VOLUNTEERS
LEND A HAND

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whistlestop.org  APRIL 2016
WHISTLESTOP EXPRESS APRIL 2016

WHISTLESTOP PERSPECTIVE
By LAURIE VERMONT
WHISTLESTOP VOLUNTEER MANAGER

Why Volunteer? Here’s Why

Service is the rent we pay to be living. It is the very purpose of life and not something you do in your spare time.

—Marian Wright Edelman

Throughout my life, I have been living this quote without even thinking about it. As a child, I organized the other kids in my neighborhood for informal day camps to keep them occupied in the summer. I saw a need and filled it. In my adult life, working for nonprofits allows me to share my love of volunteering with all my friends. (Admittedly, sometimes I twist their arms to encourage them to help me.)

My family of origin, my stepchildren and my son have always volunteered, sometimes for the organizations I am involved with and more recently for others. They continue to “pay rent” by supporting local and international organizations with both paid and unpaid work.

Whistlestop has about 140 volunteers at any given time, who donate a total of 1,700 hours each month. While the hours themselves are impressive, the volunteers’ dedication and commitment is even more so. These community members donate their time because they are invested in their community and find immense satisfaction in serving it. They also find friends and fun as they get to know others who are volunteering, as well as Active Aging Center members.

If you are interested in learning more about sharing your talents and time at Whistlestop, please stop by our Volunteer Fair, 930 Tamalpais Avenue, on Thursday, April 21, from 3:30-5:00 pm or contact Laurie at volunteer@whistlestop.org.

Thank you, Whistlestop Volunteers

We’d like to recognize and thank the 226 volunteers who have given 17,150 hours of their time, expertise and service to Whistlestop’s programs and activities during this past year. These valuable hours equate to $429,000 of staff time. Even members of our Board of Directors are volunteers. We thank you from the bottom of our hearts!
I adore the other volunteers. They are such amazing and caring people.”

That was Sandy Haevernick’s reply to the question, “What do you like best about volunteering at the Jackson Café?” Sandy added, “If someone is ill or loses someone in their family, everyone is so thoughtful and helpful. They have gotten me through some things. I’ve made good friends there.”

Sandy has been volunteering at the café for about a year as a waitress, a job she never had before this. She worked on Thursdays for several months. “I enjoyed it so much that now I am there Tuesdays and Thursdays.”

Sandy has been volunteering at the café for about a year as a waitress, a job she never had before this. She worked on Thursdays for several months. “I enjoyed it so much that now I am there Tuesdays and Thursdays.”

Sandy also enjoys meeting the customers who come in. “We are flying around there so fast most of the time that you don’t get a chance to get to know them at a deep level, but it’s fun when I remember a name and they remember mine. And we all know, for example, that for Richie, you always get him an extra side of dressing and an extra napkin.”

She said that many people get the entree of the day and she notices that very few people order sodas – more of them ask for ice tea. She said many people opt for healthy meals. “People like the special salads and some of our salads are pretty extravagant. There’s also a soup of the day.”

Sandy looks forward to her days at the café. “I never did waitressing before but I love it. I was a hairdresser for 25 years and decided one day, that was enough.” She and her husband, Tim, own Tamalpais Pet Hospital in Mill Valley.
When she isn’t preparing and sending out applications for dentistry school, Kylee Lin, 25, of San Rafael, finds time to volunteer at Whistlestop. She might have been inspired by her grandmother, who volunteered here a few years ago.

“I have volunteered other places before, but this is a unique experience,” she said. She works one day a week at the Jackson Café. “This gives me an opportunity to interact with people I wouldn’t normally be with in my life. My main duty is beverage patrol. I get excited when I recognize someone and remember their favorite drink order.”

Kylee, a graduate of the University of California, Berkeley, has been volunteering at the café for about two months. She said her grandmother, Jill Soldaviani, of San Rafael, also volunteered at Whistlestop a few years ago. Jill died in 2009. In her working life, she was a secretary at a dental office. “I guess she influenced me even more than I realized,” said Kylee.

Kylee said she really appreciates the spirit of other volunteers. And, “I get a lot of pearls of wisdom from many of the customers, some of whom are in their 80s and 90s. I have learned a lot from some very generous people.”

Howard Schwartz, left, and Mickey Rack are two of the volunteers who help older adults get more comfortable with computers in the Whistlestop Computer lab. Mickey, who is 26 and volunteers twice a week, was asked how it is to teach people who might be 40 or 50 years older than he. “One older woman came in and already had some experience. She jumped right in and picked things up faster than I did when I first started with computers. It’s interesting and fun,” he said. “They have a variety of interests. Some people like learning about Facebook because they can keep up with younger members of their family. Others like family history, or want to know more about using email.” Mickey often eats lunch in the Jackson Café with his students.
Glowing Testimonial for Friday’s Brown Bag Pantry at Whistlestop

The Whistlestop pantry is one of the most attractive pantries I’ve visited. All of the staff and volunteers deserve a big round of applause. The space was clean and bright, and the food was displayed with obvious care and thought. Those seemingly small decisions make the shopping experience so much more pleasant for participants.

I was greeted warmly and all of the staff and volunteers were exceedingly helpful. There was a positive energy in the waiting room, hallway, and pantry, and the colored numbering system works so well. Some pantries have trouble finding enough volunteers for distribution, but that clearly isn’t the case at Whistlestop. On behalf of everyone here at the Food Bank, I send a sincere thank you for all the work you do to help provide food to those who need it. We truly would not be able to do it without you.

Goldie Pyka, PR Manager, San Francisco-Marin Food Bank
Keep Learning at WHISTLESTOP

For a full list of classes and services, check out the monthly calendar online at whistlestop.org/classes/calendar or pick one up at the Active Aging Center. Fees listed for classes show the member fee, followed by the non-member fee. Join Whistlestop for the 2016 year to enjoy valuable discounts and benefits! Remember to sign up for all classes and events in advance by visiting or calling the front desk at 415-456-9062.

Poetry Discussion with Tea & Cookies
Tues, Apr 5, 3-4:30 pm
Free [Donations Appreciated] Facilitator: Helen Bruner • Enjoy a special exploration of poetry with local poet Helen Bruner, in honor of National Poetry Month. Tea and cookies provided.

Spring Swing Lunch
Thurs, Apr 14, 11:30am-2 pm; Entertainment 12-1 pm
Regular Menu Pricing • Bring in spring with the swinging sounds of local musician Jonny Darlin playing guitar and singing your favorite oldies while you dine and dance! Order what you love from our delicious menu at affordable prices.

Volunteer Fair
Thurs, Apr 21, 3:30-5 pm
Learn about the many ways to serve the older adults who come to Whistlestop. We need friendly, reliable volunteers as Meals on Wheels drivers, Jackson Café lunch servers and cashiers, Brown Bag Pantry helpers, ESL tutors, and Home Delivered Grocery Program drivers. For more information: Laurie Vermont, Volunteer Program Manager, 415-456-9067, or volunteer@whistlestop.org.

NEW/HIGHLIGHTED CLASSES & WORKSHOPS

Ping Pong
Fridays, Apr 1, 15, & 29, 2-4 pm
$2 per class/Drop-in: Instructor: Vivian Malcy • Join the Whistlestop “Rocketeers” for Ping Pong. It’s good for your mind, spirit and body. We have a wonderful group of regulars who enjoy the benefits of the game. All levels are encouraged to come.

Beginning Italian/2
Nine Thursdays, starting April 7, from 2:30-3:30 pm
$20/25 – Instructor: Karen Raccanello • Improve your Italian speaking and conversation skills and have fun with this exciting Italian class. Pre-requisite: Basic Italian instruction.

Crafts with Kids: Celebrating the Earth
Tues, Apr 12, 3:30-5 pm
Free [Donations Appreciated] Instructor: Marta Villela • Come and make colorful collages to honor Earth Day with students from San Rafael High School. We will show you how; supplies will be provided.

Seniors’ Circle
Wednesdays, 10-11:30 am; Free [Donations Appreciated]
Volunteer Facilitators from Center for Attitudinal Healing • This is an open support group for independent older adults (men and women 55+) who give each other the gift of listening. This is done in a caring environment, which encourages mutual sharing of older adult experiences – the joys, concerns, and wisdom. Drop-in.

How to Pay for Care as You Age
Tues, Apr 12, 3-4 pm
$5/7 – Presenter: Eldercare expert Laurel Etheridge • Are you concerned about how to pay for elder care if you or a family member should need it? Learn about the many options available to pay for care, how to qualify and how to get free help to apply. Do Medicare, Medi-Cal or supplemental insurance pay for any care? Learn more.

Safety Behind the Wheel & Driving Alternatives
Mon, Apr 18, 3-4 pm
Free [Donations Appreciated] Presenter: Shad St. Louis, MS, Dominican University • There are over 36 million licensed drivers over age 65 in the US. Seniors do not have a higher rate of accidents than younger Americans, but for age-related reasons, they are more likely to die or be injured when crashes occur. Learn the common factors related to aging that may impact driving performance and resources for continued safe community mobility.

Bills, Bills, Bills! Get the Legislative Report
Tues, April 19, 3-4:30 pm;
Free [Donations Appreciated] • Presenter: YWCA & Commission on Aging • The basics of bills, healthcare, housing, and benefits bills, and steps to get involved to make a difference. Q&A session follows with a Commission on Aging Legislative Committee representative.

Beginning and Intermediate Ukulele
Wednesdays, starting April 20 for six weeks, 12:30-1:30 pm
$35/40; Maximum 25 participants/ Instructor: Fred Riley • Come and learn to play the ukulele from teacher Fred Riley or improve your skills. Bring your own ukulele or borrow one. Ukuleles are available to buy at a discount.

Blood Pressure, Cholesterol & Medication Checks
Fridays, 9:30-11 am
Free [Donations Appreciated] • Free weekly blood pressure and cholesterol screenings, and medication reviews provided by Bright Star Care, 415-332-3300.

Homeshare Program
For appointments call Leslie Klor: 415-456-9068; Free [Donations Appreciated]
Free referral service for older adults providing an affordable and alternative way of meeting housing needs with numerous benefits to renters and homeowners.

Free Legal Consultation
1st four Thursdays of each month at Whistlestop; 1st and 3rd Thursdays at the Mill Valley Community Center
By appointment only: Call 415-459-6700 for appointments at both locations.

Victim Witness Assistance: Resources & Outreach
2nd & 4th Thursdays, 9 am-12 pm
Free [Donations Appreciated]
Yolanda Johnson, Advocate from the District Attorney’s office, will meet with you to answer questions, provide information, and connect you to resources, or call 415-473-6450.

Multicultural Consultants Can Help
By appointment: 415-456-9062; Spanish: Marta, 415-454-0998; Russian: Anna, ext. 138; Vietnamese: Dina, ext. 129; Farsi: Mrs. Esmaeil, 415-472-6020. No fee for consultations; small fee may apply for translations.

FREE LEGAL CONSULTATION
1st and 3rd Thursdays at Whistlestop
By appointment only: Call 415-459-6700 for appointments at both locations.

LEGAL AID OF MARIN PROVIDES A FREE 30-MINUTE LEGAL CONSULTATION FOR MARIN RESIDENTS, 60 AND OLDER. MARIN LAWYERS VOLUNTEER GENERAL ADVICE, OFFER OPTIONS, EXPLAIN RIGHTS AND IF APPROPRIATE, REFER PEOPLE TO ATTORNEYS WITH EXPERTISE IN CERTAIN AREAS OF LAW.
TECHNOLOGY APRIL • MAY • JUNE 2016

Pre-registration and payment required. 415-456-9062.

iPod/iPhone Basics 2: Essential Built-in Applications
Tuesdays, April 19 and April 26, 10 am-12 pm (2 classes) • Fee: $48 Maximum 8 people • Learn how to preserve your photos, organize them into folders, edit them, back up and print them. Bring your digital cameras and flash drives to class and we’ll show you how to work with them, use software to make the process easy and fun, and start getting them organized.

iPod/iPhone Basics 1: Getting to Know Your Device
Thursdays, May 19 and May 26, 10 am-12 pm • Fee: $48 Maximum 8 people • Learn how to make calls, send emails, send texts, download music and add applications. A course for those new to the smartphone world, each session provides one-on-one help and comes with instructional handouts so you can practice at home. (Bring your charged-up Apple device to class.)

Open Lab
Every Monday and Wednesday, 10 am-12 pm • No Fee • Use our PCs. Volunteer staff is available for advice on problems with your electronic devices; they can help with software updates to the schedule.

ANDROID Basics: Getting to Know Your Device
Thursdays, April 21 and April 28, (2 classes), 10 am-12 pm • Fee: $48 Maximum 8 people • This course is the equivalent of the “How to Use Your iPod/iPhone” class but designed for Android products. You will learn how to make calls, send emails, take pictures, surf the Internet, download music and add applications. One-on-one help comes with handouts so you can practice at home. (For Android devices only, incl. Samsung and LG)

Managing Your Photos
Tuesdays, May 17 and May 24, 10 am-12 pm (2 classes) • Fee: $48 Maximum 8 people • Learn how to preserve your photos, organize them into folders, edit them, back up and print them. Bring your digital cameras and flash drives to class and we’ll show you how to work with them, use software to make the process easy and fun, and start getting them organized.

Open Lab
Every Monday and Wednesday, 10 am-12 pm • No Fee • Use our PCs. Volunteer staff is available for advice on problems with your electronic devices; they can help with software applications.

and how best to connect the person to appropriate support services.
Open to all community members who regularly support the needs of older adults. There will be a Train the Trainer workshop in June; to be notified about it, contact support@agingactioninitiative.org. This workshop was created by members of the Marin Aging Action Initiative Mental Health and Dementia Workgroup, and is a collective effort of over 65 different agencies, grassroots organizations, commissions and neighborhood groups, funded by the County of Marin, and coordinated by MarinSpace. For more information visit www.agingactioninitiative.org or email support@agingactioninitiative.org.

Tickets: http://tinyurl.com/detectAPRIL28

Whistlestop Weekly ACTIVITIES

This Month at Whistlestop
Please view our most recent class schedule at www.whistlestop.org/classes/calendar/ or call 415-456-9062 for updates to the schedule.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>CLASS</th>
<th>INFO</th>
<th>FEE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9:30-10:30AM</td>
<td>Zumba</td>
<td>Drop-in</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<tr>
<td>10AM-1PM</td>
<td>Therapeutic Massage</td>
<td>Drop-in</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<td>10AM-NOON</td>
<td>Computer Lab</td>
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<td>German Social Group</td>
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<td>Persian Social Group</td>
<td>415-472-6020</td>
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<td>11AM-12PM</td>
<td>Music and Movement</td>
<td>415-454-0998</td>
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<td>12:30-1:30PM</td>
<td>Russian Social Group</td>
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<td>N</td>
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<td>ESL 75 Basic</td>
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<td>Y</td>
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<td>Y</td>
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<td>2-3:30PM</td>
<td>ESL 250 Advanced</td>
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<td>Y</td>
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<td>9:30-10:30AM</td>
<td>Whistleizers</td>
<td>Drop-in</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10AM-NOON</td>
<td>Mah Jongg</td>
<td>Drop-in</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10AM-NOON</td>
<td>iPad/iPhone Basics 2</td>
<td>4/19 &amp; 4/26</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<td>Manicures</td>
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<td>Cardio/Yoga Exercise Class</td>
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<td>French Class</td>
<td>Drop-in</td>
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<tr>
<td>1-2PM</td>
<td>French Social Group</td>
<td>Drop-in</td>
<td>N</td>
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<tr>
<td>1-3PM</td>
<td>Beg./Int. Conversational Spanish</td>
<td>Drop-in</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<tr>
<td>9-10:15AM</td>
<td>Tai Chi</td>
<td>Drop-in</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<tr>
<td>10-11:30AM</td>
<td>Seniors’ Circle</td>
<td>Drop-in</td>
<td>N</td>
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<td>10-NOON</td>
<td>Computer Lab</td>
<td>Drop-in</td>
<td>N</td>
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<tr>
<td>10AM-1PM</td>
<td>Therapeutic Massage</td>
<td>Drop-in</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<tr>
<td>11AM-1PM</td>
<td>Corazón Latino</td>
<td>415-454-0998</td>
<td>N</td>
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<td>Beginning Ukulele</td>
<td>Ends 4/13</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<td>Starts 4/20</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<td>Y</td>
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<td>2-3:30PM</td>
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<td>Y</td>
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<tr>
<td>2-3:30PM</td>
<td>ESL 250 Advanced</td>
<td>415-454-0998</td>
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<tr>
<td>2-4PM</td>
<td>Knitting Group</td>
<td>Drop-in</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:30-5PM</td>
<td>Citizenship Class</td>
<td>415-454-0998</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<td>9:30-10:30AM</td>
<td>Zumba</td>
<td>Drop-in</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10AM-NOON</td>
<td>Android Basics</td>
<td>4/21 &amp; 4/28</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<tr>
<td>10AM-1PM</td>
<td>Therapeutic Massage</td>
<td>Drop-in</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<td>11AM-NOON</td>
<td>Whistleizers</td>
<td>Drop-in</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<td>12:15-2:15PM</td>
<td>Vietnamese Social Group</td>
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<td>1-2:30PM</td>
<td>Intermediate Italian</td>
<td>3/10-5/12</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<tr>
<td>2:30-3:30PM</td>
<td>Beginning Italian</td>
<td>Drop-in</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<tr>
<td>2:45-3:45PM</td>
<td>Balance Class</td>
<td>Drop-in</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<tr>
<td>8:30AM</td>
<td>Community Breakfast</td>
<td>Drop-in</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<tr>
<td>9:30-11AM</td>
<td>Weekly Blood Press./Cholesterol Checks</td>
<td>Drop-in</td>
<td>N</td>
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<tr>
<td>11AM-NOON</td>
<td>Brown Bag Pantry</td>
<td>415-456-9067</td>
<td>N</td>
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<tr>
<td>1:30-3PM</td>
<td>ACASA</td>
<td>Drop-in</td>
<td>N</td>
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<tr>
<td>1:30-3PM</td>
<td>Spanish Club</td>
<td>Drop-in</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3:30PM</td>
<td>Movie Time</td>
<td>4/8 &amp; 4/22</td>
<td>Y</td>
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<tr>
<td>2-4PM</td>
<td>Ping-Pong</td>
<td>4/1, 4/15 &amp; 4/29</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4PM</td>
<td>Yoga</td>
<td>Drop-in</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“My friends all hate their cell phones... I love mine!”
Here’s why.

Say good-bye to everything you hate about cell phones. Say hello to Jitterbug5.

“Cell phones have gotten so small, I can barely dial mine.” Not Jitterbug®, it features a larger keypad for easier dialing. It even has an oversized display so you can actually see it.

“I had to get my son to program it.” Your Jitterbug set-up process is simple. We’ll even pre-program it with your favorite numbers.

“I tried my sister’s cell phone... I couldn’t hear it.” Jitterbug is designed with a powerful speaker. There’s an adjustable volume control, and Jitterbug is hearing-aid compatible.

“I don’t need stock quotes, Internet sites or games on my phone, I just want to talk with my family and friends.” Life is complicated enough... Jitterbug is simple.

“What if I don’t remember a number?” Friendly, helpful Jitterbug operators are available 24 hours a day and will even greet you by name when you call.

“I’d like a cell phone to use in an emergency, but I don’t want a high monthly bill.” Jitterbug has a plan to fit your needs... and your budget.

Order now and receive a FREE Car Charger for your Jitterbug — a $25 value. Call now!

Jitterbug5 Cell Phone
Call toll free today to get your own Jitterbug5.
Please mention promotional code 102895.
1-877-651-6963
www.jitterbugdirect.com

More minute plans available. Ask your Jitterbug expert for details.

“My cell phone company wants to lock me in on a two-year contract!” Not Jitterbug, there’s no contract to sign and no penalty if you discontinue your service.

“My phone’s battery only lasts a couple of days.” Unlike most cell phones that need to be recharged every day, the Jitterbug was designed with one of the longest-lasting batteries on the market, so you won’t have to worry about running out of power.

Enough talk. Isn’t it time you found out more about the cell phone that’s changing all the rules? Call now, Jitterbug product experts are standing by.

Available in Blue and Red.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monthly Minutes</td>
<td>was 50</td>
<td>NOW 200</td>
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<tr>
<td>Operator Assistance</td>
<td>24/7</td>
<td>24/7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Long Distance Calls</td>
<td>No add'l charge</td>
<td>No add'l charge</td>
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<td>Voice Dial</td>
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<td>FREE</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nationwide Coverage</td>
<td>YES</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friendly Return Policy</td>
<td>30 days</td>
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* We proudly accept the following credit cards.

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‘I love to come to Whistlestop because it picks up my whole day’

Whistlestop is grateful for the feedback we received in our annual Participant Satisfaction Survey. We are especially pleased that so many people mentioned our caring staff and volunteers. Here’s a sampling of comments:

“I am very satisfied, you are very kind and thanks for taking care of us.”

“My heart to all Whistlestop employees. With love!”

“Thank you, Whistlestop. I am coming for ten years now.”

“Whistlestop fills a critical need for seniors. It allows us to remain independent in our homes and to connect socially.”

“This is a fine community with excellent services and friendly people.”

“I am so grateful for the yoga and Brown Bag programs.”

“I love my teacher – Katherine Brinnier.”

“Transportation is wonderful.”

“My German discussion group is exciting and enriching. It raises my morale and energy in this more limited period of my life.”

“Whistlestop offers a variety of classes, affordable prices and people from many walks of life to help us integrate into the community.”

“Marta [Villela Morales] is excellent in her position. Especially fabulous and helpful.”

“I take classes, use the services and enjoy lunches … I have never been disappointed.”

“Whistlestop is a wonderful asset for Marin seniors. All the staff are friendly and helpful.”

Healthy Aging Symposium May 5 in San Rafael

Whistlestop again will be a sponsor of the Healthy Aging Symposium in San Rafael on Thursday, May 5. The 12th annual symposium will be held at the Embassy Suites Hotel, 101 McInnis Parkway.

This year’s theme is “Trailblazers in a Changing World.” The keynote speaker is Spencer Michels. Tickets are $20 and may be purchased on Eventbrite.

Getting Older Shouldn’t Mean Leaving Your Comfort Zone

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Healthy Aging Symposium May 5 in San Rafael

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Eliminate Mortgage Payments Forever with the Home Equity Conversion Mortgage
A Meeting at the Dog Park
Leads to Volunteer Opportunity

A colleague he met at his neighborhood dog park introduced Dave Brusati to Whistlestop. He started coming for lunch and eventually decided to deliver meals for the Meals on Wheels program here. When he started, there was a Dominican University student living nearby who needed community service credit for his degree in psychology but who didn’t have a reliable automobile. They were paired together and became a team; Dave drove and Nick helped deliver their route until the end of the school semester. When Nick’s class schedule changed and he could no longer drive those hours, Dave continued driving the route on his own. He also takes the route on other days if one of the drivers is out sick or on vacation. He is happy to meet new people and help out in his community. He comes every Friday to the Community Breakfast and usually comes to lunch on Wednesdays after he completes his route.

Touching Valentine’s Story

The 2016 Whistlestop Valentine’s project delivered happiness to countless residents throughout Marin. Erika Vaughn, Meals on Wheels Program supervisor, shared one special story.

“We have a client who has severe multiple sclerosis. She called me in tears right after receiving her Valentine’s Day cards. She said that for over 10 years, she has not received Valentine’s Day cards from anyone. She mentioned that since she has been in our program, she has discovered that not only do we care about meeting her nutritional needs, but also make sure she feels special and loved during the holidays.

“I received a lot of phone calls from clients who were overjoyed about receiving a stack of Valentine’s Day cards. Most of them felt that we here at Whistlestop took the time to make sure that each of them had a warm heart on that special day.”
Have you ever heard a poem read and then realized you have no idea what it means?

If so, you might want to come to Helen Bruner’s Poetry Conversations at Whistlestop on April 5. Whistlestop was looking for a local poet to come to the Active Aging Center to celebrate National Poetry Month and Helen, who is from Mill Valley, accepted the invitation.

“I want to emphasize that this is not a poetry reading,” said the published poet. “When you go to a poetry reading, you sit and listen to poetry for an hour, get indigestion and then go home. I don’t mean the poetry is bad, because often it is wonderful. It’s just that you get overwhelmed.”

She explained that at her event, to be held from 3-4:30pm on Tuesday, April 5, she will read a poem and then engage the audience in a discussion about it. She will read several poems so everyone will have a chance to voice their opinions. Also, there will be tea and cookies.

“I love doing these – I call them Poetry Conversations, because it is interesting to hear what people think. You get everything from ‘I don’t understand a word of that poem’ to ‘It was very moving.’”

Helen wrote poetry as a young woman in school but got away from the practice as she raised her four children and worked as a clinical social worker. “I have written a lot more since retirement. I have written much about my travels – I’ve been to places like Syria, Israel, Palestine and Nepal. Seems like they always start having wars after I leave.”

She also said that she tries to “slip underneath or go around the edges of a subject” in her work, adding, “I think poets look at things in a way that surprises them.”

She marveled at the many outstanding poets in Marin. Two of her favorites are Jane Hirschfield and Kay Ryan. “I also like poets from the past. Shakespeare’s poetry is incredible – nobody can come up to that. I also enjoy Rilke.”

She told the Express, “I draw on my own life experience. I write mostly short poems, often it’s activist poetry with a moral tone. Most of it is free verse, although I have one villanelle and one pantoum in my latest book. I guess you could describe my poems as short, condensed, intense.”

Helen’s second book of poetry, Recollecting, Dreams and Other Altered States, came out recently. Her first book was titled Dragon Breath.

She said it is difficult to answer the question “What kind of poetry do you write?”

Learn How to Decode Poems
VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Make a difference in an older adult’s life.

Meals on Wheels Drivers Needed
Meals on Wheels volunteer drivers are needed to deliver meals to home-bound meal recipients. A valid California Driver’s License, background check and clear DMV report are needed as well as a reliable vehicle and current insurance certificate. A minimum of one three-hour shift per week is required.

Jackson Café Lunch Servers, Cashiers & Friday Community Breakfast Servers
The Jackson Café provides a warm and comfortable setting for older adults to eat a nutritious meal at an affordable price. Café volunteers greet, provide excellent customer service and support social interaction. Lunch hour shifts are Monday to Friday, 10:45am-2pm. Cashier or food service experience is a plus but not required. Friday morning breakfast shift is from 8:30-10:30am. Breakfast is served from 9-10am on Friday only.

Brown Bag Pantry Volunteers Needed
Helpers needed Friday mornings from 9:15am-12:15pm for the Brown Bag Pantry. Unload the truck from the Food Bank, sort produce, greet and help recipients get their food. Fun group needs new members. Ability to lift 25 pounds is a plus.

To learn more about these opportunities or others contact: volunteer@whistlestop.org  Phone: 415-456-9067 • www.whistlestop.org

What Inspires YOU?

A single act of kindness throws out roots in all directions, and the roots spring up and make new trees.
—Amelia Earhart

We are looking for stories about what inspires you, what gives you hope and what keeps you going when times are challenging. This will be the theme of the June issue of the Whistlestop Express.

Send a story about yourself or someone who inspires you to John Bowman, john.bowman58@gmail.com or call 916-751-9189 to share your story.

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