

Bill Schaser

I don't know if you've noticed but Humboldt County is aging – gracefully I'd like to add - but we're still getting older. One in 5 of us are 60 and over now and we'll be one in 4 in 10 years. Maintaining our independence and quality of life is something we all cherish. One of the many things I love about living on the North coast is the initiative our citizens take to maintain that quality of life. Baby Boomers and others are stepping up, looking "old age" in the face and realizing it's time to work on creating the future they want.

Backed by hundreds of people and the Area 1 Agency on Aging, volunteers have established a Redwood Coast Village Steering Committee. The goal is to create a social network that enables our older population to stay active, connected, and independent and allow them to grow old in their own homes.

This Village – not a physical place – is a community of people helping people. Opportunities to contribute to society, as well as to receive help, is the focus. Rather than a person's social life shrinking with age, Village membership embraces what each person has to offer. Tasks that can be simple for some can be daunting for others. By putting together a network of members, we can solve many problems and create opportunities for everyone. I'm always amazed at the skill sets that exist in our little slice of heaven here on the North coast and the willingness of Humboldters to get involved if asked.

Do you need help learning how to use the app on your new smart phone so your grand children start referring to you as their hip grandparent? There are people who will show you.

Would you like to take someone out to one of our many farmers markets so they can buy locally grown fresh produce? There is someone who would love to go.

Have you just had surgery and need someone to walk your dog or change a light bulb in your high ceiling Victorian? ~~That's an easy task~~ *Those are* that someone would be happy to do.

There are hundreds of ways you can help and be helped when you're a member of a Village.

In 2002 a group of seniors in Massachusetts faced life's challenges by forming the Beacon Hill Village and since then over 200 have sprung up around the country with many more under development including our own Redwood Coast Village. Members call

one number to gain access to programs and services that were otherwise not available in their community.

Nationwide, the average cost of membership is \$35 per month per adult, depending on member benefits, number of volunteers and/or, paid staff, and other organizational expenses. That's a very small price to pay to stay at home and **age in place**.

As seniors we need to stay active, stay connected and stay independent but we also need to stay tuned in as we continue to develop our local Village. To learn more and sign up go to www.redwoodcoastvillage.org or join the Redwood Coast Village digital mailing list at www.a1aa.org Remember this is just the beginning of making Humboldt County an even healthier, safer and fun place in which to grow older gracefully. Redwood Coast Village will offer services to people 50 years and older.