The Joy of Grandchildren

Andy Treats His Grandkids To Vegas Surprise
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whistlestop.org
A Cirque du Soleil Surprise for the Grandkids

A trip to Las Vegas to see Cirque du Soleil is not your normal outing for the grandkids. But that is just one example of how Andy Guralas of Larkspur treats his granddaughter Olivia, 9, and grandson, Jett, 11.

“I decided to surprise them with something a little different,” Andy said, “So I took them to Vegas for Jett’s 11th birthday to see the show, and we stayed at the Bellagio. We all had a great time. It is an amazing show and I turned into a kid myself watching it.”

That doesn’t mean Andy doesn’t do the usual stuff with his grandchildren – playing at the park or attending their soccer games. In fact, when Whistlestop interviewed Andy, he was getting ready to head up to Hidden Valley in Lake County, where Olivia and Jett live, to attend Olivia’s 9th birthday party. “We have fun at the parks, I love watching them skateboarding and now they’re into roller blading.”

Andy, 86, says the grandchildren (he has six, including a 19-year-old) keep him young. He walks at least two and a half miles a day and sees his grandkids as often as he can.

“For me the grandchildren is the best part of it.”

‘The Whistlestop staff are like my extended family.’

“The Whistlestop staff are like my extended family.”
Trio of Women Finds Ways to Support Each Other

By VAL BOWMAN

Georgia Anker’s mother was one of 12 children, but she is an only child, her daughter, Debi, was an only child and her granddaughter, Jennifer, is an only child. The three are very close and Georgia loves it that way. Georgia and Debi live in a duplex in Fairfax on property Georgia and her husband purchased when they were real estate brokers in Marin County for 40 years. Georgia only retired five years ago when she was 80.

Debi’s daughter, Jennifer, lives very nearby and the three women have dinner together at least once a week. “Jennifer bakes cookies for us.” Georgia and her husband often took care of their granddaughter when her mom was at work and they had great fun together. The time they spent paid off, she said, because they have a nice relationship. What are the secrets to their closeness? “I keep my mouth shut. I don’t give advice; I’m more of an observer,” Georgia says.

Georgia’s own grandmother lived with her family and she came from “a tough bunch in the pioneer wilds of South Dakota. I often think of her when I’m making my coffee because she had to roast the beans and hand grind the beans and then make the coffee. They worked so hard back then.” She said everyone kept busy, making quilts and tatting doilies and tablecloths. She still has a quilt her mother made when she was seven. She even remembers a dog in a yoke, who walked in a circle to power their washing machine.

After retirement, Georgia became a volunteer, working at Whistlestop beginning in 2009 in the Resource office on Fridays and at the Humane Society Thrift Store in San Anselmo.

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A Family Enriched By Its Diversity

By JOHN BOWMAN

Laurie Peterson says that when she is out and about with her granddaughter JJ, she often gets double-takes. “They see this Mexican woman and her Chinese granddaughter and I can see their minds working. And that’s okay.”

Laurie lives with her daughter Jackie and granddaughter JJ in San Rafael. “Her parents went to China and adopted her when she was 10 months old,” she said. “Now she’s 12 and she is such a darling, our sweet JJ.”

She said JJ enjoys reading and is home-schooled. Laurie has two other daughters – Kim in Nashville, TN, and Nicole in Manteca and a total of eight grandchildren, five boys and three girls, ranging in age from 12 to 23. Laurie is proud that hers is a very diverse family. Nicole married a Filipino man so her three children are part Filipino, including JJ’s cousin, Gracie.

“JJ and I go all over the place,” Laurie said. “She loves going to Whistlestop and everyone there loves her.” Laurie is a Brown Bag Pantry volunteer. “But I go to Whistlestop nearly every day. It’s the best.”

Laurie was born in the U.S. but her parents were both born in Mexico. She never met any of her grandparents, who never moved or visited here. Laurie lived in Marin County years ago but moved to Idaho after marrying her husband. After he died, she moved back to San Rafael. She said she thoroughly enjoys being a grandmother and advises her grandkids they should not get married before age 25. “I tell them to get out and see the world first.” She also is a very social person. “I have many friends and they invite me to church and other places. As for me, my door is open to everyone. I wouldn’t close my door to any human being.”
Volunteer Inspires Recipient to Help Whistlestop

By PETE SLAUSON

EDITOR’S NOTE: This excerpt is from a letter that Pete Slauson wrote to Alyce Mars, widow of Whistlestop Home Delivered Groceries driver Marvin Mars, who died Nov. 7. Pete Slauson knew everyone in the Marin rock ‘n’ roll scene. He once owned the legendary Heliport in Sausalito, where the great ‘60s bands rehearsed, including the Grateful Dead. In the ’70s, he opened a 24-track recording studio-video production facility on Second Street in San Rafael.

Marvin Mars was the first person I met from Whistlestop in San Rafael. At age 70, I became handicapped so that I was unable to shop for groceries. A friend mentioned that Whistlestop provided that service. I called, signed up and sent in my order; Marvin was my first delivery person. I was amazed that a man in his 80s was helping me by picking up and delivering food to my home. I was also impressed by the inexpensive lunches served to seniors in Whistlestop’s Jackson Cafe, its Meals on Wheels program, the transportation and other services it provides for older people and the disabled.

I talked with Marvin about Whistlestop and learned about their services for seniors and how valuable they are. That was when I was hooked. Marvin was a great example of giving back or paying it forward. I miss him and I do think about people like him who care enough to give to people in need. Because of Marvin, I have helped raise over $500,000 in funds to help make sure that Whistlestop goes on and on.

(Pete helped organize Whistlestock, the organization’s major fundraising event.)

I realized that these Whistlestop people really care. I thought, ‘Maybe I could throw a little help their way.’ The best thing I could do was round up my people. I’m still on a first-name basis with all those bands.

Marvin Mars

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Keep Learning at WHISTLESTOP

For a full list of classes, check out the calendar at whistlestop.org/classes/calendar or grab one at the Active Aging Center (930 Tamalpais Ave, San Rafael).

Class fees are listed as member/non-member prices. Call 415.456.9062 with questions or to sign up. Please note that the Active Aging Center will be closed Monday, February 20 for Presidents Day.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Valentine Luncheon
Tues, Feb 14, 11:30am-1:30pm, Lunch; Service until 1:50pm; Entertainment 12-1pm; Fee: $10/$12; Jackson Café
With The Tina Carella Duo performing the standards, bring a Valentine who is 60+ and your friend pays the member price! Advance ticket purchase by Feb 13 until 5pm at the Front Desk to get the discounted membership price; $12 day of event.

NEW/HIGHLIGHTED CLASSES/WORKSHOPS

Multicultural Handmade Valentine Cards
Wed, Feb 1; 11am-12pm; No Fee; Facilitator: Caroline Remer; Albert J. Boro Community Center (Pickleweed)
Design handmade Valentine cards for your sweetheart or donate to our 2nd Friday Art Walk exhibition items to be sold. All proceeds benefit Whistlestop. Materials provided. Call Caroline at 415-454-0998 for info.

Heartfelt Cookie Decorating Workshop
Thurs, Feb 16; 2-3pm; No Fee; Facilitator: Sophie Remer
Show your Valentines how much you love them by giving them sweet Valentine’s Day cookies! Decorate yummy cookies using sanding sugars, cookie icing and colorful sprinkles; fill a bag to take home. All ages welcome.

Trilingual Dark Chocolate Tasting Workshop
Thurs, Feb 23; 2-3:30pm; Fee: $3/$5 Facilitators: Caroline Remer and Anna Ladyzhenskaya
Learn the health benefits of dark chocolate and enjoy a free facilitated tasting of different types of dark chocolate with translation in Spanish, Russian and English.

Collage & Mixed Media
Wednesdays, starting Feb 15, 10:30am-12pm; Fee: $40/$45 for 4 weeks
Experiment with different textures, papers, mixed-media applications and techniques in this 4-week series to create your own story in a collage. Sign up at the Front Desk or call Anna at 415-456-9062, ext. 138.

Year of the Rooster Social
Thurs, Feb 2; 1-2pm; No Fee Leader: Caroline Remer
Experience the tastes and traditions of the Chinese New Year. Lucky foods and stories exchanged to increase good luck in the New Year. Call Caroline at 415-454-0998 for info.

2nd Friday Art Walk
Fri, Feb 10; 5-7pm; No Fee Facilitator: Anna Ladyzhenskaya
Whistlestop joins the creativity event in San Rafael during the 2nd Friday Art Walk. Featuring jewelry made by Whistlestop members, mixed media, handmade Valentine cards, assorted arts & crafts, and watercolors. Call Anna at 415-456-9062, ext. 138 for info.

Community Breakfast
First Friday of each month, 9-10am, Fee: $3/$6; Jackson Café
Drop in for the best deal in town. Join us for a tasty, hot buffet breakfast, which includes a beverage, fruits and juices. Call Sophia at 415-456-9062, ext. 129 for info.

Senior Circle
Wednesdays, 10-11:30am; No Fee Volunteer Facilitators from Center for Attitudinal Healing
A drop-in, open support group for independent men and women (55+), who give each other the gift of listening in a caring environment. The group encourages mutual sharing of older adult experiences – the joys, concerns, and wisdom.

Movie Times at Whistlestop
Select Fridays, Feb 10 & 24; 2-4pm; No Fee; Bring a friend and view together.
February Theme: Drama/Cult Film: Harold & Maude (2/10); Fantasy/Comedy-Drama: Disney/Pixar’s Up (2/24).

NEW/HIGHLIGHTED HEALTH PROGRAMS

Brain Fitness
Tues, Feb 21, 9:30-10:30am (open to the public); 10:30-11:30am; No Fee Instructor: Bob Nations, President, Senior Access Board of Directors
Are you interested in learning different ways to exercise your brain? This Senior Access workshop is designed to stimulate the areas of the brain that promote good brain health. Sign up in advance to reserve a space.

See LEARNING on page 8
iPads/iPhones Basics 3: World of Applications
Tuesdays, Feb 14 & 21 (2 classes)
10am-12pm
Fee: $48 Maximum 8 people
iPads and iPhone users, come discover the incredible world of applications. Find apps to help you manage your daily activities and feed your passions. In this two-week course, we will focus on finding helpful and fun applications to download. Learn how to use apps for shopping, brain training, fitness, Internet radio, stock trackers, games, translation, travel, and more. Don’t forget to bring your fully charged device, Apple ID, and Apple password to class. (For Apple devices only)

Smart Phone/Tablet Basics 2: (Android Users Only)
Thursdays, Feb 16 & 23 (2 classes)
10am-12pm
Fee: $48 Maximum 8 people
Review some of the basics of using your device and discover a few of your built-in apps, including Photo editing, storing and retrieving photos, Calendar, email, Texting, Maps/GPS, and more. Learn how to find and install new apps, and how to update, delete and organize them for easy access. A perfect sequel to the Using Android Smart Phone & Tablets Basics 1 course. (For all Android devices including: Samsung, LG, Motorola, Nokia)

iPad/iPhones Basics 1: Getting to Know Your Device
Tuesdays, March 7 & 14 (2 classes)
10am-12pm
Fee: $48 Maximum 8 people
In this personalized, two-week course, you’ll be guided through how to make calls, send emails, send texts, download music and add applications. This is for those new to the smart phone/wireless device world. Each session provides one-on-one help and comes with instructional handouts. (Bring your charged-up Apple device to class.)

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. Apple assistance is available on Wednesday from 11am-12pm.

We are looking for people who already know how to play bridge and are interested in learning how to play Online Bridge. Please call Whistlestop, 415-456-9062, and add your name to the list. When there are enough people for a class, we will contact you with more information on time and date.

Pre-registration and payment required. 415-456-9062
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MARIN COUNTY COMMISSION ON AGING
MONTHLY MEETING

Thurs, Feb. 2  |  10am – 12:30pm
Where: Tiburon Town Hall
Topic: Fall Prevention
Speaker: Carol Zellar, Marin County
Commission on Aging

LEARNING continued from page 6

Relaxation & Movement
Fri, Feb 24; 4-5pm; Fee: $5
Featuring: Juan and Janine of
Sevamantra and their friend Rob
Invite a greater sense of joy, peace, and
connectedness into the New Year. They
will sing songs and guide you through
gentle movements. Sign up at the Front
Desk or call 415-456-9062 for info.

Weekly Blood Pressure,
Cholesterol Screenings
Fri, 9:30-11am; No Fee
Weekly blood pressure and cholesterol
screenings, and prevention advice is
offered by Bright Star Care, a local
agency providing home care, care-
givers, and medical staffing solutions
to families and businesses in Marin,
415-332-3300.

Medicare 101 & SCAN: Can
a Medicare Advantage Plan
Save you Money?
Wed, Feb 8 (Medicare 101); Feb 22
(SCAN Presentation); 10-11:30am;
No Fee; Call Whistlestop to sign up:
415-456-9062
Instructor: Rozan Donals of
SCAN Health Plan
Don’t miss out on health care savings
for 2017! Get clear, straightforward
answers to your Medicare questions
and information about 2017 Medicare.

Medicare 101 & SCAN: Can a Medicare Advantage Plan Save you Money?

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### HIGHLIGHTED SUPPORT SERVICES

- Need Assistance?
  - Multicultural Consultants Can Help
    By appointment only: Caroline Remer

Victim Witness Assistance
2nd & 4th Thurs, 9am-12pm; No Fee
Advocate Yolanda Johnson from
the District Attorney’s office answers
questions, provides information, and
connects you to resources. More infor-
mation? Call 415-473-6450.

Free Legal Consultation
Most Thursdays of each month at
Whistlestop and 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+. Marin
lawyers volunteer to give general advice,
offer options, explain rights and, if ap-
propriate, refer people to attorneys who
have expertise in certain areas of law.

Homeshare and Telephone
Reassurance Programs
Call for appointment: Leslie Klar,
415-456-9068; No Fee
Homeshare is a free referral service for
older adults seeking or offering hous-
ing. Telephone Reassurance is trained
volunteers calling isolated older adults
who need connections.
Mary Ann Muirhead

Mary Ann Muirhead, a volunteer with the Whistlestop Meals on Wheels program for over three years, looks forward to driving her route every week. “There is something so satisfying about helping people in your community who don’t ask for much, but appreciate every little bit of assistance you can give them. Most of the people really need the healthy, nutritious, microwavable meals they receive each Monday, Wednesday and Friday.”

This fall, Mary Ann was diagnosed with breast cancer in September. She underwent two surgeries and then a month of radiation treatment. The radiation treatment was in Sonoma County, where she had to travel five days a week for four weeks. She insisted on rearranging her cancer treatment so it would not interfere with her Meals on Wheels route. She only missed one day of delivery throughout the ordeal. She had her last treatment Dec. 5 and is now cancer free!

When she looks at the struggles she has gone through this year, combined with a forced retirement at age 54, as well as the years of rehabilitation her husband endured after a stroke, she still feels thankful for all that she has. Her daughter is a veterinarian at the Denver Zoo and lives closer than she has since she graduated.

Mary Ann went to Connecticut College and Brown University, graduating with a Masters in Literature. With no teaching jobs available, she took a job as a secretary in a law office. She eventually went to law school, graduated from DePaul University and worked in Chicago and in Washington DC at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. She met her husband there; he was also an attorney.

Mary Ann retired early when the couple relocated to Marin. She was on the Board of the Friends of Hospice By The Bay Auxiliary. She has volunteered at the Hospice thrift store, Hodgepodge, for over 25 years.

To learn more about Meals on Wheels or other volunteer opportunities, contact Laurie at: volunteer@whistlestop.org or 415-456-9067.

Teresa Pilian, a Whistlestar member originally from El Salvador, knitted the cap Caroline Remer (a multicultural coordinator for Whistlestop) is wearing in this picture. It happened to match the sweater of Sophie Remer (guest services coordinator); she calls the sisters “My Whistlestop Angels.”

Arnold Luber, Whistlestop volunteer nominee, with his wife and daughter at the Center for Volunteer & Nonprofit Leadership Heart of Marin Awards lunch. Three cheers for Arnold! We are so grateful for our amazing volunteers.

VOLUNTEER OF THE MONTH | By LAURIE VERMONT

Mary Ann Muirhead
Whistlestop Honors Employees of the Year

Whistlestop’s CEO Joe O’Hehir has announced the five 2016 Employees of the Year. The honored employees were each presented with a Visa gift card and an Employee of the Year certificate at the annual Whistlestop Holiday Party in the Jackson Café. They are also named on a plaque on the Whistlestop Employee of the Year Wall of Fame. Honored were: Althea Boxley, Quality Assurance Specialist; Stephanie Carneiro, Travel Navigator; Ty Logwood, Driver, Marin Paratransit; Yank Francies, Driver, Marin Contracts; and KC Tse, Driver, San Francisco.
The Pacific Sun’s annual Best of Marin survey is underway and it will help us if you can vote for Whistlestop as the Best Nonprofit in the county. Whistlestop won the honor in last year’s survey. This time you can vote for Whistlestop as Best Nonprofit in the Everyday category. You can also vote for the Jackson Café as Best Cafe/Coffee House under Food & Drink. Vote for Whistlestock as Best Charity Event under Arts & Culture.

To go directly to the ballot, use this url: www.bohemian.com/northbay/survey. If you need help with the online survey, you may go to the Whistlestop Computer Lab on either Monday or Wednesday at 10am.

You must vote for at least 20 things in order to have your votes count. You may vote only once. You will be asked for your name but it will not be made public.

Voting will end at 5pm on Feb. 28. Winners will be announced in the Pac Sun on April 26. So, if you agree that Whistlestop offers the best services and nutrition for older adults in Marin, go vote now!

You Can Help Grand Jury

You can help the Marin County Civil Grand jury by nominating a Marin resident to serve on the 2017-2018 Grand Jury by March 22 (completed applications are due by April 22). If selected from the pool of applicants, your nominee would serve for a year (with 18 other jurors) dedicated to making Marin County a better place to live and prosper. Please submit their contact information to Jay Hamilton-Roth, Foreperson by calling 415-473-6132 or emailing us at grandjury@marincounty.org.

SUN DAY

if you have lost joy
don’t try to get her back
don’t clutch at the hem of her silken skirt
don’t chase after her
or call out in the night
no weeping or wailing
feeling sorry for yourself

go out into the garden
lay yourself down
and sink into the earth
as water sinks into sand
be drenched by light
feel it pressing into you
almost too heavy to bear
dissolve into honey
into pollen
into ripe fruit
then rise up laughing
and catch your reflection
in the eyes of another

By TRUE HEITZ
Giving Through Your Estate

By SERENA D’ARCY-FISHER

The beginning of a new year is a good time to review, and possibly revise, your financial goals and estate plans. If you have had changes in your family or in the value of your assets, update your plans. Clear, legally valid estate plans will ensure that your wishes for your family and loved ones are met, as well as your philanthropic goals. You can often make a gift by adding a bequest through a simple codicil or amendment to your existing will.

There are a number of ways you can remember your favorite charities, like Whistlestop, in your estate planning after providing for your family and loved ones. For example, you can leave a gift of a specific dollar amount from checking or savings accounts—such gifts are probate free and not subject to estate taxes. You can also make a gift of an asset, such as a home, a car, a painting or an art collection. You also have the option to give the remainder or a percentage of your estate to charity.

Did you know that you could also name a charity as a beneficiary of your insurance benefits or retirement plans? If you are over 70-1/2 you can now make a charitable gift of up to $100,000 per person a year from your traditional or Roth IRA completely free of federal tax. Heirs would likely be subject to large income taxes on this type of inheritance. You may also have insurance policies that are no longer needed for their original purpose; these can also fund your charitable gifts.

Many homemade wills are confusing and may be declared invalid by the courts. It is always a good idea to seek legal advice or consult with a professional financial advisor when drawing up or revising your will. Ask for a quote upfront when seeking professional help with your estate planning.

Whistlestop, in partnership with Legal Aid of Marin, offers free half hour in-person appointments for Marin seniors on Thursdays. To find out more or to schedule an appointment, contact Whistlestop’s Information and Referral office: 415-459-6700.

Call Serena, 415-456-9062, ext. 114; information is provided in confidence and with no obligation.