



SENIOR UPDATE  
AREA AGENCY ON AGING  
ADVISORY COMMISSION ON AGING  
6955 FOOTHILL BLVD., SUITE 300  
OAKLAND, CA 94605-1907

# Senior Update

...The Eyes and Ears of Alameda County Seniors

Commission on Aging

## Decreasing the Pain of Knee Osteoarthritis through Weight Management

Moshe Lewis MD, MBA, MPH

### Inside this issue:

- Decreasing the Pain of Knee Osteoarthritis 1
- LifeLong Medical Care Celebrates 30 Years 1
- Ten Talking Tips for Independent Seniors 3
- How Occupational Therapists can help 4
- ACTIA Awards to Paratransit Programs 6
- Gay and Lesbian Seniors Fight for Survival 7
- Know What a Child Needs? 7
- Senior Information 8
- Calendar of Events 9

When the youthful looking senior, Ms. Casandra Thomas, decided to see her doctor because of her knee osteoarthritis she was surprised to learn that something called lifestyle modification, particularly exercise and weight reduction, is now being recommended by doctors all over the country for the management of osteoarthritis. Therefore, Casandra asked her doctor to explain to her the connection between exercise, weight loss and knee pain. Given her sense of independence, Casandra was delighted to learn that there was something within her control that she could do to decrease her pain. Her doctor explained that the weight transmitted through the knee joint is four times one's body weight. That

means that a person's knees have to support eight hundred pounds of force if that person weighs two hundred pounds. In addition, multiple studies have been done to demonstrate the benefit of weight loss on decreasing knee pain. For example, the **Arthritis, Diet, and Activity Promotion Trial (ADAPT)** was a randomized, single-blind clinical trial lasting 18 months that was designed to determine whether long-term exercise and dietary weight loss were more effective, either separately or in combination, than usual care in improving physical function, pain, and mobility in

older overweight and obese adults with knee osteoarthritis. This study effectively showed that even modest weight loss such as 15 to 20 pounds had a significant effect on patient's own reports of improved function and decreased pain. Now, most experts who treat patients with knee and even hip osteoarthritis recommend exercise and weight reduction over pharmacological therapies. The exercises include such activities as group-based exercise in water. In Casandra's case, her physician explained to her that in water, gravity is eliminated, hence people are weightless. *continued on p. 2*

## LifeLong Medical Care Celebrates 30 Years of Service to Alameda County Seniors

Kathryn Stambaugh, MPH



LifeLong Medical Care began serving the community in 1976, when the Gray Panthers opened Lifelong's Over 60 Health Center in Berkeley. LifeLong has grown to include six clinics, two Adult Day Health

Centers, a dental practice and multiple programs that provide tailored, personal health care to over 18,000 people each year – including 4,000 people over age 65. These high-quality services and commitment to commu-

nity health have earned LifeLong the reputation as the primary "safety net" provider of medical services to the uninsured and those with complex health needs in Berkeley, Oakland, Albany and Emeryville. *continued on p. 2*

## Decreasing the Pain of Knee Osteoarthritis through Weight Management Continued from Cover



Therefore, in the water people can walk and do a lot of exercise such as light aerobics that is more painful when they are on land. In addition, in most Arthritis Pool Programs, which exist throughout every community in the United States, the water is heated. Heat is an excellent way of bringing healthy nutrients to the body through increased blood flow. In addition, good circulation also helps remove impuri-

ties and decrease muscle spasms which often plague patients with knee osteoarthritis.

Armed with this information, Casandra, who represents a real patient after her name was changed for confidentiality, attended four sessions with a nutritionist where she learned to be more aware of portion sizes and her caloric intake. A close friend of Casandra's ultimately inspired her to join a won-

derful Arthritis pool program in her community at the Y on Alston Way, and she no longer requires medication for pain except Tylenol Arthritis.

### References:

1. Arthritis Rheum. 2004 May;50(5):1366-9. Exercise and dietary weight loss in overweight and obese older adults with knee osteoarthritis: the Arthritis, Diet, and Activity Promotion Trial.
2. Best Practices Res Clinical Rheumatology. 2006 Feb;20(1):81-97.

## LifeLong Medical Care Celebrates 30 Years of Service to Alameda County Seniors Continued from Cover



LifeLong's innovative **Over 60 Health Center** in Berkeley specializes in meeting the medical needs of older adults. The first clinic of its kind in the United States, this unique facility is known for its caring staff and comprehensive approach to wellness. Services include physician office visits, lab services, foot care, hypertension screening, medication and nutrition information, mental health services, case management, social work home visits, family consultation and support, and chemical dependency evaluation. The clinic also offers preventive services such as health education, weight management and smoking cessation, as well as specialized care to help

patients and families live with Alzheimer's Disease and chronic conditions like hypertension and diabetes. The Over 60 Health Center's success in serving older adults lead LifeLong to open a new clinic, **LifeLong Medical Care – East Oakland**, to bring these same high-quality services to seniors in East Oakland's Foothill Square neighborhood.

Many other LifeLong programs also support the health needs of Alameda County's diverse population of older adults. **The Adult Day Health Center**, located downstairs from the East Oakland clinic, supports the health and independence of adults with complex care needs, many of whom cannot stay by

themselves during the day and would otherwise require nursing home care. The **Supportive Housing Program** provides on-site medical, mental health and social services to formerly homeless adults living at subsidized housing sites in Berkeley and Oakland. LifeLong Dental Care in Berkeley offers routine dental care, such as exams, fillings, dentures & extractions, as well as referrals for specialized services. **A Clear Path to Coverage**, one of LifeLong's newest initiatives, helps seniors navigate the health insurance maze and get the coverage – and health care -- they need. For more information call 510-704-6010 or visit [www.lifelongmedical.org](http://www.lifelongmedical.org).

## Ten Talking Tips for Independent Seniors

### Jane Malmgren, Home Instead Senior Care



How can seniors communicate with their adult children, or caregivers, to prolong the senior's independence? Here are ten tips:

**1. Be assertive.** Assertiveness involves figuring out what you need in a specific situation, and then stating it clearly and definitively so that the other person can't fail to understand.

**2. Not aggressive** Aggressive communication includes negative personal attacks and name-calling. When the other person begins to focus on themselves because their feelings are hurt, then you have lost the ability to talk about what you want to talk about.

**3. Be selective.** Pick your battles. It may be easier to walk away or go along with something. Save the assertive behavior for the situations where it is most important.

**4. Optimize the energy.** Look for the places and times in which you are most effective in getting what you need out of conversations. Plan to have important conversations at those times and places.

**5. Compensate for weaknesses.**

Don't feel embarrassed if you need a hearing aid or if you need to take notes or make lists to remember important ideas.

**6. Seek independence, avoid dependence.**

Seek social contact where people encourage you to do things yourself and where they challenge you mentally or physically.

**7. Raise the issue.**

Consider what your child might want to know. For instance, your child may find it difficult to talk about your will. You may want to mention to your child that you have a will and that it's in good order.

**8. Defend without defensiveness.**

Your child may accuse you of not being safe to drive anymore. What are some things you can do? Offer to take a driving test or defensive driving class. If your child is suggesting taking away your car keys, consider offering a compromise such as not driving at night. Looking for places where you are comfortable meeting someone halfway will increase your chances of getting your own way on the issues most important to you.

**9. Look for points of agreement.**

Even if you disagree with 90% of what someone is saying, don't forget to point out where you do agree: common ground is a good starting point for solving problems.

**10. Listen and put yourself in the other person's shoes.**

When your children come to you with an issue, it's normally because they're concerned and because they care. Expressing gratitude, caring and love shows your desire to maintain a positive relationship, no matter what is going on now.

These ten tips have been adapted from the booklet "The 40-70 Rule: A Guide to Conversation Starters for Seniors and Their Boomer Children" published by Home Instead Senior Care in partnership with Dr. Jake Harwood, Ph.D.

Home Instead Senior Care provides non-medical home care to seniors to help them retain their independence. To request a free copy of "The 40-70 Rule" booklet or if you have questions about the services offered by Home Instead Senior Care, please contact Jane Malmgren at 510-663-3652.

# How Occupational Therapists Can Help Seniors Who Face Driving Challenges

Kent Milton and Patti Y. Horsley

The toughest decision faced by an older Californian may be surrendering the car keys. Some seniors say that the loss of driving privileges can be virtually as devastating as the death of a spouse. Any remedy that offers the possibility of extending the safe driving years promises to be a valuable (and highly valued) service.

One emerging answer is third-party assessment—thorough, objective and reliable. When coupled with the opportunity for rehabilitation, assessment also seems far less threatening. One such agent of change is the occupational therapist (OT), whose examination process includes clinical evaluation, recipes for rehabilitation if required, and a training cycle to improve deficient driving skills. Twenty-nine California OT programs offer this service, and 17 of these provide the added capability of in-vehicle evaluations resulting in the appropriate adaptive and/or rehabilitative actions that may keep the individual driving safely.

Typical of these programs is that managed by Duane Cintron, an OT and a certified driving rehabilitation specialist, who operates in the broader Sacramento community. Cintron says that driving problems often start with vision changes, echoing the nation's motor vehicle departments, which observe that vision problems are the most common functional stumbling block to renewing the driver's license.

Cintron notes that 20-20 eyesight is a measure of visual acuity, but not of the ability to process what is seen. "Useful vision is a learned skill," he says, meaning that people acquire the interpretative capability with practice during their early years. For example, when a ball suddenly appears in the street, a child may be close behind. Sometimes older people lose the capacity to make rapid situational judgments because of eye ailments or a stroke, which may diminish cognition and perception. The therapist's role is to recapture these abilities so life--and driving--can resume. If the identified vision problem (e.g., cataracts) can be solved medically, that often resolves any driving issues. Other eye ailments may require analysis and retraining by a vision specialist (Cintron works closely with one).

Comprehending what one sees is so important to driving that Cintron checks a range of visual skills including useful field of view (what the eyes see and how the individual puts that information to use), motor-free visual perception (a recognition test measured with symbols on flip cards), and oculomotor (eye muscle) skills critical for smooth yet rapid environmental scans. He also looks at depth perception and contrast sensitivity—the ability to pick out objects blending into a gray or dark background. After this exhaustive study of vision, Cintron runs through a bat-

tery of clinical tests used to measure functional losses, which in turn have an impact on driving ability. First he checks strength, balance, range of motion and sensory loss--inability to feel the feet, legs or arms. Then follows cognitive evaluation, determined by thought-process tests such as spelling a word backward, following written or verbal directions, or counting backward by sevens. The ability to sustain attention is measured by asking subjects to complete the tedious task of eliminating a given letter of the alphabet from a printed paragraph in a distracting environment.

Clinical evaluation may define (or preclude) the need for a drive test, which begins with a closed course sequence set up on a parking lot, followed by street driving---residential, business, rural roads and freeways. Cintron works with all ages, and he estimates that 90 percent of his clientele continue to drive, including those who work their way back to safe status through rehabilitation. Currently about one patient in five is a senior.

He, like other occupational therapists who evaluate drivers, hopes to expand that ratio as more people become aware of the possibilities. His comment to seniors: "Don't be afraid of assessment, it can help you remain on the road. And isn't that what you want?" He also notes that OTs can be a valuable resource for doctors seeking the best answers for their patients.

*Continued on p. 5*

## How Occupational Therapists Can Help Seniors Who Face Driving Challenges

Continued from p. 4

Families often rely on his counsel as well when making decisions about the driving future of a senior. About 80 percent of Cintron's patients seek help after a traumatic event such as stroke, heart attack or a crash. His older patients usually come through referrals from family or doctors. Cintron believes more seniors would self-refer if they understood the benefits. Many forms of trauma can be dealt with, although rehabilitation may be stretched over a considerable period. He describes a syndrome known as visual-spatial neglect, where the brain no longer recognizes a part of the body, a limb or even an entire side of the environment. Asked to draw a clock face, a person with this problem will squeeze all 12 numbers onto one side of the clock. Driving is impossible for this person, and rehabilitation represents a challenge to both patient and therapist because so much time and patience are required.

As the senior population soars (today there are approximately four million Californians over 65, by 2030 the number will be nine million), California's 29 occupational therapists equipped to conduct driving-fitness evaluations appears to be too few. Elin Schold Davis, older driver project coordinator for the American Occupational Therapy Association, agrees.

"One of our national objectives has been the development of educational resources for therapists,

building awareness and encouraging expansion of occupational therapy driving rehabilitation programs. Awareness and demand drive program development and expansion. We are preparing resources to respond as the medical community and seniors gain knowledge that occupational therapy assessments and rehabilitation can be a path to added driving years," she said. In California, the Center for Injury Prevention, Policy and Practice and the State and Local Injury Control Section of the California Department of Public Health have joined to train more OTs, even those classified as "generalists" who have not previously focused on driving. The training effort, funded by a California Office of Traffic Safety grant, will guide OT generalists to ask patients "do you drive?" And if not, "is regaining the ability to drive one goal of your rehabilitation?"

To reinforce their interaction with patients, generalists will be trained in the basic skills of assessing how functional problems arising from health issues affect driving. They also will be provided information on how to secure advanced training in driver evaluation and rehabilitation. California Highway Patrol Commissioner Joe Farrow, who chairs the Older Californian Traffic Safety (OCTS) Task Force, says expanding OT avail-

ability "coincides with our task force objective to emphasize the positive impact of professional assessment. We need more evaluators, and we need to make it clear that professional, third-party assessment can be a powerful tool in helping seniors recognize their limitations and—more importantly—provide a method to deal with these impediments to safe driving."

Additional information about OT driver evaluation and rehabilitation programs can be found at [http://www.eldersafety.org/resources/occupational\\_therapist\\_locator.html](http://www.eldersafety.org/resources/occupational_therapist_locator.html) or [http://www1.aota.org/driver\\_search/index.aspx](http://www1.aota.org/driver_search/index.aspx).

About the authors: Kent Milton is a retired annuitant with the California Highway Patrol and is Chairman of the Public Information Section of the Older Californian Traffic Safety Task Force. Patti Y. Horsley holds an MPH and is with the Center for Injury Prevention Policy and Practice at San Diego State University. She presently serves as a consultant to the EPIC Branch, California Department of Public Health.

# ACTIA Awards \$4 Million to Local Paratransit Programs

Sylvia Stadmire, Commissioner  
Robert Washington, Commissioner

The Alameda County Transportation Authority (ACTIA) awarded \$4 million in grant funds to 20 local programs serving seniors and disabled patrons, under the agency's Measure B Paratransit Gap Grant—Cycle Four funding (2008-2010).

Since the paratransit grant program's first funding cycle in 2002, ACTIA has awarded more than \$9 million in grants for paratransit services.

Reflecting the diversity of the senior and disabled population in Alameda County, the programs include voice response scheduling technology, programs targeting disabled youth and Alzheimer's-affected constituents, and a picture guide to riding BART. The funded programs collectively serve all four planning areas of Alameda County.

## **Fully Funded Grant Programs:**

Alameda Contra Costa Transit District (AC Transit) New Freedom Fund Grant Match

AC Transit EBP Mobile Data Terminal/Automatic Vehicle Locator Project \$360,000 AC Transit Interactive Voice Response (IVR)/Web Based Scheduling Software

Alameda County Transportation Improvement Agency (ACTIA) County-wide Mobility Coordination

Alzheimer's Services of the East Bay Driving Growth through Transportation: Special Transportation Services for Individuals with Dementia

Bay Area Outreach and Recreation Program (BORP) BORP North County

Youth/Adults with Disabilities Group Trip Project

City of Albany Albany Senior Center Community Shuttle Bus

City of Emeryville 94608 Area Demand Response Shuttle Service for Seniors and/or People with Disabilities

City of Fremont VIP Rides Program

City of Oakland Department of Human Resources—TAXI-UP & GO Project!

City of Pleasanton Downtown Route

City of Pleasanton Rider Assessment Service

Livermore Amador Valley Transit Authority (LAVTA) Paratransit Vehicle Donation Program and Dial a Ride Scholarship

Livermore Amador Valley Transportation Authority (LAVTA) Livermore Senior Housing Shuttle

San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit District (BART) Learn BART! A Picture Guide to Riding BART

Senior Support Program of the Tri Valley Volunteers Assisting Same Day Transportation and Escorts

Subtotal—Fully Funded Programs \$2,949,115

## **Partially Funded Grant Programs:**

ACTIA Central County Taxi Program Expansion and "Guaranteed Ride Home" for Travel Training Participants

Centers for Independent Living Mobility Matters!

City of Hayward Hayward Round About—Paratransit Shuttle Service

City of Oakland GRIP—Grocery Return Improvement Program

Subtotal—Partially Funded Programs \$1,050,885

## **Total Awarded \$4,000,000**

Review of proposals and recommendations for funding are made by ACTIA's Paratransit Advisory Planning Committee (PAPCO), a 28-member panel of senior and disabled Alameda County residents, who use local paratransit services and serve a two-year term on the committee. Final approval of funding is made by ACTIA's Board.

ACTIA Board  
Alice Lai-Bitker, Chair  
Supervisor, District 3

Mark Green, Vice-Chair  
Mayor, City of Union City

Keith Carson  
Supervisor, District 5

Henry Chang Jr.  
Vice-Mayor, City of Oakland

Scott Haggerty  
Supervisor, District 1

Beverly Johnson  
Mayor, City of Alameda

Marshall Kamena  
Mayor, City of Livermore

Janet Lockhart  
Mayor, City of Dublin

Nate Miley  
Supervisor, District 4

Anthony Santos  
Mayor, City of San Leandro

Gail Steele  
Supervisor, District 2

## Gay and Lesbian Seniors Fight for Survival

Frank Howell, Commissioner

Recently I had the pleasure of attending the same sex marriage of two very dear friends, Bobbie Jarvis & Meg Bruynell in Fremont. About 82 people attended. What a revolution!

Some progress has been made, but there are still holes in the Constitution that need to be filled.

Sandra Block, **USA Today**, reported on 5/16/04 that Gay Seniors frequently come out on the short end when it comes to federal benefits, routinely granted to straight couples. They are denied Social Security and/or Medicare when a partner dies. Even in cases where the life partners have carefully crafted a will with the aid of a competent attorney, the surviving partner can be thwarted by the IRS. A

huge inheritance tax can be demanded. Again, the straight spouse is not required to pay any tax.

The Lavender Seniors of the East Bay has been holding educational programs with the staff of senior care homes to make the staff aware of the special needs of gay seniors. If the staff proves to be free of homophobia, the Lavender Seniors will post a special emblem at the agency which certifies that gay couples will be fully accepted, meaning they can live together and not be separated because they are viewed as being two single people.

According to the Human Rights Campaign, a national gay civil rights organization, a partner with a spouse who is 55 or older constitutes 23% of the lavender population. Those who are 65 and older comprise 12% of the same sex

population.

Hopefully, if Proposition 8 fails to pass in California (Prop. 8 eliminates the right of same-sex couples to marry) and a new administration come to Washington, a new day will dawn for Gay, lesbian, and transgender seniors.

**Senate Bill 1729**-Proposed by senator Carol Migden provides training for staff in nursing homes in order that they provide an environment free of homophobia.

**Senate Bill 153**-Also proposed by Senator Carol Migden, avoids an unfair property tax upon the death of the co-owner.

For more information contact Alice Kessler, Government Affairs Director, Equality California at [eqca.org](http://eqca.org).

## Know What a Child Needs? You

Arlene Silverman



Putting your experience to work for the community

Many Bay Area kids live far from their grandparents and other family members. To help those youngsters, RSVP of San Francisco and Alameda Counties brings caring older adults into the lives of Alameda County school children. Anyone

over 55 who enjoys working with young people may choose from opportunities such as one-on-one reading with elementary-school children or becoming a mentor for a young person in need. Results: Students show progress in their schoolwork, and adults get back

more than they give. As one volunteer reports, "This has been a year of fun. I've gotten a lot of hugs!" Call RSVP at (510) 452-0868, or visit [www.rsvpsf.org](http://www.rsvpsf.org) to learn more about ways you can help your community.

## Senior Information

Alameda County Senior Information Program



## November 4, 2008 General Election: VOTE

*excerpt from 2004 Senior Update article by Doug Brown*

Seniors know that countless Americans sacrificed and even died to ensure that all people have the right to vote. Politicians know that a majority of registered seniors make the effort to vote. The result is that senior issues are at the forefront of political debate and interest.

November 4th is the date for the General election for President, other elective offices, and important initiative measures. For information about voting, registration and vote-by-mail application deadlines, and local initiatives, call the Alameda County Registrar of Voters at

510-267-8683 (and for information about poll worker opportunities call 510-272-6971), or visit [www.acgov.org/rov/](http://www.acgov.org/rov/). For information about state initiatives visit the Secretary of State website [www.voterguide.sos.ca.gov/](http://www.voterguide.sos.ca.gov/) or the League of Women Voters website [www.smartvoter.org/](http://www.smartvoter.org/).

## U. S. Treasury Debit Card for Social Security Recipients

Sources: PR Newswire and U.S. Treasury

The U.S. Department of the Treasury is introducing the Direct Express (R) card-- designed as an alternative to paper checks--to Social Security recipients. The Direct Express card is an option for federal beneficiaries who do not have a bank account, but are looking for a no-cost or low-cost alter-

native to using check-cashing facilities. The Direct Express card curbs the risk of lost or stolen checks, giving people access to their money without the need to carry large amounts of cash. The cards are PIN-protected and funds are FDIC-insured. There is no sign-up fee and no bank ac-

count or credit check is required to enroll. Senior citizens, people with disabilities and other Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipients may sign up for the optional card by calling toll-free 1-877-212-9991 or visiting [www.fms.treas.gov/directexpresscard/](http://www.fms.treas.gov/directexpresscard/).

## Annual Flu and Pneumonia Alert

Flu season can begin as early as October and last as late as May. October or November is the best time to get vaccinated, but getting vaccinated in December or even later can still be beneficial. The

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that everyone 50 and older get a flu shot each year and that people 65 and older get a pneumonia vaccination at least once to pre-

vent illness. For more information, consult your doctor, or contact Alameda County Public Health Immunization Assistance Project at 510-267-3230 or Sutter VNA at 1-800-500-2400.

## Energy Assistance Programs

The CARE program offers a 20% discount on electric charges for low-income households. Contact CARE at 1-866-743-2273 or for more information visit [www.pge.com/care](http://www.pge.com/care). REACH is a one-time

assistance program that helps low-income customers who experience hardships and are unable to pay for their energy needs. Contact REACH at 1-800-933-9677 or for more information

visit [www.pge.com/reach](http://www.pge.com/reach). The HEAP program provides qualified low-income households with assistance on their energy bills. Contact HEAP at 1-866-675-6623.

**Call Information and Assistance at (800) 510-2020 or (510) 577-3530**

**Senior Update**  
**Area Agency On Aging**  
**Advisory Commission on Aging**  
**6955 Foothill Blvd, Suite 300**  
**Oakland, CA 94605-1907**

Phone: 1-800-510-2020

Fax: 510-577-1962

PRSRT STD  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
SAN LEANDRO, CA  
PERMIT NO. 45

### **We're On The Web!**

[http://www.alamedasocialservices.org/public/services/elders\\_and\\_disabled\\_adults/aaa.cfm](http://www.alamedasocialservices.org/public/services/elders_and_disabled_adults/aaa.cfm)

**Senior Update** Editorial Board: F. Rose, C. Steiner, Q. Campbell, N. Hartschen, F. Howell, J. Hunt, M. Schiffman, S. Stadmire, G. Tucker, K. Bridges, A. Holloway, and M. Schulz

## **Calendar Of Events**

### **California Senior Legislature 2008 Session**

The California Senior Legislature is a volunteer body whose primary mission is to gather ideas for legislation at the state and federal levels, craft the ideas into formal proposals, prioritize the proposals, present them to members of the Legislature or the Congress, and advocate for laws implementing the ideas. The 28th Annual Session will be held **October 20-22** in the State Capitol, Sacramento. For details call 916-552-8056 or see [www.4csl.org](http://www.4csl.org).

### **Aging in Place Symposium**

Lavender Seniors will present the 2nd Annual Symposium on **Friday, October 3rd** at Marina Community Center, 15301 Wicks Blvd., San Leandro. For details contact Dan Ashbrook, 510-667-9655 Ext 3.

### **Health and Resource Faire for Seniors**

Newark Senior Center will present the 10th Annual Faire on **Wednesday, October 29**, 10 am-1:30 pm at the Silliman Activity Center, 6800 Mowry Avenue, Newark. For details call 510-742-4840.

**\*ELECTION DAY \* Vote \* Vote \* Vote \* Tuesday, November 4.**