



SENIOR UPDATE  
 AREA AGENCY ON AGING  
 ADVISORY COMMISSION ON AGING  
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# Senior Update

...The Eyes and Ears of Alameda County Seniors

Commission on Aging

## The Rewarding Experiences of a Senior Volunteer

Frank Rose, Commissioner

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This article speaks to my senior colleagues about the rewarding experiences that results from becoming a capable volunteer.

### Definitions of Volunteer

A volunteer is someone who serves in a community or for the benefit of natural environment primarily because they choose to do so. Many serve through a non-profit organization – sometimes referred to as formal volunteering, but a significant number also serve less formally, either individually or as part of a group. However, by most definitions, a volunteer worker does not get paid or receive compensation for services rendered.

### Generally Accepted Motivating Factors For Volunteering

Motivations are unique, however, they will often be a combination of the following:

Altruism: Volunteering for the benefit of others. Quality of Life: Serving the community because, providing service makes ones own life better — is perhaps the most significant motivation for

volunteering. It is often mixed with a good dose of altruism. Sense of Duty: Some see participation in community as a responsibility that comes with citizenship. Religious Conviction: Many faiths hold that service to others or the community is a spiritual duty or a means of reaching higher spiritual states. Giving Back: Many people have in some way benefited from the work of an organization, and volunteer to give back. Social: Volunteering is a good way to meet a lot of different people from other walks of life and it is often easy to make new friends. It is the prevailing opinion that at least some and in many cases, all of the above applies. However, in my case volunteering is a combination of all the above, and provides a warm and gratifying feeling that is very difficult to describe. Moreover, it is very powerful and without the energy it provides, it would be highly improbable to continue helping others when sometimes you need help yourself.

### Past and Current Volunteer Experiences

Many seniors cannot volunteer to help others outside of our immediate families. Since retiring 15 years ago, my volunteerism has ranged from Neighborhood Crime Prevention Council (NCPC) to California Senior Leaders Alliance (CSLA). I volunteer because I care. I care about the seniors who need help navigating the communication systems and understanding the new technology. I care about the youth that lack good role models. I care about many of our young people having parents who do not understand education and that knowledge is power. I care that not enough seniors take advantage of opportunities to show youth the right way to succeed. I care because I know I make life better for many less fortunate and/or less informed individuals.

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"We make a living by what we get, we make a life by what we give."

- Sir Winston Churchill

## The Rewarding Experiences of a Senior Volunteer Continued from Cover

Finally, I care because God gave me the ability to help others, and I intend to continue as long as I am able. Actually effective volunteering takes work, at times, more than your old job. The difference, volunteering is not a job, it is a commitment to making things better. However, to be a good and effective volunteer you must have the full support of your family, because volunteering affects your entire family. So, without your family's full support, volunteering will not be an enjoyable and/or pleasing experience.

**What Our Neighborhoods, Communities, Cities, & Counties Need**  
Lend a hand, be that person that takes the expertise acquired through the years and use it to help solve problems. Lending a hand will help turn our country in a positive direction. Many intelligent seniors possess the knowledge and wisdom necessary to solve our most difficult problems. Therefore, we all should step forward and become the "Somebody" who is willing to do what "Anybody" intelligent should do to solve many of the problems that make our lives less enjoyable.

In addition, there is another vast advantage to volunteering, "Continuing Education." The more you volunteer, the more you know.

To illustrate, the following is my current "Continuing Education Curriculum":

- EOBA/Smartmoves Program-At-Risk Youth Education.
- Elmhurst Weed Committee-Neighborhood Restoration
- AC Advisory Commission on Aging -Olmstead & Older Americans Act
- EOBA Certified Farmers Market
- Central City East Redevelopment Project Area Committee-California Redevelopment Law
- Students Run Oakland Program-Marathon Training)
- Beat 34 NCPC-Crime Prevention
- ACTIA Citizens Advisory Committee -Monitor Use of Measure "B" Transportation Funds
- Commercial Zoning, Technical Advisory Group-Oakland General Plan/Commercial Zoning
- California Senior Leaders Program (California AB 840, - Single-Payer Health Care Program; & "Measuring American Poverty Act of 2008." - HR 6941 and S 3636. )
- California Senior Leaders

Alliance Steering Committee (Elder Economic Security Index (EESI); Baucus White Paper -- Healthcare Reform). Finally, I hope this article cause you to lend a hand, by sharing your wisdom and experience with those who need help with issues, somewhat difficult for them, but relatively simple for you. Because when you can spend 10 - 20 minutes settling a problem that might take someone less knowledgeable, a few days, you know, deep down you have done something very good for humanity. Volunteering is more than rewarding, gratifying, and good for your body, soul, and overall health; it is highly enlightening and educational. I know, because I am a VOLUNTEER.  
**Now, do you want to be a volunteer?**

## Getting Started in the World of Volunteering

Miriam Schiffman, Commissioner



### Ready to get started? Visit the websites below:

\*RSVP of San Francisco and Alameda Counties at [www.rsvpsf.org](http://www.rsvpsf.org), and

\*Volunteer Center of the East Bay at [www.helpnow.org](http://www.helpnow.org)

As Seniors, we have more time available to volunteer and a world of experience to offer. In addition to all the altruistic reasons, volunteering contributes to our own mental and physical well-being. It is equally important to find satisfaction in what you choose to do. If the “compensation” – i.e. satisfaction – is not sufficient, you will quickly be looking for some other volunteer spot.

There are many, many volunteer experiences that will be suitable to you. How do you find the right one(s)? Answering the following questions might help: Who, What, Where, When and How.

Who would you like to help? Who would you like to work alongside of? Perhaps you want to help those who are sick, or children, or teens or the homeless, or the homebound, or those living overseas. Would you want to work directly with those in need of help or for the organizations who serve them? What about little theater groups or animal shelters? Wanted to be a police man? Some local police departments make use of volunteers. Becoming active in a civic group to help a broader population – the League of Women Voters comes to

mind – is a form of volunteering.

What can you do or would like to do? What are the skills you already have to offer – clerical, artistic, working with people, speaking a foreign language, driving, cooking, gardening, building & repair skills or anything else you have done during your lifetime at work or at home? What, if any, might be your physical limitations? Would you like to learn something new? What have you always wanted to do, but never had time for? Not long ago, I answered an ad in the newspaper to volunteer at the native nursery in Joaquin Miller Park and learned all about propagating and planting native plants.

Where would you like to volunteer? Do you want to help in your own community or go somewhere new or further away? Commuting time and ease to get to and from the volunteer site is part of this “where” question. Your comfort level with the neighborhood and at the site is also important if this is to be a long-term commitment. Do you prefer or need to stay home? Call your local Senior Center and offer to make a daily

“check-up” or friendly visitor phone call to other seniors.

When are you available to volunteer and for how much time? Is it one day a month, every week for an hour or two, at night or only during the day, on weekends? Many places can accommodate you even if you are not available for a month or two. Or are you available only occasionally? I know several people who volunteer for one-time events such as street fairs. They can pick and choose when, where and in what they want to participate.

How do I get started? This is perhaps the easiest question of all to answer. The internet - try a search for volunteering in the community you live in. The newspaper - the Oakland Tribune has a long list of requests for volunteers on a weekly basis. Word of mouth – ask, let people know you are looking. The phone book – in the front of every book is a list of organizations and agencies and government offices. Call, ask. Walk into your nearest church, library or other center of activity and offer your services.

There is no lack of places to go to, things to do and ways to volunteer your time and help. Answering who, what, when and how may help you narrow down the field. And, thank you ....every little bit you do, helps.

## City of Fremont Human Services trains 27 Community Ambassadors for Seniors

Asha Chandra, Program Manager

The City of Fremont Human Services Department has a long history of partnering with community organizations in serving older adults. Yet there remain a significant number of seniors who are underserved due to: lack of awareness of services, physical isolation, inability to speak English, and cultural barriers. To help address these needs, the Department, along with six community organizations, developed the Community Ambassador Program for Seniors (CAPS), funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

The six community organizations include the Centerville Presbyterian Church, the Muslim Support Network, Sikhs Engaged in Volunteer Activities, the India Community Center and the Taiwanese Senior Help Association, and Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church.

In September 2007, twenty-seven (27) volunteer ambassadors attended a 32 hour training session developed by the Human Services Department, San Jose State University, Stanford Geriatric Education Center, and many community organizations. The training covered topics such as active listening, housing and transportation options, and qualification for benefits such as Social Security, Medicare, and Medi-Cal. In the future, there will be two more training sessions for new volunteer ambassadors.

CAPS is building capacity to serve seniors and their families in their own communities, in their own language, within their own cultural norms, and will do so where seniors live, worship, socialize and learn. "These ambassadors are the bridge between their seniors and the local re-

sources and services. They will serve their communities by making seniors and their families more aware and comfortable in accessing local services. Further, they will begin to share best practices amongst each other", stated Asha Chandra, Program Manager.

This initiative is part of the larger 5-year Robert Wood Johnson funded strategic project, Pathways to Positive Aging, a partnership of the City of Fremont Human Services Department and the Tri-City Elder Coalition, whose goal is to create a community where seniors will understand, choose and access culturally enriched, affordable services and opportunities that enhance their quality of life.

If you would like to become a volunteer ambassador, or for more information about the CAPS program, contact Asha Chandra at (510) 574-2055 or email [achandra@ci.fremont.ca.us](mailto:achandra@ci.fremont.ca.us)



## Seniors show up in droves for free health screenings in Hayward

Eric Kurhi  
The Daily Review

At Wednesday's (Sept. 10, 2008) annual Healthy Aging Fair at Centennial Hall, there definitely was such a thing as a free lunch, and was it ever popular.

A half-hour before the doors to the dining hall opened, the line of senior citizens was 75 deep and growing rapidly. They snaked down the hall of the bustling convention center, with shorter lines forming in the peripheries for the free health screenings, which are the real point of the event.

"It's like a job fair, but better," said Sandra Morris, who came in from Oakland to take advantage of the multitude of cost-free checkups. She had already had her ears inspected — "Turns out I do have a little bit of hearing loss," she said — and found herself taking off her shoes and kicking up her heels for podiatrist Dr. Michael Stein.

"Having everything all in one place for seniors to come to is terrific," Morris said. "We have an aging population, and these are very important services. I hope (the fair) continues and grows, and we see more events like this in other cities and counties."

The fair was started seven years ago in Oakland by the Alameda County Commission on Aging. It grew rapidly, and found a perfect home at Centennial Hall in its third year.

"This place, with all the little rooms off to the sides, is ideal," said commission Chairman Quincy Campbell, M.D.;M.P.H. who added that he expected the number of attendees to top 1,000 this year.

They come from all over Alameda County, Campbell said, from as far north as Oakland and Berkeley to as far east as Pleasanton and Livermore. Many are shuttled in from senior centers, while others arrive independently or via a free bus that runs to and from the Hayward BART station.

Campbell said the health screenings are the main draw.

"We used to have health-related lectures, but we found that most of the people who come do so for (the screenings) so that's what we concentrate on," he said.

There was a large selection of diagnostic tests available Wednesday. In addition to ears and feet, specialists were checking eyes, teeth, prostates, glucose levels, bone density, blood pressure, balance and body mass. Campbell said a lot of the attendees don't have a health care plan that would cover all the tests, while others, like Morris, just found the event convenient. Plus, there are the freebies. A vendor room hosts dozens of organizations and companies offering various services and products, many with promotional pens, pill bottles, medicine droppers, refrigerator magnets and the like all up for grabs, and grabbed they were.

"Everyone loves free stuff," said Campbell. "Sometimes they fight over it."

*This article first appeared in The Daily Review on September 12, 2008. Reprinted with permission.*



# Senior Information

Alameda County Senior Information Program



## Volunteer Tax Assistance

Franchise Tax Board and IRS

The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) and Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE) programs provide free assistance to individuals with limited income and/or over the age of 60 who need help in completing federal and

state income tax returns. Assistance is generally available from February 1 through April 15th and is provided at most senior centers and some library branches. There are several ways to find a location near

you: call the IRS at 1-800-829-1040, check the State Franchise Tax Board website at [www.ftb.ca.gov](http://www.ftb.ca.gov), call AARP at 1-888-227-7669, or check their website at [www.aarp.org](http://www.aarp.org).

## 2009 SSI and CAPI Benefit Increase

In January 2009, the cost of living adjustments for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Cash Assistance Program for Immigrants (CAPI) will go into effect. California supplements SSI benefits with State Supplemental Payment (SSP), however the 2008-2009 state budget permanently suspended the cost of living adjustment for SSP. SSI is a federal program that provides a monthly cash benefit to eligible seniors, blind and disabled people who meet income and resource criteria. CAPI provides benefits for aged, blind or disabled immigrants who are not eligible for SSI. In January 2009, SSI maximum payment amounts for a single aged or

disabled person will be \$907 per month and for a blind individual \$972 per month. A qualified couple may receive \$1,579 per month and if the spouses are both blind, they may receive \$1,806 per month. For persons living in housing without cooking facilities and those residing in Residential Care Facilities, benefits can be higher. To be eligible for SSI, one cannot have more than \$2,000 in liquid assets if single, and no more than \$3,000 for a couple. Eligible persons may have a burial plot, auto, owner occupied home, and up to \$1,500 set aside for burial (per eligible person). In certain instances, one can work and still receive benefits. Along with a cash allowance, those

receiving SSI/SSP receive medical coverage under Medi-Cal. However, SSI recipients in California are not eligible for food stamps. CAPI benefits for individuals are generally \$10 less than the allocation under SSI/SSP. Similarly, CAPI benefits for couples are generally \$20 less than SSI/SSP. However, CAPI recipients may be eligible for both Medi-Cal and food stamps. Since these benefit programs are complex, please contact Social Security for SSI information at 1-800-772-1213. For CAPI information call 1-800-648-0954. You may also contact the Area Agency on Aging at 1-800-510-2020 for general information.

## DTV Transition Reminder: February 17, 2009

The digital television (DTV) transition refers to the switch from analog to digital broadcast television. When the transition is completed on February 17, 2009, all U.S. full-power TV stations will stop broadcasting in analog format and will transmit only in

digital instead. Consumers who subscribe to pay television services (for example: cable, satellite) will continue to receive broadcast television programs through these subscription services. Consumers who do not have subscription TV services

will have two choices, purchase a digital TV or get a converter box for each of their analog TVs. \$40 subsidy coupons are available to help consumers pay for converter boxes. For more information call 1-888-DTV-2009 (voice) or 1-877-530-2634 (TTY).

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

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### **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)

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## **Calendar Of Events**



### **African American Health Summit 2009**

The Bay Area Black United Fund will present the African American Health Summit, on February 6-7, 2009 at the Oakland Marriott City Center, 1001 Broadway. The Summit includes a Health Conference on Friday, February 6th, and a Free Health Expo on Saturday, February 7, 2009. The Expo will feature health screenings, cooking demonstrations, exercise activities, lectures, performances, exhibitors, and the Senior Pavilion Station. For details on how to register for the conference, or to volunteer call 510-763-7270 or visit [www.babuf.org](http://www.babuf.org).

