A ‘Club Sandwich’ Daughter-Mother-Grandmother

According to one expert’s terminology on the Sandwich Generation, Karen Arnold is part of the “Club Sandwich” group of caregivers.

Club Sandwich is a term coined by Carol Abaya, MA, a New Jersey syndicated newspaper columnist. She says these are folks in their 50s or 60s who are sandwiched between aging parents, adult children and grandchildren. Karen, 58, of Fairfax, has an 89-year-old mother and two sons, aged 27 and 30.

Karen, a dietitian, is chief of nutrition and food services at the San Francisco VA Medical Center, where she has worked for the past 25 years. She also is treasurer on the Whistlestop Board of Directors.

Her mother, Loretta, lives alone in her home in Santa Barbara. “She has had some strokes so now has limited mobility and must use a walker, but she tries to stay active,” Karen said. Loretta had the foresight to purchase long-term healthcare when she was in her 70s. She now has in-home care daily for about eight hours.

Karen drives to Santa Barbara every six to eight weeks and Loretta also has two sons, one in Santa Barbara and one in Nevada City. “She has a lanyard with one of those medical alert devices so that if she falls she can call for help. It’s set up so that a fall signals someone at the service and there’s a machine in her home. They will call and say, ‘Are you all right, Loretta?’ If not, my brother in Santa Barbara is notified and a 911 call is made.”

Karen’s husband, Peter, has taken on the handyman role and has done considerable work to make Loretta’s home safer, such as installing grab-bars in the bathroom. The in-home caregiver also drives Loretta to appointments when needed.

Karen has three grandchildren – the other part of the sandwich – and babysits for them when she can. “I just stayed with the baby, a 10-month-old, for a whole day recently. She kept me on the run. Remember when you had a baby that age and how they got into everything, like the cabinet under the kitchen sink?”

Karen became interested in Whistlestop when her 88-year-old mother-in-law lived at the Redwoods in Mill Valley. “Once she was no longer able to cook, Whistlestop’s Meals on Wheels was a lifesaver,” said Karen. “And the Whistlestop vans took her all over. I saw first-hand how caring and helpful those drivers are.”

Karen wanted to do something about older adults who are isolated in their homes, unable to interact with others. “Isolation is a big deal, and I wanted to help. Whistlestop was a natural way for me to get involved.”
Whistlestop a Great Resource for Sandwich Generation

The Sandwich Generation – people who help care for and often live with both aging parents and young or adult children – are more and more in need of support from organizations like Whistlestop.

According to the Pew Research Center, 47% of adults in their 40s and 50s have a parent 65 or older and are raising a young child or financially supporting a grown child aged 18 or older. The Sandwich Generation in Marin County is a fast growing segment of the population. The aging of county residents is placing more and more responsibility on the shoulders of the Sandwich Generation. One in four Marin residents – about 64,000 – are 60 or older according to the County Area Plan for Aging 2016-2020 report.

The Pew report focuses on the financial responsibilities of the Sandwich Generation. Most of those in this group have fulltime jobs, so they must depend on community resources to help lighten their burden, especially for their aging parents. A place like Whistlestop, with its transportation, nutrition and educational services, can be a lifesaver for such families. It is a social hub, helping older adults in Marin avoid dangerous isolation.

Carol Abaya, MA, a New Jersey journalist, has been writing about the Sandwich Generation since the 1990s. Her nationally syndicated column on aging and elder care and parenting is read by hundreds of thousands of people through publications including the New York Times and the Wall Street Journal.

She breaks down the term into three categories:

Traditional: those sandwiched between aging parents who need care and their own children who need some help. And she coined the following terms:

Club Sandwich: those in their 50s or 60s, sandwiched between aging parents, adult children and grandchildren. Or, those in their 30s or 40s with young children, aging parents and grandparents.

Open faced: anyone else involved in elder care.

She says that no two Sandwich situations are identical and on her website, sandwichgeneration.com, she provides a variety of tips on how to cope with the inherent responsibilities.
Seven years ago Nancy’s father began using Whistlestop paratransit services to get around when he was no longer able to drive himself. She saw what a great service this was and how much need there was in the Marin community for alternative transportation for seniors.

When she retired from her job as Counseling and Admissions Secretary at Redwood High School, she looked into driving one of the buses, but decided against it. Then, last October, Nancy came by the Whistlestop booth at the Marin Senior Fair and learned about the new volunteer driver program, CarePool. CarePool offers a volunteer the opportunity to have a flexible schedule and to spend time with a senior in need of transportation on a one-on-one basis while taking them to the grocery store or to a medical appointment.

Nancy, a San Francisco native, moved to Marin when she was in her twenties. She loved her job, worked hard and enjoyed many extra-curricular activities, including belly dancing. Since retiring from Redwood High School, she spends time with her friends, family and Border Collie/Newfoundland-mix dog, Joy. However, most of her spare time now is spent volunteering.

Nancy is an Area Representative for the California School Employees Association, is a lobbyist for The California Alliance for Retired Americans (CARA) and is taking on an executive role in the Mill Valley Senior Club at the Mill Valley Community Center.

Volunteering for CarePool gives Nancy the satisfaction that she is providing a much-needed service to people who have limited transportation options. She often accepts longer-distance rides that might not be picked up by another volunteer. Last month she drove almost 300 miles and is thankful for the mileage reimbursement provided for this program. Kristin Stoerker, Travel Navigator, says, “The riders enjoy interacting with Nancy and always look forward to riding with her.”

For more information, call Laurie at 415-456-9067 or email: volunteer@whistlestop.org

CarePool is a volunteer driver program, serving seniors from Sausalito to Novato with funding support from, Marin’s Measure B Vehicle Registration Fee Initiative, and Marin General Hospital.
Planning, Patience, Love Hold Them Together

By JOHN BOWMAN

When she’s not zipping around on her Ducati Scrambler motorcycle or listening to a patient’s story, psychiatrist Alison Kreshin, MD, is at home in Larkspur with her husband, two children and her 85-year-old father. She is a textbook Sandwich Generation mother, daughter, wife.

Dr. Kreshin and her husband, Nathan Cohen, MD, also a psychiatrist, have devised efficient systems as they collaborate to juggle their three-generation home life with busy and demanding professional careers.

Their children, all Cohens, are Levi, 17 next month, a junior in high school, Leah, 20, who will start her second year at NYU this fall, and Fred, who lives with his wife and daughter in San Francisco.

Alison’s father, Larry, lives in a cottage that they built on their property for him, but he spends a lot of time at the main house, especially for dinners. Nathan prepares Larry’s breakfast, which usually consists of cereal, milk, prune juice and coffee, which Nathan puts in a travel cup to keep it hot. “I am in awe of my husband,” Alison said. “He has accepted Larry into our lives so beautifully.”

Levi did not connect so much with his grandfather when Larry first came to Marin from Virginia, but now is “pretty sweet to him,” said Alison. Levi interacts with Larry regularly, including often walking him to the cottage after supper. She said this relationship has helped Levi develop more patience. And, “Leah has always been so lovely with Larry.”

“My father has difficulty walking due to spinal stenosis and a hip replacement that didn’t go well, but won’t use a walker, although he will use two canes,” Alison said. Despite that, Larry volunteers one day at week at Whistlestop at the center host desk. He also regularly takes classes at the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) at College of Marin. “Last semester he took a course in the history of Rock and Roll,” Alison said.

Alison prepares her father’s lunch, placing a meal in the fridge or leaving a plate on the kitchen table, covered with a dome to keep the cats from getting it. One treat he always looks forward to is ice cream. He sometimes eats at the Jackson Café, getting there in one of the Whistlestop vans or driven there by a young man named Victor, who comes twice a week to help Larry with bathing and running errands.

Larry is always learning and loves to read the New York Times and the New Yorker magazine. “Often he will read stories to me while I am fixing a meal,” said Alison, who is an excellent cook. She and her father, the last two Kreshins in the U.S., have always been very close. That closeness is essential today in a three-generation family negotiating all of the trials and joys that go with living together.
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. Whistlestop’s Active Aging Center and Jackson Cafe will be closed on July 4th in observance of Independence Day.

CELEBRATIONS/EVENTS

Annual Patriotic Lunch Celebration
Fri, July 1, 11:30am-1:30pm; Entertainment: 12-1pm Fee: $8/10
Come and celebrate the U.S.A. with our annual patriotic lunch and entertainment in the Jackson Cafe. A traditional summer lunch will feature BBQ chicken, hamburgers, and veggie burgers, with potato salad, baked beans, corn, and apple pie for dessert. Bread & Roses Presents will play patriotic music. Purchase tickets by June 27 at the front desk.

Summer Swing Lunch
Thurs, July 7, 11:30am-2pm; Entertainment: 12-1pm; Fee: $6/8 Regular menu pricing
Come and enjoy your favorite 1950’s swing music provided by talented local entertainer Jonny Darlin’ while ordering what you love off our fresh and fabulous menu. No tickets required.

NEW/HIGHLIGHTED CLASSES & WORKSHOPS

Community Arts and Crafts:
Patriotic Collage Making

Tues, July 5, 3:30-5pm; Free (Donations Appreciated)
Instructor: Marta Villela, Hispanic Multicultural Programs Coordinator
Come and make colorful collages to pay tribute to the U.S.A. We will show you how and supplies will be provided.

Introduction to Innovative Acrylic Painting
Six Wednesdays beginning July 6; Fee: $40/45
In this exciting new class, Graciela Placak will provide step-by-step instructions for using acrylic and metallic paints to create cards and paintings. This introduction to acrylic techniques is appropriate for beginners or experienced students. Learn to create your own artwork at home; all supplies will be provided.

Brain Fitness Workshop
Thurs, June 14, 9:30-10:30am; Free (Donations Appreciated)
Instructor: Bob Nations, President, Senior Access Board of Directors
The top four things to promote good brain health as we age: move your body, eat right, find a challenge, and socialize. This Senior Access Brain Fitness class offers all four: move your body to the workshop where we’ll talk about eating right and challenge you with fun activities in a room full of people who are socializing.

Low-Income Food and Utility Support Workshop
Mon, July 18, 2:30-4pm; Free (Donations Appreciated)
SF-Marin Food Bank & Community Action Marin Energy Services will show you how to get help to purchase food and support to pay your utility bills. To apply, call the numbers below, or bring your ID, current PG&E bill, and proof of income for the last 30 days to the workshop. To learn more about CalFresh, call Veronica, 415-697-7411. Info about the Home Energy Assistance Program, 415-526-7550.

Senior Circle
Wednesdays 10-11:30am; Free (Donations Appreciated)
Volunteer Facilitators from Center for Attitudinal Healing
A drop-in, open support group for independent older men and women (55+), who give each other the gift of listening in a caring environment, which encourages mutual sharing of older adult experiences – the joys, concerns, and wisdom.

Weekly Blood Pressure, Cholesterol Screenings, and Medication Reviews
Fridays, 9:30-11am; Free (Donations Appreciated)
Free weekly blood pressure and cholesterol screenings, and medication reviews are offered by Bright Star Care, a home care agency that provides home care, caregivers, and medical staffing solutions to families and businesses in Marin, 415-332-3300.

Medicare 101 Seminar: Learn the Nuts and Bolts
Wed, July 13, 10am-12pm; Free (Donations Appreciated)
Instructor: Cara Suminski of SCAN Health Plan
Turning 65? Losing coverage with an employer? Medicare can be confusing. What’s the difference between Part A and Part B? What are your options when it comes to Health Plans? Cara will show you how simple Medicare can be. Seminar for educational purposes only; no plan-specific benefits will be shared. Sign up today; Cara, 415-720-2133.

HIGHLIGHTED SUPPORT SERVICES

Need Assistance? Multicultural Consultants Can Help You
By appointment: 415-456-9062
Spanish: Marta Villela, 415-454-0998; Russian: Anna Ladyzhenskaya, ext. 138; Farsi: Mrs. Mehrbanoo Esmaili, 415-472-6020
Whistlestop offers information, resources and referrals to English and non-English speakers in Spanish, Russian and Farsi. No fee for consultations; small fee may apply for translation services.

Homeshare and Telephone Reassurance Programs
Call for appointment: Leslie Klor: 415-456-9062, ext. 132; Free (Donations Appreciated)
The Homeshare program is a free referral service for older adults providing an affordable way to meet housing needs with many benefits to renters and homeowners. The Telephone Reassurance program is offered to people who might be isolated and need connections. Trained volunteers will call three mornings a week to check in with people.

Victim Witness Assistance
2nd & 4th Thursdays, 9am-12pm; Free (Donations Appreciated)
Yolanda Johnson, Advocate from the District Attorney’s office, will be available to answer questions, provide information, and connect you to resources, or call 415-473-6450.

Free Legal Consultation
First four Thursdays of each month at Whistlestop; first and third Thursdays at the Mill Valley Community Center. By appointment only: 415-459-6700
Legal Aid of Marin provides free 30-minute legal consultations for Marin County residents who are 60 and older. Marin lawyers volunteer to give general advice, offer options, explain rights and, if appropriate, refer them to attorneys who have expertise in certain areas of law.
Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program
Presentation on Mon, July 18, 2:30-4pm
Location: Whistlestop, 930 Tamalpais Ave and 3rd St., San Rafael
FREE
Presented by: Community Action Marin and CalFresh

Come for the presentation if your utility expenses are too high and you can’t pay your bill or you need help purchasing food. You can apply onsite with assistance after this presentation. Here is what you need to bring: your ID, current PG&E bill, proof of income (last 30 days).
Call Whistlestop at 415-456-9062 if you have questions.

TECHNOLOGY JULY / AUGUST 2016
Pre-registration and payment required. 415-456-9062

iPad/iPhone Basics 3: World of Applications
Tuesdays, July 12 & July 19 (2 classes) 10am-12pm
Fee: $48 Maximum 8 people
In this two week course, we will focus on how to use apps for shopping, brain training, fitness, Internet radio, stock trackers, games, translation, and travel (Uber). Learn how to organize apps and how to get rid of unwanted apps. This is a perfect sequel to the “How to Use Your iPad/iPhone” and “Essential Built-in Applications” classes. Bring your fully charged device, Apple ID, and Apple password to class. (For Apple devices only)

Android Basics 2:
Understanding Your Smart Phone or Tablet
Thursdays, August 11 and August 18, 10am-12pm (2 classes)
Fee: $48 Maximum 8 people
Review some of the basics of using your device. We will show you some built-in features that you might have missed or were afraid to try.
Learn how to get the most out of your built-in apps, including photo editing, storing and retrieving photos, calendar, e-mail, texting, and maps/GPS. We’ll introduce the steps to find and install new apps, and show you how to update, delete and organize your apps for easy access. This is a perfect sequel to the “Using Android Smart Phone & Tablets Basics 1” course. (For Android devices only)

ONGOING
Open Lab
Every Monday and Wednesday, 10am-12pm; No Fee
Use our PCs to access the Internet. Volunteer staff available for advice on problems with your laptops and tablets; they can help you with software applications.

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>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10AM-1PM</td>
<td>Therapeutic Massage</td>
<td>Drop-in</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10AM-NOON</td>
<td>Computer Lab</td>
<td>Drop-in</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:30AM-NOON</td>
<td>German Social Group</td>
<td>Drop-in</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:30AM-1:30PM</td>
<td>Persian Social Group</td>
<td>415-472-6020</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11AM-NOON</td>
<td>Tai Chi</td>
<td>Drop-in</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:30-1:30PM</td>
<td>Russian Social Group</td>
<td>Drop-in</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3:30PM</td>
<td>ESL Classes</td>
<td>6/8-7/27</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:30-10:30 AM</td>
<td>Whistlesizers</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>10:30AM-1:30PM</td>
<td>Manicures</td>
<td>Call</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:45-11:45AM</td>
<td>Cardio/Yoga Exercise Class</td>
<td>Drop-in</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:30AM-12:30PM</td>
<td>French Class</td>
<td>Drop-in</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2PM</td>
<td>French Social Group</td>
<td>Drop-in</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-3PM</td>
<td>Beg./Int. Conversational Spanish</td>
<td>Drop-in</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4PM</td>
<td>Ukulele</td>
<td>6/7-7/12</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-11:30AM</td>
<td>Seniors’ Circle</td>
<td>Drop-in</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-NOON</td>
<td>Computer Lab</td>
<td>Drop-in</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10AM-1PM</td>
<td>Therapeutic Massage</td>
<td>Drop-in</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:30AM-NOON</td>
<td>Acrylic Painting</td>
<td>7/6-8/10</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:30AM-1:30PM</td>
<td>Persian Social Group</td>
<td>415-472-6020</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*11AM-1PM</td>
<td>Corazón Latino</td>
<td>415-454-0998</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:30-1:30PM</td>
<td>Beginning &amp; Intermediate Ukulele</td>
<td>Drop-in</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2PM</td>
<td>English Pronunciation &amp; Conversation</td>
<td>6/8-7/27</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-3:30PM</td>
<td>ESL Classes</td>
<td>6/8-7/27</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10AM-1PM</td>
<td>Therapeutic Massage</td>
<td>Drop-in</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11AM-NOON</td>
<td>Whistlesizers</td>
<td>Drop-in</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:15-2:15PM</td>
<td>Vietnamese Social Group</td>
<td>415-419-4553</td>
<td>N</td>
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<tr>
<td>1-2:25PM</td>
<td>Intermediate Italian</td>
<td>6/9-8/18</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:30-3:30PM</td>
<td>Beginning Italian</td>
<td>6/9-8/18</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:45-3:45PM</td>
<td>Balance Class</td>
<td>Drop-in</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9-10AM</td>
<td>Community Breakfast</td>
<td>Drop-in</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:30-11AM</td>
<td>Weekly Blood Press./Cholesterol Checks</td>
<td>Drop-in</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11AM-NOON</td>
<td>Brown Bag Pantry</td>
<td>415-456-9067</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:30-3PM</td>
<td>ACASA</td>
<td>Drop-in</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:30-3PM</td>
<td>Spanish Club</td>
<td>Drop-in</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-4PM</td>
<td>Movie Time</td>
<td>7/1, 7/15, 7/29</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-4PM</td>
<td>Ping-Pong</td>
<td>7/8 &amp; 7/22</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4PM</td>
<td>Yoga</td>
<td>Drop-in</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FREE PARKING
Lot at corner of 3rd St. & Tamalpais Ave • 8:30AM-5:00 PM for Whistlestop & Jackson Café guests.

Jackson Café
Entrees from $6-$8
Open to the public for lunch every weekday!
Located in Whistlestop Active Aging Center.

Fresh. Affordable. Delicious.
When Marta Villela’s mother, Marta Morales, came to live with her six years ago, it wasn’t always easy. She had recently moved here from Guatemala and she was depressed, crying and missing her friends. Marta’s daughter, Maria, now 15, was used to it being just the two of them, making decisions together. She liked that way.

Thankfully, the younger Marta signed up for some parenting classes and started having family meetings to discuss things that came up. She listened to her daughter and asked her what was difficult for her with the new living arrangements. She reminded Maria that her abuelita had stayed with her for the first six years of her life in Guatemala while she was working. “I told her, ‘She only wants positive things for you.’”

She also took her mother to a physician’s assistant to talk about her depression. That’s how Marta was introduced to Whistlestop. She joined the Whistlestop staff in January of 2014 where she was, until recently, the Hispanic Multicultural Coordinator. Her mom was referred to the Latino Social group at Whistlestop, where she would find people her age who spoke Spanish. Marta went with her mom until she got comfortable. She is still part of the group and has many friends. They think she is Superwoman because she had a knee replacement in April. They showered her with questions about her doctor and her progress. “The doctor was impressed with her recovery. She was even dancing at Pickleweed recently,” Marta said.

Even though it was challenging at the beginning, the relationship among grandmother, daughter and granddaughter is solid now. Recently Marta and Maria were driving across the Golden Gate Bridge and Marta said, “You know, we’ve never walked across the bridge. Let’s go for it. Let’s walk now.” Maria responded, “No, let’s do it when Abuelita can do it with us. I know she would like it.”

Marta is glad they worked on the relationship. “Soon the three of us are going to Guatemala together for a vacation.” A few years ago, Maria and her grandmother went there together, just the two of them.
I am writing to send thanks to Meals on Wheels for several years of meal delivery to my mother, Justine Garner, of San Rafael. In late March, my mother passed away following a stroke. She was 91 years old and she was as comfortable as possible and at home when she died.

Meals on Wheels allowed us to extend her independence at home for a number of very valuable years. All of the volunteers were wonderful; Tammy delivered to Mom for the last couple of years and she was particularly lovely. She always had a smile to offer and a pleasant, but appropriately brief, conversation. My mother was always cheered by Tammy’s delivery visit.

I can’t thank you enough for this amazing service, which allowed my mom to remain living in familiar surroundings with dignity and in the place she loved to call home.

With sincere thanks,
Marianne Garner and the Garner Family
San Rafael Couple Finds Joy in Volunteering at Whistlestop

By JOHN BOWMAN

"It's all Bob Sonnenberg's fault," Nori Fithian said laughingly, as she explained how she wound up being a volunteer cashier at Whistlestop's Jackson Café.

The story goes like this: Sonnenberg, longtime Whistlestop Board member, recommended that his friend, Bob Fithian, Nori’s husband, become a Whistlestop Meals on Wheels driver. Fithian did so and has continued in that role for about two years.

Nori, who lives in San Rafael, continues the story. “One day my Bob said, ‘Let’s go to the St. Patrick’s Day lunch at the Jackson Café. I hear it’s always a good meal and a fun time.’ So we did and he was right. The women volunteering there were so lovely – welcoming and attentive. So after the meal, we marched over to Laurie Vermont’s office and I signed up to volunteer.”

Nori started out serving tables and later was asked to be one of the cashiers. In her nearly two years on the job she has found the Café staff just as enjoyable to work with as she expected. “I love it, because I get to greet people. It’s fun to see the Monday regulars come in and usually I know just what they are going to order.”

She said she appreciates the myriad services Whistlestop provides and wishes even more people knew more about the center. “Too many people don’t know about all the things that go on there. They don’t realize that productive, active older people come there. I would like to see more people appreciate the place – the exercise, computer and art classes. In fact, I hope to find time to take one of Anna’s abstract art classes one of these days.”

Nori, who taught school for 20 years, also volunteers as a reading tutor for third graders at Laurel Dell Elementary School in San Rafael, and is in training to be a museum guide at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.
From Losing a Toe as a Girl to Being a Dance Teacher

BY GAIL BARONE OF SAN RAFAEL

EDITOR’S NOTE: The June issue of the Express featured inspirational stories from readers. Here is another story from one of our readers.

It was 1947, I was 4 years old, and my mother and my twin sister went to a party. I was left with a babysitter who was 11 years old. We lived in Park Merced in San Francisco and there was a playground with swings and slides nearby, which I was to be taken to. Next door was a repair shop that was used to repair washing machine and dryer motors and a mechanic working on them for the Bendix Company. There was a sign on the door saying “No Admittance,” but he let us in anyway.

There were huge motors on benches with handles that turned the motor in all directions, which I found fascinating. The motors were not that high off the ground, so I began to turn the handle of the apparatus and the motor fell on my foot. I was rushed to St. Joseph’s Hospital and immediately went into surgery again. What saved me from losing my foot was a big bolt in the motor that hit my toe. I remember it so well as I was administered ether gas with a Mickey Mouse mask and the gas was vile. I could not go to sleep right away. The smell was terrible and the ward was filled with that smell and others.

My father was a dentist and had served in World War II for four years as a Lieutenant Commander. He told me that after serving all that time in the war, he was devastated upon returning home and witnessing his daughter losing a toe.

The good news is that only half was taken and the gangrene was caught in time. The other good news: I received a Nancy Ann doll every day for the 20 days I was in the hospital. After six months in a wheelchair, it was a slow recovery and my legs were smaller than they should be because of the inactivity. When I was 8, my mother put me in ballet classes, but to be able to go on your toe, you need the first two toes for balance, so that ended my career in ballet.

I experienced many years of pain associated with this loss, but I discovered that if I danced, the pain subsided. So I danced and danced and danced to rock and roll.

When I was 24 with two children, divorced, and receiving no child support, I was working in San Francisco as a secretary. The money was not enough to support my children so I had to look for a second job. I could only work at night, so the options were not great.

Then one day I saw an advertisement for a dance instructor for Arthur Murray Dance Studio in San Anselmo. I took my 45 rpm record of Little Richard’s “The Girl Can’t Help It” and performed freestyle for the manager. I was hired on the spot to teach disco, and the rest is history. My partner and I did shows in clubs in San Francisco and Marin County. Those were the best years of my life. After surviving many obstacles, it was a blessing that I was able to perform and teach with no formal instruction – I just did it on my own.

“... it was a blessing that I was able to perform and teach with no formal instruction – I just did it on my own.”

Gail Barone is a former Whistlestop volunteer, helping at the welcome desk and in the Jackson Cafe.
People’s Choice in Chili Cook-off

Jackson Café’s Chef Luis Realpozo won the coveted “People’s Choice” award as well as third place in the Service Organization Category of the 20th Annual Petaluma Chili Cook-Off. Chef Luis guides Homeward Bound students in creating lunches for the Jackson Café, Whistlestop’s nutritious and inexpensive bistro, which is open to the public in downtown San Rafael.

VOLUNTEER ANNOUNCEMENTS

Make a Difference in an Older Adult’s Life!

Jackson Café Weekday 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 provide friendly greetings, excellent customer service and support social interaction. A free meal is provided for Café volunteers. Cashier or food service experience is a plus. Lunch hour shifts: Monday-Friday, 10:45am-2pm (Café hours: 11:30am-2pm) Friday morning shift: 8-10am (Breakfast is open to the public and served from 9-10am Fridays.)

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

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 and a clear DMV report are needed, as well as a reliable vehicle and current insurance certificate. A minimum of one 2-3 hour weekday shift is required.

Whistlestop CarePool Volunteer Driver Program
Drivers provide round-trip rides to ambulatory older adults going to the doctor or grocery store. Use your own car and receive ride requests by email. Accept or decline and drive on your own schedule, about 2.3 hours for each round trip. Volunteers must have a reliable passenger automobile with current insurance certificate, a valid California Driver’s License and a clear background check and DMV report. 

To learn more about these opportunities or others, contact Laurie, volunteer@whistlestop.org or 415-456-9067.

NOW HIRING!

- Drivers
- Mechanics
- Attendants

jobs@whistlestop.org 415-456-9062