Bourne, Hospice by the Bay Chief Medical Director.

“Offering curative treatments, rather than suggesting hospice and comfort care, can be easier for doctors emotionally, especially with patients they know well,” she says. A survey of cancer physicians found that 65 percent said they’d tell a patient who was still feeling well that he or she had only four to six months to live, but only one in four would discuss the option of hospice care with that patient.

What can you do?

“Call us, and we can have a conversation with your doctor,” Bourne suggests. “Ultimately, your physician wants you to have the end-of-life experience that you want, to die at home with hospice if that’s it. We can help ease resistance by describing all the ways that hospice comfort care helps patients live better and even longer than predicted.”

Dr. Bourne’s tips for talking to your doctor about hospice are:

Base your decision about hospice on your wishes for end-of-life care and whether you meet the medical eligibility requirements.

Volunteer of the Month

December, 2014

Madeleine Antonio

Madeleine was born and raised in Northern Ireland and came to the United States with her husband in 1964. He was from the Bay Area and, after some detours, the couple finally made it back to the West Coast.

Madeleine has been volunteering at the Jackson Café since April and wishes she had found Whistlestop years ago. She enjoys being with all the people who come in for lunch and especially likes working with the other volunteers, who she says are a very interesting and diverse group of people.

She loves traveling and tries to get back to Ireland as often as possible to visit her relatives. Madeleine’s other great love is for her grandchildren. She has seven of them. Some of them live close by and others she does not see as often as she would like.

Marilyn Moore, the Jackson Café Coordinator, says of Madeleine, “It is always a pleasure working with Madeleine. She is able to multitask—serve our guests, refill a drink or remove dishes—always with a smile.”

In-Home Therapy Services

Marin • San Francisco

PHYSICAL THERAPY FOR SENIORS

• Specialized treatment for a variety of problems
• Balance and Fall Prevention Programs
• Visits are up to 60 minutes of personalized therapy
• Seniors are eligible to receive outpatient therapy in their homes under Medicare Part B

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whistlestop.org
Breakthrough Hearing Technology

You are invited to make a **breakthrough** to a life full of amazing hearing.

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or for more information: [www.whisperhearing.com](http://www.whisperhearing.com)

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San Rafael CA 94903
(415) 233-6081

**Whisper Hearing - Greenbrae**
Entrance on Via Hidalgo
350 Bon Air Rd #100
Greenbrae CA 94901
(415) 413-4928
Keep Learning at WHISTLESTOP

Whistlestop has a new fee structure for classes, activities, and special events that charge a modest fee; there is a discount for Whistlestar members. Becoming a Whistlestar member is easy -- to learn how, call 456-9062, Monday-Friday from 8:30am - 5:30pm. For a full list of classes and services, refer to the Whistlestop monthly calendar at whistlestop.org/classes/calendar/ or pick up a calendar at Whistlestop, 930 Tamalpais Ave., San Rafael. (Check the calendar on our website daily or call for updates to the schedule during the holidays.)

Please note that Whistlestop’s Active Aging Center and Jackson Café will be closed on December 25 and 26 in observance of the Christmas holiday. We will also be closed on January 1 & 2 in honor of the New Years holiday.

UPCOMING SPECIAL EVENTS

TREE-DECORATING & HOLIDAY CAROLING PARTY
Tues, Dec 2, 2-4pm
Bring in the holiday cheer by participating in a community tree-decorating party in our lounge, followed by a festive multi-cultural caroling performance with special treats in our Caboose Room. Come one, come all for this free, fun, and festive occasion!

“CHRISTMAS JUG BAND” LUNCHEON
Thurs, Dec 11, 11:30-2pm
Come to the Jackson Café for a rollicking good time. Enjoy the ever-popular “Christmas Jug Band,” known locally as “the kings of 100% acoustic folk-skiffle-swing holiday highjinks!” Also enjoy a traditional Christmas lunch, festive decorations, and good company, all for a price you can’t beat. Sign-up in advance as space is limited. Buy your ticket for $10 by Monday December 8 (and become a member), or pay $12 at the door.

CEDARS OF MARIN HOLIDAY CRAFT FAIR
Wed, Dec 17, 11am-1pm
Artists from the Cedars of Marin (Day Programs and Residential Services for Adults with Developmental Disabilities) will display their hand-made jewelry, cards, small art works, knitted hats and scarves, for your holiday gift purchasing pleasure.

HIGHLIGHTED CLASSES AND GROUPS

CHINESE BRUSH PAINTING
Fri, Dec 12, 1:30-3pm
Fee: $3/$5 for materials per class
Learn the art of Chinese brush painting with artist Louise Yee.

CONVERSATION GROUP FOR 90+
Every 3rd Thur, 1:30-3pm
Fee $0/$3
Contact: Virginia Dziomba, 456-6647
Join this small, friendly conversation group for women and men who are 90 plus every third Thursday.

“I CREATE” ARTS & CRAFTS WORKSHOPS
Wednesdays 10am-Noon
featuring Holiday Card making on Dec 3, 10am-Noon
Fee: $3/$5 per class for materials
Come and join a fun new group to explore knitting, embroidery, quilting, sewing, and other arts & crafts. All abilities and skill levels welcome. Led by artists Jackie Herzog and Anna Ladyzhenskaya. Call Anna to learn more at 456-9062, ext. 138.

MIND EXERCISE CLASS
Thurs, Dec 4 & 18, 3:30-5pm
Fee $0/$3
Stimulate your mind by exploring dynamic word and number puzzles. Facilitated by experienced YMCA teacher Lloyd Licher.

SALSA/CUBAN BALLROOM DANCING
FOR OLDER ADULTS
Thurs, 4:30-5:30pm
Fee: $8/$10 (Cash only, pay each time)
Drop-ins welcome
Come and learn beginning cha cha, mambo, and rumba dances geared for older adults of all levels and abilities with professional dancer Dale Louise Evje of Novato.
Keep Learning at WHISTLESTOP
For a complete list of classes, visit whistlestop.org

ZENTANGLE CLASS
Thurs, Dec 4, 1:30-3pm
Fee: $3/$5
Zentangle is an easy-to-learn, relaxing, fun way to create beautiful images by drawing structured patterns. Paula Egan, a certified Zentangle teacher, will show you basic techniques of this increasingly popular art form.

NEW ZUMBA CLASS
Wednesdays starting Dec 10, 12:30-1:30pm
Fee: $6/$8 (Cash only, drop-in fee)
Zumba is a great way to stay fit and active. Fun, motivating combination of Latin-inspired music and dance steps are guaranteed to get you moving. Zumba movements are easy to follow and for all activity levels. Instructed by Angela Jakab-Miller. Please bring water and a small towel.

HIGHLIGHTED HEALTH PROGRAMS

BLOOD PRESSURE SCREENING AND MEDICATION REVIEW
Tues, Dec 9, 11am-1pm
No Fee
Free monthly blood pressure screenings provided by Dominican University nursing students. Bring your over-the-counter and prescription medications for review.

CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUP
Mon, Dec 15 2:30-4
No Fee
Are you a caregiver coping with the challenges of caring for a loved one with a chronic or acute illness? Judy Coombs, RN, BSN, Gerontological Nurse Educator, leads a free monthly support group to help you learn about coping skills and helpful resources.

RELAX & RENEW Stress Reduction Class
Mondays Dec 1, 8, & 15, 1-2pm
Fee: $5/8
Release your stress, renew your zest for increased good health and happiness. Easy, gentle practices for all levels of ability. Both standing or sitting options. Bring a water bottle. Teacher Barbara Lovejoy, MSW, has helped people for more than 40 years. She is a workshop leader, Certified Life Coach, and former Chairperson of the Graduate School of Holistic Studies at JFK University.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Volunteers Needed to Serve Breakfast
Beginning Friday, Dec 5, Whistlestop will host a weekly Community Breakfast for older adults. We are building a new team of early birds. Volunteers are needed to set up and serve from 8 to 10am every Friday morning. Benefits are doing something good for older adults and a Free Breakfast.

Volunteer Drivers Needed
Meals on Wheels volunteer drivers needed to deliver meals to homebound clients. A valid California driver's license and a clear DMV report are needed, as well as a reliable vehicle, current insurance certificate and a working cell phone. Must be reliable, friendly, and clean in appearance. A minimum of one 3-hour weekday shift is required. Friday morning drivers are especially needed.

Check the calendar on our website daily or call for updates to the schedule during the holidays.
Grocery Shoppers Needed
Home-Delivered Grocery shoppers are needed to shop for homebound San Rafael older adults (60+). Shopping day is on Thursday mornings at the San Rafael Safeway on B Street. Participants pay only the cost of the groceries on a weekly, monthly, or shorter basis, for example while recovering from an illness. The program is a partnership between Whistlestop and San Rafael Safeway. Volunteers need to be available on Thursday mornings from 9am to Noon and have their own car.

Cashiers and Servers Needed
The Jackson Café at Whistlestop needs a few reliable, friendly volunteers who are interested in serving lunch at the café. Cashier experience is a plus but not required. Volunteers are asked to commit to a minimum of one weekday from 10:45am to 2pm. You receive a free lunch and get the satisfaction of making a contribution to older adults. Contact: volunteer@whistlestop.org Phone: 456-9062, ext. 117 www.whistlestop.org.

Thank You for Your Donations
The Whistlestop Active Aging Center would like to thank the many wonderful individuals and organizations that have donated to our classes, programs, and events this year. With much appreciation, we want to thank:

- **Safeway** for gift cards for our Mariachi event
- **Sol Food** for gift cards for Mariachi and 60th Anniversary events
- **Riley Street Arts & Crafts** for art supplies
- **LIFT** for Health Recipes booklets (English & Spanish)
- **Oscar’s Tacos** for chips and salsa for our Mariachi event
- **Wilfrido Sanchez** for the cell phone for our Mariachi event
- **Christina Dixon RDHAP** for In-Home Dental Hygiene Care which provided fluoride treatment to some of our Corazon Latino members

Whistlestop participates in Subaru’s “Share the Love” event
Whistlestop will once again be joining Subaru’s “Share the Love” event! Subaru will donate $250 for every new vehicle sold or leased to the purchaser’s choice of participating charities November 20, 2014, through January 2, 2015. Please tell your friends and neighbors about this fantastic opportunity and remind them to tick the box for “Meals on Wheels” operated by Whistlestop.

Katherine Brinnier for a white board to teach ESL classes
Canal Alliance for ESL volunteer teachers to our ESL program and two piñatas for our Cinco de Mayo celebration
City of San Rafael Library for booklets for our US Citizenship students
Marin Grassroots for the 2014 Election information by easy magazines, and
Linnea O’Brien for new white boards for our ESL classes.

**TECHNOLOGY**
Pre-registration and payment required. To register, Call 456-9062. See details of classes online.

- **Computer Tutor**
  - Mondays and Wednesdays, Noon-1pm
  - by appointment
  - Fee: $20/per hour
  - We offer personalized computer assistance, troubleshooting and instruction for the PC user, specializing in assisting older adults and novices.

- **Open Lab**
  - Every Mondays and Wednesdays, 10am-Noon
  - No Cost
  - Use our desktops to access the Internet. Volunteer staff available for advice on problems with your laptops and tablets or to offer help with software applications.
  - For additional computer class options at other locations, go to: [www.technology4life.org](http://www.technology4life.org).
  - Or call: 320-0363.

**Marin County Commission on Aging**
Thursday, Dec. 11 • 10am to 12:30pm
The Redwoods, Mill Valley
Topic: Legislative Update
Speakers: Legislative Task Force Planning Committee

**Whistlestop’s Thanksgiving Meal Donors**
Whistlestop would like to thank the following organizations that generously donated to our annual Thanksgiving Luncheon in the Jackson Café:

- **Mission San Rafael Rotary**, John H Rickards.
- **San Rafael Host Lions Club**, Bonnie Page.
- **KIND**, Corina Ingram.
**WHISTLESTOP EXPRESS**

**DECEMBER 2014**

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**WHISTLESTOP EXPRESS**

**DECEMBER 2014**

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**ACTIVITIES**

This Month at Whistlestop

Please view our most recent class schedule at www.whistlestop.org/classes/calendar/ or call 456-9062 for updates to the schedule.

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**TIME** | **CLASS** | **INFO** | **FEE**
---|---|---|---
9:30–10:30AM | **Zumba** | No Class Dec. 1, 3, 5 | Y
10–1PM | **Chair Massage** | Drop-in | Y
10–NOON | **Computer Lab** | Drop-in | N
10:30AM–1:30PM | **Persian Social Group** | 472-6020 | N
11–NOON | **Movement & Music** | Ends Dec. 8 | N
12:15–1:45PM | **German Social Group** | Drop-in | N
12:30–1:30PM | **Russian Social Group** | 456-9062 | N
1–2PM | **Relax and Renew Class** | Drop-in | Y
2–3:30PM | **ESL Basic/Advanced** | Ends Dec. 10 | Y
4–5PM | **Theatre Games & Play Reading** | 456-9062 | Y

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9:30–10:30AM | **Whistlesizers** | Drop-in | Y
10:00–NOON | **Mah Jongg** | Drop-in | N
10:45–11:45AM | **Cardio/Yoga Exercise Class** | Drop-in | N
11AM–2PM | **Manicurist** | Appt. Req. | N
11:30AM–12:30PM | **French Class** | No Class Dec. 9 | N
1–2PM | **French Social Group** | Drop-in | N
1–3PM | **Learn Spanish** | Drop-in | N
1:30–3PM | **Mastery of Aging Class** | Drop-in | N
3:30–4:30PM | **Advanced Korean Drums** | Class ends Dec. 9 | N

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9–10:15AM | **Tai Chi** | No Class Dec. 24 & 31 | Y
10–11:15AM | **Seniors’ Circle** | Drop-in | N
10–12PM | **Computer Lab** | Drop-in | N
10–12PM | **I Create Arts & Crafts Workshop** | Drop-in | Y
10:30AM–1:30PM | **Persian Social Group** | 472-6020 | N
11AM–1:30PM | **Corazón Latino** | No Group Dec. 24 & 31 | N
12:30–1:30PM | **Zumba Class** | Starts Dec. 10 | Y
1–2PM | **English Pronunciation** | Ends Dec. 10 | Y
1:30–3PM | **ESL Basic/Advanced** | Ends Dec. 10 | Y
3:30–5PM | **Citizenship Class** | Ends Dec. 17 | Y

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9:30–10:30AM | **Whistlesizers** | Drop-in | Y
10AM–1PM | **Chair Massage** | Drop-in | Y
11–NOON | **Zumba** | Drop-in | Y
12:15–3PM | **Vietnamese Social Group** | 456-9062 x129 | N
1:30–2:30PM | **Learn Italian** | Ends Feb. 12, 2015 | Y
2:45–3:45PM | **Balance Class** | No Class Dec. 18 | Y
3:30–4:30PM | **Beginning Korean Drums** | Ends Dec. 4 | N
3:30–5PM | **Mind Exercise** | Dec. 4 & 18 | N
4:30–5:30PM | **Salsa/Cuban Dance** | Drop-in | Y

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8:30AM | **Community Breakfast** | Drop-in | Y
9–10AM | **Brown Bag Pantry** | 456-9062 x117 | N
11–NOON | **ACASA** | Drop-in | N
1–3PM | **Practice Spanish** | Drop-in | N
1:30–3:30PM | **Ping-Pong** | Dec. 5 & 19 | N
2–4PM | **Yoga** | Drop-in | Y

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*Except for Corazón Latino Group, held weekly at Pickleweed Community Center, all classes are held at Whistlestop's Active Aging Center, 930 Tamalpais Ave., San Rafael.*

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**LUNCH MENU**

**WHISTLESTAR MEMBER (LOWEST PRICE)/**

**NON-MEMBER OVER 60 / UNDER 60**

**Main Entrée**

- $4.95/$5.95/$6.95
- $4.50/$5.25/$6.25

**Sandwiches**

- $4.50/$5.25/$6.25

**Soup du Jour**

- $1.95/$2.95/$2.95 bowl
- $4.50/$5.25/$6.25

**Garden/Caesar Salads**

- $3.75–$4.50

**TUNA SALAD SIDE**

- $1.25

**BEVERAGES**

- $1.00

**DESSERTS/FRUIT**

- $2.00

**CHEESE**

- $0.50

**AVOCADO**

- $1.25
One of my favorite raptors is the Northern Harrier. Harriers perform almost impossible acrobatics that are so fast they are over in the blink of an eye, leaving you to wonder just what you saw.

Harriers are ground birds. They nest and raise their families in fairly open spaces on the ground. They hunt voles and field mice usually at an altitude of 5 or 6 feet, not at all like Hawks that perch high in a tree, scanning far afield for prey. No swooping down from afar for Harriers; their mode of hunting is entirely different.

Like the Owls, Harriers sense prey primarily with their ears, not their eyes. Their eyes come into play only at the very last moment. To hear the rustle of their prey, Harriers have a ring of sound amplifying feathers around the face much like those of an Owl. The female Harrier has sound-sensing feathers that are aimed forward, tuned to the rustle of prey just ahead. And her eyes are aimed straight down, alert for the first sight of a mouse as it passes below.

When the Harrier attacks, it cannot drop downward onto its prey; its forward momentum will cause it to overshoot. So, in the blink of an eye, the Harrier does a half snap roll, reverses course and drops straight down into the weeds for the mouse (bottom photo). The middle photo shows a female pouncing and the top photo is an adult Male Northern Harrier hunting. (Yes, the Marine and Air Force Harriers were named after these nimble birds.)

Every week I email a special photo free to a self-selected group. To join, just email SHENmaker@MSN.co and ask. ‘Till next month,

Richard
Multicultural NEWS
By ANNA LADYZHENSKAYA

Mouthwatering Cultural Dishes

December is the time when every culture, country, region or province has its own culinary traditions to celebrate holidays with delicious foods.

During the Jewish celebration of Hanukkah, many foods are fried in oil as a reminder of the Maccabees’ miraculous oil that lasted for eight days resulting in the eight day holiday. “Loukoumades” are deep fried puffs dipped in honey and sugar to represent the cakes the Maccabees ate, in addition to “Potato Latkes” and “Sufganiyot.” This in addition to a braised beef brisket with vegetables makes a nice Hanukkah meal.

Latin Americans start to celebrate Christmas on Dec. 24 – “Noche Buena.” A popular dinner includes tamales with meat or with veggies, a ham, a pork leg, and a baked chicken or turkey. The festive dinner might also include “buñuelos,” “panetone,” sweet bread, “atoles,” or dried fruit, and hot fruit or milk punch, hot chocolate and eggnog.

Christmas Day dinner in an Italian home might feature pasta or soup, seasonal vegetables, lamb, pork, and eel. Each province gives the recipe its distinctive taste and uniqueness. Dried fruit and dessert specialties complete the meal.

Poppy seed cake is one of the “must have” dishes during Christmas and New Year’s in Poland and the number of poppy seeds in the cake represents how much health and wealth the family will enjoy in the New Year.

Although many people celebrate the Catholic Christmas in Russia, it does not have much significance for most Russian people. New Year is considered the most important holiday. Vegetable salad “Olivie,” cold meats in “Holodetz,” roasted piglet (chicken or turkey), fish, “piroshky,” and herring with the cooked potatoes are always on the holiday table.

Germany’s traditional December holiday is “Weihnachts.” Dishes are no longer so easy to define as in the “old days”, when you typically had roast goose, “die Weihnachtsgans” – or a dish of gruel, depending on which side of the tracks you were born. Today it can be a savory roast with onions and potatoes and any of your favorite vegetables, fruits and nuts, roasted together with the meat, all complemented with mouthwatering, “clovey,” an aromatic red cabbage.

For the sweet tooth it’s “Weihnachtsstollen,” a sort of yule log filled with raisins and marzipan and flavored with rum, and “Lebkuchen” and “Pfeffernuesse.”

Whatever you’re celebrating today, we hope you enjoy the food and the time with your loved ones – as that is truly the reason for celebration!

Thanks to Karen Raccanello, Italian teacher, for her information about Italian holiday foods; Elfriede Messeret, German Social Group Leader, for German food ideas; and Marta Villela Morales, Hispanic Multicultural Coordinator, for sharing about Hispanic holiday foods.

Call Today and Get $25 off! 415-451-0100
It was December, nearly Christmas. It had been a long year. I had moved my children off a boat that had kept us barely above the freezing water. Now we lived in a cottage, hoping to stay calm and warm. It was not to be.

A man in the neighborhood, whose mind had left him, came upon the idea that something he had lost was in our home. He came roaring onto our porch, howling in the hoarse voice of an animal enraged. I hurried my children into the safest inner room and called the police. They came and did nothing. The man had gone, he would probably never return, they said. That was not enough reassurance for me. I called a friend who lived near the sea, and in the middle of the night, I bundled my little family into our little car and we went over the hills to safety.

Our hostess, Grace, was as good and true as her name. She took us in and gave us soft mattresses, warm blankets and fluffy pillows to rest upon. We fell into a huddle in her daughter’s room. Exhausted, we did not sleep but dozed. My children were shaken to the core.

It was still dark when I heard the steady rhythm of steps on the stairs. Into the room floated an apparition I knew from childhood prayer books was Santa Lucia. She was dressed all in white with ruffles on her sleeves and a thick red sash around the waist of her skirt. As was tradition in ancient Europe, she wore a golden crown upon her head and it was topped with candles. They were lit and glowing softly. She carried in her arms a tray laden with white cups, little white rolls and a white pitcher of hot chocolate. Silently she came before each of us pouring sweetness back into our lives. The night turned from black to navy blue as we sipped, and Santa Lucia sang. A thin ray of light, pink as the inside of a shell, promised a happier day. Lucia left as she had come, silently. My daughter said it was as if we had been fed by an angel.

Who says there are no saints among us? Not I, certainly. Once before Christmas, one actually did come to feed me and mine. ✪

Mary Ann Maggiore consults with teens, young people & their families to create a meaningful life. Contact her: maryannmaggiore@gmail.com, 577-6627.
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continued from page 5

• Before your appointment, write down your questions about hospice and bring them with you.
• Rather than ask direct questions about hospice, ask about options. For example, “If I don’t do chemo, what are my options?”
• You may feel emotional during the conversation. Bring a friend who can help you cover your list of questions and take notes.
• Remember that your doctor will recommend what he or she thinks best, but you must be the final decision-maker.
• At the end of the conversation, you can say, “I don’t want to decide now. I need to think about it.” That will give you time to think through your choices.
• You can get a second opinion from another doctor who may refer you to hospice care.
• You have the legal right to refuse medical treatments, even if your doctor disagrees. It’s best if you affirm your end-of-life health care wishes by completing an advance directive or living will that documents your health care choices.

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Meet Francie. Francie Bedinger is the Home Care Assistance Kentfield client care manager and works directly with clients and their families throughout Marin County. With a masters in Gerontology, Francie is an expert in health and wellness for older adults and works hard to ensure her clients are happy and healthy at all times.

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