

3550





**NANCY MOSS**  
Editor



**BETTIANNE GOETZ**  
President



**Front Cover**  
"The Subject Was Roses," Paula Carlson's watercolor, displayed in the Rose City Exhibition, Oregon Society of Artists, 1922.



**Back Cover**  
An abandoned wagon wheel in the small, high-desert town of Frenchglen, about 50 miles south of Burns.  
Photo: Nevton Dunn

The Jan. 16 forum on the Resident Assistance Fund led by Mirabella Executive Director Sharon Van Eaton was both wide-ranging and precise. Residents asked thoughtful questions and received detailed replies.

Luckily, the ample funds reported by the foundation advisory committee mean that even as it pays out each month to a needy resident, we have time to consider our situation and continue to ask questions.

In one case Sharon understated the situation. Discussing the expense of a resident needing financial support, Sharon mentioned a monthly cost of \$10,000–\$12,000. A number of residents covering expenses of a spouse on the health care floor say that \$15,000 is the usual monthly cost.

In answering a question about fees on the health center, Sharon said Mirabella would cover a resident's basic expense, like a haircut, but not more exotic processes like an expensive dye job. A friend who lived in the health center complained that the briefs he required were an extra in his monthly fee. A resident with a spouse on the health care floor has said that wipes were listed as an extra. The word "basic" can shift in its meaning.

Sharon assured her audience that supporting a resident who could not pay their bills would be no more than 1% of our monthly fee — but the base for that bill may exceed the figure she mentioned.

It was good to hear Sharon say that PRS had not ruled out giving out grants to its facilities if it had excess revenue. Pro Publica lists PRS's 2024 revenue as \$26.3 million and its expenses as \$23.4 million. It's not clear if that counts as excess. Sharon said that Mirabella was having a better year financially than it had experienced during Covid, which may mean a smaller fee increase. Both comments bode well for our future.

Sharon offered to meet with individual residents to answer questions. The January forum was a promising start to unraveling a complex situation.

## A NEW YEAR, A SHARED FUTURE

As we begin the New Year, 2026, I would like to extend my warmest wishes to every resident in our community. A new year always brings with it a sense of hope — an opportunity to reflect on where we've been and to look ahead to what is before us. It is my favorite part of the holiday season.

This coming year offers us the chance to continue building a community rooted in kindness, respect and looking out for one another. Our building is more than just a place to live; Mirabella is a home filled with life experiences and wisdom. Each of us contributes something unique, and together we create an environment where neighbors become friends.

In the year ahead, we can look forward to continued activities, opportunities to connect and moments that bring us together — whether through social gatherings, shared meals or simple conversations in the elevator. These everyday connections strengthen our sense of belonging and remind us that none of us is alone.

The new year is also a time to embrace small joys and simple pleasures: a good book, a favorite hobby, laughter with friends or a peaceful morning. When challenges arise, we face them best when we support one another with patience and understanding.

On behalf of RAMP (Resident Association of Mirabella Portland) I thank you for your involvement, your care for this community and your willingness to lend a helping hand when needed. Your presence makes this building a welcoming and caring place.

Let's all celebrate 2026. Resolutions not required.

## ~ The Inside Scoop ~

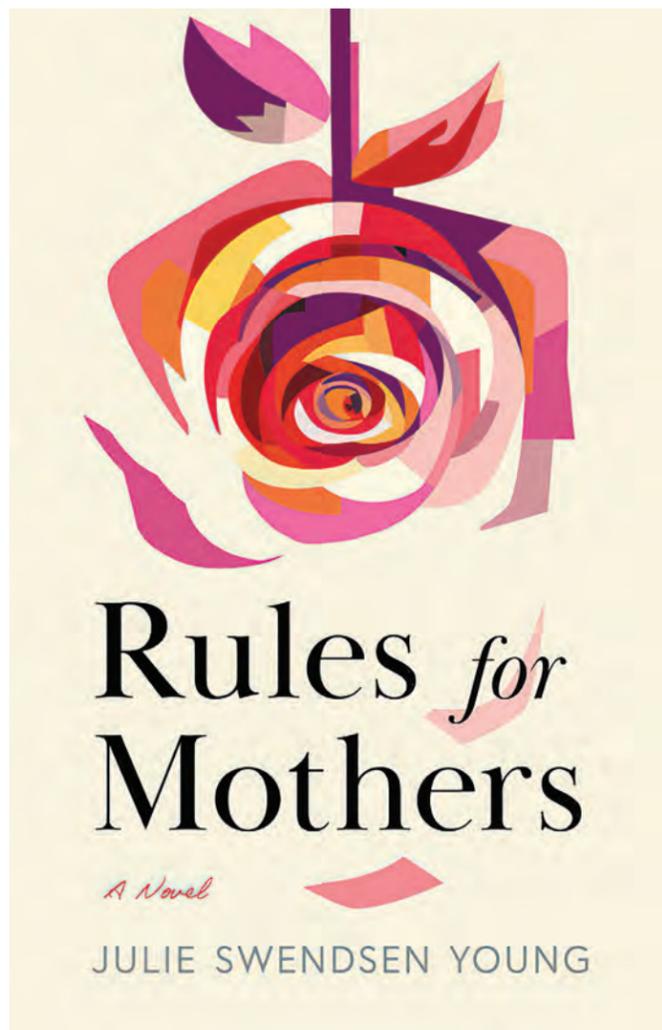
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## Julie Young Novel to be Published

Set in 1980s Portland, "Rules for Mothers" by Julie Young explores a woman's search for self-fulfillment amid the demands of young children. Pre-orders of Julie's book at Amazon, Barnes and Noble and [Bookshop.org](http://Bookshop.org) are available through her website [julieswendsenyoung.com](http://julieswendsenyoung.com). Julie's book will be published by Hybrid Publishing on April 14.

## Mirabella Players Choose Program

The **Mirabella Players** will present three plays in a summer program: "He Says, She Says," by Rosemary Hole; "How Nice of You to Ask," by Rich Rubin and "Getting By," by Nancy Moss. "How Nice of You to Ask" was produced in a past Fertile Ground Festival, and "Getting By" had a staged reading in 2024 by Twilight Theater in Portland.

## St. James Hosts Photographers

**St. James Lutheran Church** will display a Mirabella Photography exhibition in May and June, with a reception on May 17 at 6 p.m.

The selection process, started in February, will determine the number of photographers in the show.

St. James Lutheran Church is located at 1315 Park Ave., Portland, a short walk from a streetcar stop.

## Art Committee: Recent Acquisition

**Eric Wiegardt's watercolor** "Red House," on the fourth floor, is the art committee's most recent acquisition. It was a gift from Paula Carlson.



Photo: Richard Mounts

## HB 3838: A Threat to Mirabella

**It's ba-ack.** Defeated last year, HB 3838 has returned. If passed, an appointed board would determine minimum working standards for "home and community based" services in Oregon. Mirabella Executive Director Sharon Van Eaton says that Mirabella has 50-60 caregivers that would fall into that category.

An expansion of what the board decides are "minimum working standards" would therefore hurt Mirabella. "We already have oversight in all the areas this bill is going to address," says Sharon. The Health Center has both state and federal oversight. Considering all the regulation we face, she asks "What is the point of the bill?"

Salaries and benefits are Mirabella's largest budget item, consuming "48-52% of the operating budget," Sharon adds. If the cost of caregivers increases, it will spread to other areas, like ripples in a pond.

Because "we have to have fair and equitable wages across the board," if the salaries and benefits of aides are increased, Sharon would have to consider adding to others'. She would have to look at employees' functions and add to workers whose job descriptions are equivalent. "Knowing from history how wage compensation has hit," Sharon estimates that changes brought about by HB 3838 would total \$700,000 to \$800,000 a year.

And the board given this power is appointed, not elected. Kristin Milligan, head of the senior advocacy group Leading Age Oregon, writes that "mission-driven providers already operate on thin margins; this bill imposes unfunded mandates that will threaten their financial sustainability."

Those of us who have heard Director of Human Resources Renee Chan and former Director of Facility Services Kent Liebelt talk about the challenges involved in maintaining a full staff believe what Milligan says. We may recall dining in the Bistro and being told they are one server short; there may be a wait.

Last year, contributing to Mirabella's efforts to defeat HB 3838, three Mirabella residents wrote letters detailing their opposition to HB 3838. One resident of a CCRC was able to testify. Residents who want to express their feelings about this bill, either by writing or attendance, should contact Sharon.

— Nancy Moss

## Security Company Chosen

**Lucinda Klicker**, security outreach coordinator for the South Waterfront Community Association, says that at its Jan. 15 meeting the association chose Echelon Protective Services to cover the South Waterfront.

Echelon has worked with River Place and the Pearl in the past as well as Zidell where, Klicker says, it "reduced incidents from six to zero per month."

Echelon's services include a hotline where anyone can call and get a response in nine minutes or less as well as patrols, either driving or on foot. Building security guards can use body cams to identify threats.

Echelon's proposal, however, requires a buy-in from all the different buildings in the South Waterfront. The next step, Klicker says, is getting a proposal from Echelon that meets the needs of the neighborhood. Building managers have to "see what the price tag is and take it to the rental units," which have not been involved so far.

Echelon was asked for a proposal by the end of January. Then Lucinda would contact building managers, with Echelon helping to "flesh out ideas and answer questions."

It's up to the neighborhood to accept or reject Echelon's proposal. Building managers may prefer a scaled-down system with only a hotline, which could "give people a sense of security," Klicker says.

Mirabella's one recent security event, when a staff member's car was followed into the parking garage and the staff member confronted the other driver, serves to remind residents to look after themselves when using an entrance, to take an extra minute to look back and help Mirabella stay secure.

— Nancy Moss

## Residents Support Public Art

**The Oregon Arts Commission (OAC)** is celebrating the 50th anniversary of Percent for Art, a law passed in 1975 stating that 1% of a public project would be spent on art. As an employee of the OAC, Mirabella resident Terri Hopkins did research into the merits of the legislation, served on the OAC's steering committee and lobbied for the support of art in public buildings and squares.

"More than 900 artists are part of this collection," said Amy Lewin, current OAC head. Most of the art selected is located on outdoor sites. The indoor collection includes three of Mirabella resident Arletha Ryan's woodblock prints; the City of Portland owns her "Steel Bridge." The September 2022 issue of 3550 features Arletha's prints of Portland's bridges. ([www.3550magazine.org/backissues](http://www.3550magazine.org/backissues))



Photo: Robert French

ICE officers fire flash bang grenades at protesters in front of the ICE building.

## Attacked by ICE

The two January ICE protests were very different.

The Saturday Labor Against Ice protest's Sunday aftermath was more obviously violent, as the above photo shows.

But that violence was mostly targeted after being provoked. A few protesters made the choice to take the risk and cross the line.

In the Saturday Labor Against ICE rally, ICE didn't target anyone. They targeted everyone. Indiscriminately and with no provocation.

And that kind of violence affected everyone, turning people legally expressing themselves into unwilling, scared, angry victims.

A real cross section showed up for the Saturday rally: families, some with kids, union members, cyclists, old people, a few with canes or walkers.

Overall, union-based and family-friendly — at least at first.

With no warning and no provocation, a few agents suddenly came onto the roof of the ICE building and began firing gas canisters and shooting off loud flash devices.

To make the chaos more real, think of three groups of people: First, seniors: My wife Joy and I were tear gassed. It was scary and painful, but with some early help we managed to walk back to Mirabella.

Who knows how other less mobile old folks managed to navigate the crowd to outrace the gas?

Union people: how different it must have felt from picket lines where rules are so predictable.

The kids: The Oregonian has a video of a little girl near us sitting on the ground eyes red and watering, saying, "Owie, it hurts." What lingers with me most is the vision of that stunned, crying little girl in a pink sweatshirt covered with butterflies.

They tear gassed our children. And our grandchildren.

— Neal Milner

# Foundation's Role and the Resident Assistance Fund

By SHARON VAN EATON

Thank you to everyone who joined me at the recent town hall to discuss questions and concerns about Mirabella's Resident Assistance Fund and long-term financial support. I appreciate the thoughtful dialogue and the opportunity to provide additional context.

Mirabella is a continuing care retirement community (CCRC), also known as a life plan community. At the heart of this model is long-term financial planning, designed to balance resident security with the financial sustainability of our community.

### Health Center Costs and Supplemental Fees

One of the questions at the town hall had to do with Health Center costs, which are included in the monthly fees, and "other fees." Room and board fees cover staffing and core services. Additional fees may apply for ancillary items such as medications, briefs, wipes and other medical or personal care supplies. These costs vary based on individual needs and are standard across life plan communities. Please refer to the budget town hall presentation for a breakdown of room and board by level of care.

### The Mirabella Foundation and Donor Oversight

Much of our discussion centered on the Mirabella Foundation. The foundation was created with one clear purpose: to support Mirabella's mission and enhance the lives of our residents and staff. Over the years, it has grown into a deeply valued resource within our community, made possible by the generosity of our donors.

Because the foundation operates under IRS regulations, all donations are restricted by donor intent. These funds cannot be used at management's discretion. Instead, they must be used exactly as designated by the donor.

Oversight of the foundation is intentionally multi-layered. Fundraising efforts are guided by the Foundation Advisory Committee (FAC), which may forward recommendations to the Resident Foundation Committee (RFC). The RFC, which is a Mirabella Portland board of directors committee, ensures that all expenditures align with donor intent, community needs and regulatory requirements. This structure exists to promote transparency, accountability and fiscal responsibility.

### The Resident Assistance Fund and Our Commitment

At the center of the foundation's work is the Resident Assistance Fund (RAF), which exists to support residents who



Sharon Van Eaton, Mirabella executive director

outlive their financial resources through no fault of their own. Having a fund like this is common across life plan communities. At Mirabella, historically fewer than 1% of residents have required RAF support, and we expect this proportion to remain consistent in the future based on industry trends.

Our Residency and Care Agreement outlines the circumstances under which financial assistance may be granted. In general terms, to be eligible residents must demonstrate that their assets were depleted through unforeseen circumstances, not through improper asset transfers or financial misrepresentation. Residents who meet these conditions are not asked to leave the community when they exhaust their resources.

When assistance is granted, it's important to clarify that Mirabella does not cover 100% of residents' expenses if they continue to have income. If a resident receives income such as Social Security, that income is applied toward the cost of care, and Mirabella covers the remaining balance.

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### Admissions and Financial Vetting

Before a resident joins Mirabella, we complete a comprehensive financial review to ensure long-term readiness for residency. This vetting process is conducted by Mirabella itself, not by Pacific Retirement Services (PRS).

Prospective residents provide detailed financial disclosures, which we model using tools designed specifically for CCRCs. These projections account for inflation, contract types and potential transitions between independent living, assisted living and the Health Center. Medical conditions are never used to deny admission, though known care needs are appropriately factored into financial planning.

When applicants do not meet the financial threshold, we may decline admission or encourage consideration of a more affordable apartment. While these decisions are difficult, they are necessary to ensure we can honor our lifelong commitments to residents.

### When Residents Outlive their Assets

Even with careful vetting, unexpected situations, for instance a sudden illness requiring extended skilled nursing care, can significantly change financial projections. When this occurs, we conduct additional reviews, including an evaluation of spending patterns, confirmation of original disclosures and review of tax returns, financial statements and other relevant information.

Before RAF support is considered, any refundable portion of a resident's entrance fee is fully applied. RAF support then requires further review and final approval by the Mirabella Portland board. While the number of residents who rely on the RAF is small, those who do are often in higher levels of care, where costs escalate quickly.

If RAF funds are depleted after entrance fees are fully drawn down, the cost of care shifts to Mirabella's operating budget. These costs are absorbed alongside other operational expenses and are addressed during our annual budgeting process. Monthly fees are influenced by many factors, including staffing, utilities, insurance, occupancy levels and insurance reimbursement delays or denials.

### PRS Management Fees and Grant Support

Another question raised was why the PRS management fee does not cover the cost of residents who outlive their funds. The PRS management fee is structured as 5% of Mirabella's gross revenue and is intended to cover operational support services such as but not limited to accounting, IT, marketing and media and recruitment. Because the fee is tied to gross revenue, the amount reimbursed to PRS naturally fluctuates as occupancy rises or falls.

If Mirabella were to bring these support services in-house, we would most likely experience a higher and more fixed cost structure. Based on industry benchmarks, internalizing these functions could cost approximately 6.5% of gross revenue, with limited flexibility to adjust as occupancy changes. The current PRS model allows Mirabella to benefit from shared expertise and economies of scale while maintaining cost variability aligned with revenue performance.

It is also important to note that PRS has, at times, deferred management fees to support Mirabella's success, particularly

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**"The safeguards and processes  
... reflect best practices  
across life plan communities  
nationwide."**

— Sharon Van Eaton

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during challenging periods such as recovery from the Covid-era economy. Those deferred fees are now being repaid on a quarterly basis.

Questions also arose about whether PRS might provide additional grants in the future. While that is possible, it is difficult to predict. Past grants have come from rebates and development-related fees, such as those associated with Mirabella ASU.

### Balancing Mission and Financial Sustainability

The safeguards and processes I've described are not unique to Mirabella — they reflect best practices across life plan communities nationwide. While cases requiring financial assistance are rare, they carry real financial impact, which is why our admissions process and ongoing oversight are so thorough.

The Mirabella Foundation exists to support our mission while protecting donor intent and ensuring the long-term health of our community. The Resident Assistance Fund represents commitment from residents to residents facing genuine hardship.

In closing, I want to sincerely thank everyone who attended the town hall and contributed such thoughtful questions and respectful dialogue. These conversations matter, and I appreciate the care and engagement that so many of you bring to our community. I look forward to continuing this discussion and working together to ensure Mirabella remains a place rooted in transparency, trust and mutual respect. ●



*"This is money—get ready to worry about it for the rest of your life."*

## Analysis: How to Provide Resident Assistance

By JOHN FOREMAN

Pacific Retirement Services, Inc. provides management services for Mirabella Portland. It is the sole shareholder of the Mirabella Portland and even has the authority to make certain decisions on behalf of Mirabella Portland. The management of the Mirabella Portland/Pacific Retirement Services, Inc., sells admission to the Mirabella Portland community in part by assuring prospective residents that no resident of Mirabella will have to leave Mirabella because they have outlived their financial resources through no fault of their own. What they do not tell prospective residents is that if they become a resident, management will expect them to pay not only their own fees and costs but to pay the fees and costs of those residents who PRS/Mirabella management decides cannot pay their own fees and costs through no fault of their own.

Fairness suggests that Mirabella/PRS management needs to acknowledge that they, not the other residents, are contractually responsible for preserving the status of residents of the Mirabella Portland who are no longer able to pay their fees and costs through no fault of their own. They should provide to all residents open and transparent information on an ongoing basis about the status of any residents who may need or who are then receiving assistance — how many are in need of assistance then, how much assistance has been needed in the past and what is the projected future need for

assistance. They also need to provide open and transparent information about the status of the Resident Assistance Fund which Mirabella/PRS expects will make the payments. There is no "confidentiality reason" why disclosing this information cannot be provided. It can and should be done without providing information about individual residents.

In addition, it is misleading to suggest that any financial support must come dollar for dollar from revenue of monthly resident fees and costs. PRS has made at least two prior contributions to Mirabella and almost \$270,000 of that money ended up in the Resident Assistance Fund for use as support for residents who needed assistance because they outlived their financial resources through no fault of their own.

We are now told that Mirabella and PRS are doing well financially. Mirabella/PRS management should take advantage of this financial good time and pledge that it will contribute to the payment of fees and costs for residents who are not able to pay through no fault of their own. The Mirabella/PRS contributions should come not from the general fund of resident monthly fees and costs that pays for the operation of Mirabella Portland, but from the portion that would otherwise go to pay bonuses and salary increases for management, and/or from the "Base Management Fee

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equal to at least five percent (5%) of Net Cash Operating Revenue for the Community” annually paid by Mirabella to PRS. (Quoted language is from page one of the Mirabella Portland Independent Living Residence and Care Agreement signed by all residents of Mirabella.) Neither source of funds from Mirabella/PRS should require an increase in monthly fees for residents of Mirabella.

Management, after all, is almost exclusively responsible for making the decisions that bring into the community those who ultimately are not able to pay, and who make the decisions to raise fees and costs that cause some to be unable to pay. PRS says it should be paid at least five percent of the annual Net Cash Operating Revenue because it claims special expertise in providing services like “risk management” to Mirabella. Some members of management are paid very handsome compensation because they are responsible for applying that expertise and making the ultimate decisions about who becomes a resident and who does not. They earn their salaries when their decisions are correct. They should be willing to accept responsibility when their decisions are not.

Mirabella/PRS should be willing to enter a partnership with the residents who are required to pay their fees and costs to support those who cannot. If the management will

contribute from the salary and bonus pool and the PRS management fee to an adequately funded endowment and provide open and transparent information about the process, the residents should commit to raising funds for the same purpose through voluntary contributions and fundraising activities. The amounts needed and raised will undoubtedly vary from year to year based upon the status of the endowment fund and external factors like the Covid pandemic.

The goal should be to develop:

1. **A Mirabella community that is selective** about its membership so that no one who is offered the opportunity to live at Mirabella is a significant risk to later be put in the position of being unable to pay their fees and costs through no fault of their own;
2. **A Mirabella community that cares** for its members who do qualify who despite everyone’s best efforts find themselves unable to pay through no fault of their own;
3. **A Mirabella management that works openly** and cooperatively with the resident community; and
4. **A Mirabella management that controls its costs** without sacrificing Mirabella’s unique amenities so that the Mirabella community can be as diverse as possible because it is financially accessible to as wide a range of the community-at-large as possible. ●

# Super-Agers: The Recipe

By LOUISE DUNN



Laura K. Byerly, a clinician educator and geriatrician at Oregon Health and Science University (OHSU), will present a five-part series on super-aging at Mirabella beginning March 3. Each Tuesday will address a different topic: eating, experiment, ease into sleep, exercise and engagement. I recently posed 10 questions to Dr. Byerly about the series and aging. In the discussion below, LD is Louise Dunn; LKB is Laura K. Byerly.

worsening arthritis. He made the most beautiful scarves and taught me never to assume what can or can’t be learned, or who would love to learn a new craft or skill.

**LD: When you think of people who stay sharp, active and engaged in their 80s, 90s and beyond, what traits or habits show up again and again?**

LKB: Exercise, social engagement and a positive outlook on aging and life. Particularly the last component — even people who have suffered loss, trauma and hardship in their life will age better if they are able to find a way to look forward with hope rather than backward with distress.

**LD: Some people assume it’s too late to change, that we are on a downward spiral. What do you say to someone who thinks improvement at their age isn’t possible?**

LKB: More and more data come out each year proving that it is never too late to improve your health. I use recently published articles to teach our internal medicine residents about incorporating healthy aging coaching in their primary

**LD: You work with older adults every day. What’s something you wish everyone understood about aging?**

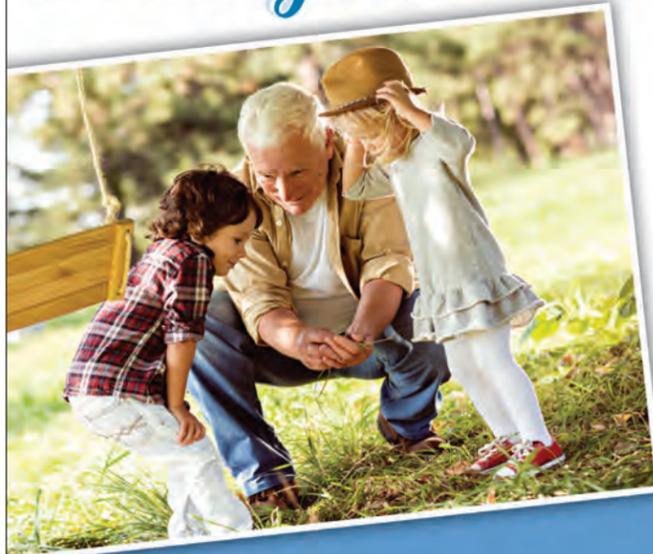
LKB: People sometimes assume that changes are just normal. Often a healthcare team can improve your quality of life by treating conditions that people presume to be “normal aging,” like bladder leakage or constipation. Let us know what you’re experiencing so we can help.

**LD: Can you share something that surprised you, something your patients taught you about growing older?**

LKB: One of my patients, a military veteran in his 70s, took up crocheting in his 60s to help his fingers stay nimble despite

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care practice. The residents are always impressed that there's evidence that quitting smoking at any age will reduce risk of dementia — that it's never too late for their patients to quit smoking and help their cognition. I'd say to the person who thinks improvement isn't possible, "There's no harm in trying to change, and there's known risk in keeping things the same. The odds are in your favor to make a change, and those are better odds than Vegas."

**LD: In March, we are having a five-part series on super-aging at Mirabella, every Tuesday at 1 p.m. What do you hope will be the outcome?**

LKB: I hope that people walk away knowing how to be the change outside Mirabella. I want them to teach their family members, their friends, their online blogging communities, random people in the grocery store, all about super-aging. Our team will never be able to reach as many people as we'd like. I consider the Mirabella attendees of this series as a new education force who can disseminate knowledge even more broadly than we can.

**LD: Can you give us an example of a misconception about exercise, eating or sleep that you and your team will address in the series?**

LKB: "I shouldn't exercise at my age. I'm just so tired during the day, and it'll make it worse." We'll teach you how exercise will GIVE you more energy and help your life. There are a beautiful fitness center and pool at Mirabella, the March Wellness gym across the street and amazing walking paths and trails around the South Waterfront — something for everyone.

**LD: What's a new or emerging finding about aging that feels especially promising — or exciting — to you?**

LKB: The impact of identifying, and intervening upon, hearing impairment. Many studies prove a link between hearing loss and dementia, depression and even Parkinson's disease. I'm so excited that we're seeing published data showing that

treating hearing loss with hearing aids can mitigate some of these risks. I hope this knowledge will also encourage more interventions that reduce hearing damage in younger individuals (no more blasting headphones at full volume).



Dr. Laura K. Byerly

Photo: OHSU

**LD: Social connection keeps showing up as a major predictor of health. There is a lot of opportunity for social interaction here at Mirabella. What can you tell us about how social connection interacts with our physical health?**

LKB: You should come hear my talk on March 31. Wouldn't want to spoil it for anyone!

**LD: If someone wants to age well but feels overwhelmed by the countless recommendations and too many "shoulds," where's the simplest place to begin?**

LKB: Data shows you can begin anywhere. If getting 200 more steps a day is your goal, do that. If doing a meditation exercise at night to fall asleep is your priority, that's your best place to start. There is no universal "best" first step other than the one you are most interested in.

In fact, in one study older adults in Seattle were enrolled into a coaching program for specific dementia risk factors, such as high blood pressure or depression. But they could choose completely different risk factors to work on with their coach and still saw improvement in their brain health. If you don't have a specific goal and are open to suggestions, though, I'd suggest adding 20 minutes of physical activity to your weekly routine, then gradually work your way to 150 total minutes a week.

**LD: Finally, if you could send a message to every Mirabella resident on their birthday, what would you want them to hear?**

LKB: Have as much fun as you can, as long as it doesn't land you on the news.

**LD: Fun is what Mirabella is all about. Thank you for the insights. It makes me want to make some changes in my life right away.**



Walrus in the Arctic's Svalbard Archipelago.

Photo: Johanna King

## My Perfect Day

By JOHANNA KING

I have had many perfect days. A recent one occurred about five years ago. I was on a small, rusty Swedish boat in the Svalbard Archipelago in the Arctic. One day I saw two creatures that I thought I might die without ever seeing — a walrus and a polar bear.

We saw two congregations of walrus, one a small group on an ice floe and the other a huge group of at least

30 on a small island and in the nearby icy water. They were loud, smelly, very close to us, glorious.

There were two babies among the crowd; it was amazing to watch the mothers protecting them from being crushed by the other huge creatures all around. I felt so connected to their world: community, love, parenthood, communication.

I thought it was perfect. ●

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When she was a kid, Peg Foulk got in trouble for going to the movies. Some she wanted to see more than once and stayed through a second showing. Fortunately, she could walk to the movies from home. Her love of movies hasn't waned. She came to Mirabella because we have great movies.

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## Resident Profile:

### Peg Foulk: Mirabella Movie Maven

By PAMELA LINDHOLM-LEVY

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#### **A movie favorite: "How the West Was Won."**

Peg was born in Newport News, Virginia, to a mostly Irish family. Her mother was first-generation and her father was what she calls "half-first generation." Her father worked in an aircraft carrier shipyard. Peg was the baby of the family, with an eight-year gap between Peg and her next sibling. She remembers being lonely when others were at school. The family remained close and small. She has a niece in Portland and a nephew in Seattle, but no children.

#### **First Movie: "The Wizard of Oz" on TV.**

Peg grew up in a planned community called Hilton Village two blocks from the James River. It was English style, with a church on each corner of the town square. One of the homes had been novelist William Styron's childhood home. Peg used to babysit in that house.

#### **Movie story: Peg was 10 when "Psycho" was released.**

Peg's mother read the ratings in the Catholic Virginian and would not allow 10-year-old Peg to see it (mothers know best). So Peg was excited when she was in high school and it was to be shown on TV, but it was cancelled nationwide when Valerie Percy, daughter of then-Sen. Charles Percy, was murdered by an intruder at their family home in suburban Chicago.

From 1968 to 1972 Peg attended Mary Washington, the

women's branch of the University of Virginia. The main campus did not admit women until 1972, the fall after her graduation. Peg's major was American studies, part of her lifelong interest in history.

The school, in Fredericksburg, was named for George Washington's mother, who lived there in a home he purchased for her after she was widowed. Wearing appropriate historical clothing, Peg was a tour guide in the home during her school years.

Peg took trips to Washington, D.C., to participate in peace marches, a feature of her college years.

#### **Movie memory: She will never forget "Easy Rider," in 1972.**

During her undergraduate years, Peg also worked in social services, making home visits in Black neighborhoods to get residents signed up for various programs. As much as she loved history, social work appealed to her in the real world. Consequently, she looked for a good school with a good social work and mental health master's program, but at the same time she wanted it to be in an interesting place. She enrolled in Boston College in 1973.

#### **Movie memory: "Harold and Maude," 1973.**

In grad school Peg met her future husband, a fellow graduate student. They married after getting their degrees and stayed on in Massachusetts for 16 years. Peg worked for the state health department, then at a subacute hospital, at a hospice

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**Peg found that she leaned  
toward hospital work.  
One of her goals ... was for  
"people to let you in."**

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agency then back to the hospital. As AIDS was being recognized, she began working for the Cambridge visiting-nurse association. In an office was an historic photo of a nurse in bloomers riding a bike to her home visits. Here, Peg worked with a diverse population, from the homeless to Harvard professors.

She found that she leaned toward hospital work. One of

*(Continued on page 16)*



Photo: Robert French

Peg Foulk

(Continued from page 14)

her goals, as she stated, was for “people to let you in.” In other words, open up and let you help them in the most difficult of times. She never worked in the foster care system.

When the couple moved back to Virginia she worked in various capacities at the Portsmouth Naval hospital, one of the three major naval hospitals in the country, for active duty service members and their families, plus retirees.

Peg is grateful she was able to be part of so many lives at critical times and in roles that were different from that of doctors and nurses. Social work provided personal relationships amid sometimes-complex medical treatment in a large system. Peg saw first-hand how the changes in medical care with mergers, managed care and decreased length of stay impacted patients, and how social workers provided advocacy at all stages of change.

Peg’s marriage didn’t last, and she began to look for a whole new world. She found it in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Its blend of Native American, Hispanic and white cultures clicked with her interests. She was working for the feds already and followed that path to the VA Hospital, where she stayed until retirement.

Retirement opened up more new worlds for travel in the U.S., but eventually Peg discovered classes at Oxford and took one on Queen Elizabeth I. Peg calls it “quite an experience.” She found Cambridge more her cup of tea and attended summer sessions for three years. She lived in the dorm and had meals with an international group. Costs were reasonable and weekend trips to London and other places easy.

Covid ended her international travels. But before that, she went to Florence, Moscow and St. Petersburg. She had an adventure in Mexico City after getting separated from her tour group. Her Spanish was minimal, and her attempt to say she had missed her bus came out in translation as “no rubbish.” Another tour leader added Peg to a French group that was going to the same place Peg’s group was scheduled for but wasn’t there. Peg stayed with the French the rest of the day, but then she was back on her own. She’s not sure how she did it, because she has a



Three-year-old Peg, dressed appropriately by her mother, rides a pony at Hilton Village.

poor sense of direction. Afraid to take a cab, she “walked like I knew where I was going and made it back to the B&B.” She remembered the name because it was the same as that of someone she knew.

Albuquerque drew visitors too. When her brother’s widowed partner came to visit, his biggest interest was seeing the site of the scene in which a prominent character in “Breaking Bad” is murdered.

In retirement years Peg also took classes at the University of New Mexico and especially enjoyed their offerings in history. She established student scholarships in music and medieval studies that included Viking and Old Irish history.

When it was time to leave Albuquerque, Peg moved to Portland to be with her niece and close to her nephew. She looked at three retirement communities and chose Mirabella based on the quality of movies.

Does she have a favorite? Not really. She has a sort of top ten with “To Kill a Mockingbird” close to the top. She’s a fan of the first two Godfather films. What does she avoid? Horror most of all. Sci-fi is a close second. She remembers when her hometown theater played what she calls “big” movies like “Ben Hur.” and “The Ten Commandments.” Maybe she just didn’t like Charlton Heston. At any rate they weren’t her favorites, nor are superhero films, and they could be skipped during the summer movie program in Virginia when she was in elementary school. Tickets cost \$3 for 12 movies.

Peg marvels that she can watch any movie on DVD or streaming, something she would have once thought impossible. She is a goldmine of movie lore.

Besides joining the movie committee, she is on the welcoming and programs committees She is on the RAMP council and for the past two years has chaired the employee appreciation fund committee. She calls this “a particularly positive experience because so many residents are committed to expressing their thanks to all staff who provide us with such special service throughout the year.” Peg believes this exemplifies the idea of social connection, which she focused on throughout her professional life.

Meeting here, meeting there — Peg deserves a relaxing movie at day’s end. ●



Photo: Bert Van Gorder

The White Salmon River is famous for its exciting rapids.

Years ago, the phrase “go with the flow,” a statement right out of the hippie movement, meant letting go and letting things happen naturally. The term refers to a river that generally flows quietly, with ease and in harmony with nature. This all changed for me one summer day.

We were three families, each in separate rafts, on the Deschutes River in Central Oregon. It was day two of our three-day river trip. We were having fun: paddling, tent camping, hiking and building campfires. On this warm July day, we parents were doing the best we could to navigate around large rocks and through small and large rapids. Among us we had six young children under age 10. We adults were inexperienced at rafting but on the first day out we emphasized, especially for the children, the importance of wearing life vests fully fastened.

We had just finished lunch and were back on the rafts when John, age 8, fell out of his parents’ raft as we bumped our way through class three rapids. The waves were steep and the current was swift. John was quickly separated from his parents’ raft as his life jacket started to slip off because it was not fastened properly. He was flailing, gasping and about to go under. My family’s raft was closest to John’s. I quickly maneuvered it over to a large rock which John was going to sweep by. I jumped out of my raft and clung to the large, jagged, slippery rock. I stretched my left arm out

as far as I could, and tried to grab his shirt. I got him on the second try.

This almost tragic incident changed my view of how the river, as a metaphor, works for my life’s journey.

The few class three rapids in my life have not turned into stop signs. Yes, there were times when I got pinned on a rock and high centered and once I grounded out on a flood plain. But seasons passed and with patience I floated downstream again.

One day I saw a man swimming upstream against the river’s current going nowhere. Occasionally my life felt like that. My dad expected me to choose a career in engineering. I was happier going downstream and eventually retired as a hospice social worker.

Young salmon, I call them “small fry,” run headfirst down river and enter the ocean early in life. They are hardened young, not fearful about ending in an ocean plunge. Sometimes these “small fry” become our leaders.

At my age, I like the eddies in the river the most. Just going nowhere for a brief time ... a time out. I have sometimes done this with my grandkids at a public pool’s lazy river, just having fun going in circles. I have also had eddies in my life when going in circles was less fun.

I will never forget John, falling out of his parents’ raft on that summer day when the river’s lessons flooded my way. ●

## Going with the Flow

By BILL YOUNG

**G**ood news! “Through progressive resistance training, seniors can reverse some age-related decline in physical activity,” according to Mirabella’s wellness coordinator, Alec Rivara.

Note the word “progressive.”

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## Staff Profile:

### Alec Rivara

#### Gaining Strength at Any Age

By **NANCY MOSS**

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Alec grew up in Orange County, California. His parents divorced when he was young; he spent equal time with both, he says.

In school, Alec wanted to play sports, but “I was an asthma kid.” He tried out for football but couldn’t run the required laps so had to look elsewhere. Alec’s father had a gym in his den and Alec spent time there.

After high school, he worked at Medieval Times, a dinner theater show where, Alec says, “Dumb young men rode horses, jostled and jumped off horses.” He spent about five years in his early 20s doing stunts for his job. “Periodically, I would get hurt and had to deal with it,” once having his “face split open” twice, once having to get stitches in his forehead. “It was a lot less fun,” he says of that job.

His work at Medieval Times involved helping others; “I ended up teaching the squires,” he says, referring to a knight’s assistants.

At this point in our interview, a resident emerges from the gym. “I got to 90,” he tells Alec.

“You should be able to go to 100 on Friday,” Alec replies.

He is demonstrating the word “progressive” here: you have reached one level; now move on to the next. I want to see that pattern in action.

Following through, I walk into Alec’s class, Strength Training, Gentle, at 2 p.m. and discover chairs neatly arrayed around the activity room, with weights ranging from five to 25 pounds resting on them. As music plays, residents filter in. Alec leads the 10 of us in squats — lowering down to our chair and then back up — and lifts, arms extended over our head.

He coaches us individually on placement of feet, arms, butt and, in my case, too rapid descent to my chair. “That looks pretty good,” he tells Linda, a resident seated next to me, who is pressing five-pound weights as the Beatles’ “Penny Lane” plays in the background.

Alec walks around the room checking on each person’s progress. “Last time you did eight, now you’re going to 10,” Alec tells someone.

“I think 20 is too much for me,” one woman says.

“Even when you did it last time?” Alec replies.

After I complete three overhead lifts, with a heavier weight each time, Alec tells me I’m done. “Introduce, don’t overload,” he says of a resident’s first sessions.

I feel energized. Alec describes this as, “I feel better after I do something,” the temporary good feeling a person gets from exercise. This is the benefit participants get from his challenging them.

After Covid put an end to his Medieval Times job, Alec entered an online certificate program and worked at becoming a strength coach, apprenticing at a local gym. He ran personal training sessions out of his garage.

Alec moved with his wife, Sarah, from Orange County to Beaverton in 2022 and began to specialize in working with seniors. Older people, he says, are “anabolically resistant,” requiring more stimulus than younger folks to grow muscle and develop strength. However, he promises that seniors can overcome that resistance.

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### Alec’s goal is for residents to gain “tools to develop their own fitness program,” not to be dependent on a coach.

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In other words, the Fountain of Youth that Ponce de Leon is said to have sought in Florida can be found through exercise — but we have to work at it. That word “progressive” translates to the increasing weights a person lifts. Alec’s goal is for residents to gain “tools to develop their own fitness program,” not to be dependent on a coach.

Alec has run two competitions in Mirabella’s gym, the first in rowing and the second in “strict curling.” Men’s and women’s contests ran separately, amid cheering from onlookers.

In his free time, Alec goes to concerts with Sarah; “I listen

*(Continued on page 20)*



Photo: Ron Mendonca

**Alec Rivara**

(Continued from page 18)

to a lot of metal," he says. They also enjoy travel and took a trip to Japan in September. He hopes to return to Japan next year and perhaps Prague the year after that. They "don't do tours," he says, just "get there and figure it out." He also enjoys "nature and outdoor stuff."

The idea of improving physically as we age is both inspiring and challenging. Alec is a knowledgeable, precise and patient guide to residents' feeling that brief high and gaining strength. ●



Alec as a knight in the Medieval Times show.



## Albatrosses of the World

Photo Essay By JOHANNA KING

Samuel Coleridge's epic narrative poem, "Rime of the Ancient Mariner," was first published in 1798. In it the mariner thoughtlessly shoots an albatross, and as a result he and his shipmates suffer bad weather and crippling thirst. Eventually his shipmates die, but before they do, they hang the body of the albatross around the mariner's neck as a symbol of his guilt. He finally realizes that he must love and protect all of nature's creatures, even sea snakes, and he survives. But he is doomed to retell his story over and over; the story is as relevant today as it was over 200 years ago.

There are 22 species of albatrosses recognized today. At least 17 are under threat, primarily from long-line and trawling fisheries, which kill over 100,000 albatrosses every year. Other threats include marine debris (especially plastics), invasive species (especially cats and rats), habitat loss and global warming.



Midway Atoll provides a protected habitat for the three North Pacific albatross species, the Laysan (shown in large numbers here), the black-footed, and the short-tailed.



The short-tailed albatross, seen here amidst a group of smaller Laysan albatrosses, was declared extinct in 1949, and survives in very small numbers today. The two nostrils, one on either side of the beak, are characteristic of all albatrosses.



Albatrosses lay only one egg, and the parents take turns incubating it and feeding the chick. It takes both parents to sustain the chick; if one is lost, the chick also dies.



Young albatrosses, after spending seven or eight years at sea, may take two or three more years to find a mate and a nest site. These Laysan albatrosses are doing an elaborate courtship dance that includes bill clacking, neck stretching, and vocalizations. All albatrosses do a similar dance, and they all remain faithful to the chosen mate and nest site for their long lives.



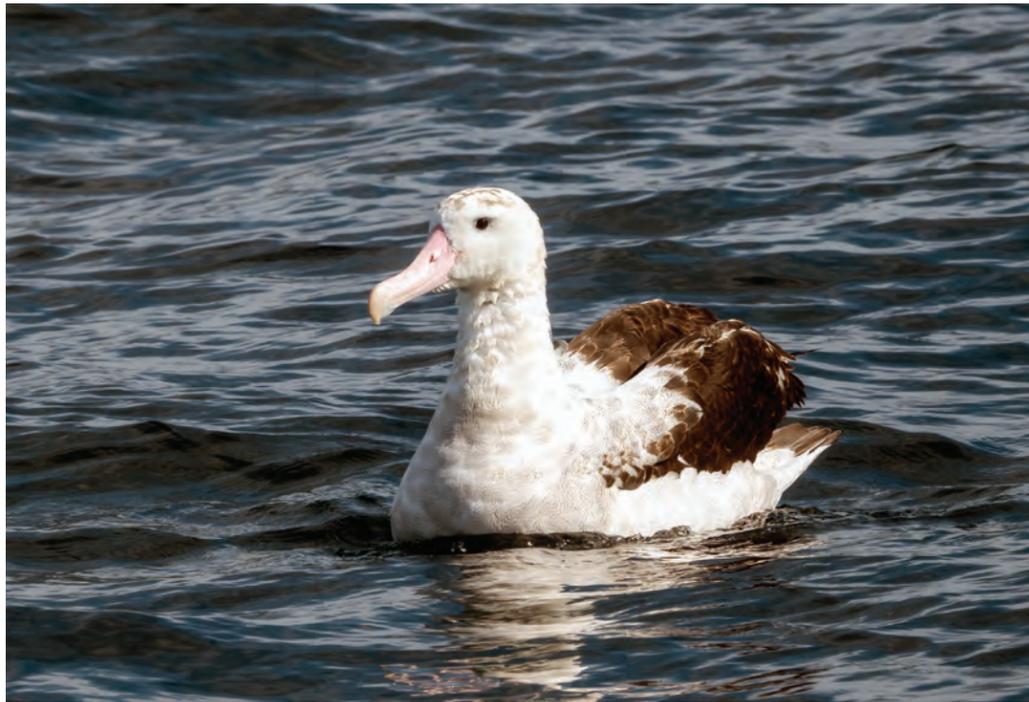
Albatrosses are very long lived. Wisdom, a Laysan albatross like this one, was banded in 1956, when she was already about 10 years old; she laid yet another egg this year. And she has been using the same nest site all these years!



The wandering albatross, the largest flying bird on earth, weighs up to 25 pounds and has a wingspan of up to 12 feet. A denizen of the southern oceans, it is perhaps the species shot by the ancient mariner.



Seeing its beak in the hand of this researcher dramatizes the huge size of the wandering. It may fly an astonishing 15 million miles in its long lifetime.



Closely related to the Wandering, this antipodean albatross is distinguished by more dark feathers on its head and tail.



The most numerous albatross is this black-browed, numbering more than 800,000 pairs. Albatrosses rarely flap their wings, relying on their very long wing edge to provide lift.



Left: The black-footed albatross ranges widely across the North Pacific, from Midway Atoll to the coast of the U.S.

Below: This black-footed was spotted in Monterey Bay, taking advantage of prey pushed up by orcas and other marine creatures.





Left:  
Waved albatrosses nest only in the Galapagos and on one other Ecuadorian island, and are critically endangered.

Below:  
Seeing an albatross in flight is to witness one of nature's great gifts.



# My Visit to Memory Care

By DOROTHY DWORKIN



Photo: Stanley Berman

An exercise class in memory care: outsiders invited.

## HALCYON

A MYTHICAL BIRD BELIEVED TO NEST AT SEA AND TO CALM THE WAVES:  
AN IDYLICALLY HAPPY, PEACEFUL TIME IN THE PAST.

Enter the memory care unit on the second floor at Mirabella and immediately feel a sense of calm and quiet. I am here to talk with Jodie Childs, director of social services on the second floor, which includes the memory care unit, a locked wing for individuals with memory-impaired illnesses including dementia and Alzheimer's disease.

### HALCYON DAYS ARE PERIODS OF PEACE.

For persons with memory loss, a major goal of treatment is to create an atmosphere of calm and joy in everyday life. The professional staff is trained in the skills required to enable residents with memory issues to find fulfillment in their current lives. Other Mirabella staff members are also taught to recognize residents with memory impairment should they have interactions with them outside of the unit.

Jodie shares the office with Bob Borowiecki, activities coordinator on the memory care unit. Some of her responsibilities extend to services in the skilled nursing section of the

second floor. Zac Bright is the overall director of health services.

The cheery dining room I saw when I entered the locked unit is often shared by residents and their visitors. Residents are free, however, to have meals in their own apartments. Since socializing is an important part of well-being, eating in the dining area is encouraged.

In addition to offering a tranquil environment, safety is critical, and security is ensured by a locked door that restricts access to the wing. I was escorted in by an employee from the skilled nursing area. Family involvement is encouraged and occurs frequently. Elevator entry to the second floor from the lobby requires a fob.

A physician's referral is needed for long-term residency in the memory care unit. Sixteen apartments are available and equipped for the special needs of memory-impaired individuals. Most apartments are occupied by former Mirabella independent living residents, who are given priority. Residents

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who temporarily require even quieter moments can use the therapy garden and private nooks, along with a staff member. Memory care residents are encouraged to participate in activities offered to all residents on the second floor.

When I asked Jodie about a resident's typical day, she said the goal is to mirror each person's previous routine as much as possible.

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**"Memories are like stories in a book. With memory loss, some of the pages of the book have been ripped out."**

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"We try to keep the familiar routine that a person experienced prior to living in memory care. If the person was an early riser, we start earlier in the morning with that person than we would with a person accustomed to sleeping later," she said. "We are also careful about the kinds of television programs that are on the screen, to avoid any undue stressors."

The overall philosophy of the unit is to provide an environment that is safe and consistent over the course of the 24-hour day and to provide appropriate and enjoyable activities. With this goal, Bob Borowiecki offers a full schedule of daily activities open to all residents on the second floor.

A typical calendar of monthly events includes exercise groups, dance movement classes, flower arranging, tai chi (with Marlena Fiol and Ed O'Connor), music programs, films, visits from a therapy dog, singalongs and book talks. A favorite is the visits from Bubbles the Clown, Rosie Batcheller.

Bob developed a training program for staff on the second floor and is currently offering a similar program to staff in the

entire building since any employee may meet residents from other floors with signs of memory issues. Improvisation and role-play are used to increase staff awareness should they meet someone who is confused or behaving inappropriately. Ways of responding and understanding what is happening are a major goal of the program. Staff are given an opportunity to share their own comfort level with memory-impaired residents. They learn to sometimes use gestures instead of words to show understanding.

Bob also created a game for staff to act out their own emotions and thus better understand others' feelings. Staff training for both new and existing employees is held on the first and third Wednesday of each month. He attempts to get everyone to take training within a couple of months of hire and for health care staff he aims for one month. The program attempts to remove the stereotype often attached to memory loss.

Bob encourages memory care unit residents to remember positive events in their past lives and will sometimes suggest non-religious meditation and relaxation exercises to enhance the process. This work occurs on a one-to-one basis with receptive residents.

"Memories are like stories in a book. With memory loss, some of the pages of the book have been ripped out," he says.

Listening closely to where an individual is at a particular time is crucial to the process. His or her current reality may not be the listener's reality. With memory loss you must let go of yours and step into theirs. The operant phrases are to "go with the flow" and "be in the moment."

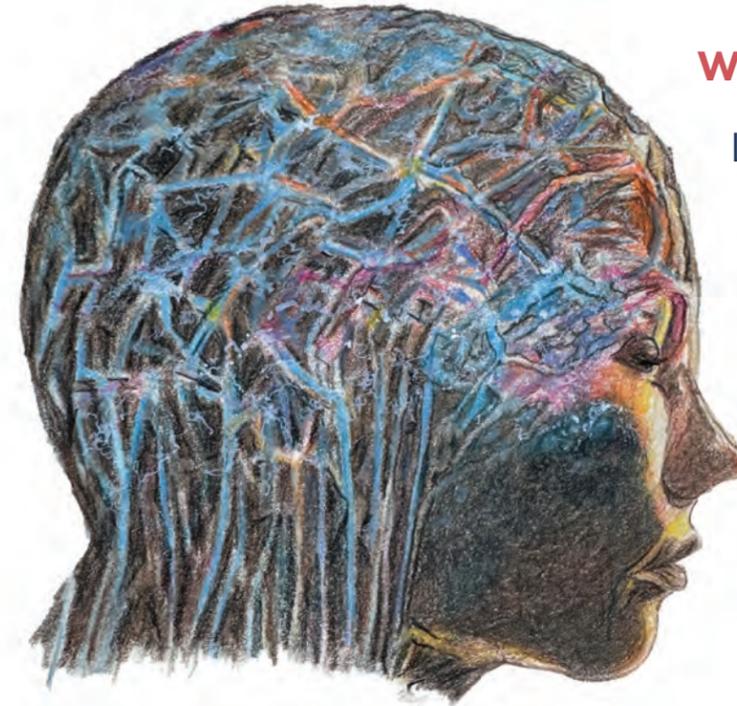
"Grief and mourning are also important to the process for family members. Understanding that their loved one is in a different reality at times is difficult. I assist them with the process when possible," Bob notes.

In the late 1960s, Simon and Garfunkel sang about "Bridge over Troubled Water." The line serves as a metaphor for living through a difficult time. The lyrics offer unconditional support and comfort for someone in distress. Residents and their families in the memory care unit receive the care and support needed to transverse that bridge. ●

# Meditation: Exercise for the Brain

By MARLENA FIOL

Art by HEBE GREIZERSTEIN



**When our** hyperactive grandson

Louis was in kindergarten, his teacher had the class lie down for a few minutes of silent reflection. When the quiet time ended, Louis sat up and exclaimed, "I don't feel so crazy now."

## What It Is

Meditation has become a widely recognized tool for cultivating mental well-being, but debates about what it actually is — and how best to practice it — still persist. The word itself stems from the Latin *meditatum*, meaning "to ponder," which adds to the confusion. Meditation is a set of techniques intended to encourage a heightened state of awareness, with the aim of achieving a mentally clear and emotionally calm state. So while pondering is an analytical thought process, meditation involves observation and mental stillness.

## A Growing Global Practice

In the United States, the number of adult meditators more than doubled from 2012 to 2022, reaching over 17% of the population. Globally, hundreds of millions now incorporate meditation into daily life, with usage accelerating after the Covid-19 pandemic. This rise is fueled by a greater cultural focus on mental health, stress reduction and the accessibility of guided apps that make meditation easier than ever to learn.

## Myths and Misunderstandings

Despite its mainstream presence, several persistent myths continue to confuse people. One is the belief that meditation requires a perfectly silent mind. In actuality, thoughts naturally arise during practice — the goal is to observe them without judgment, not eradicate them. Another misconception is that meditation is a religious practice. While rooted in spiritual traditions, contemporary meditation is highly adaptable and practiced across both religious and secular settings. Finally, many assume meditation demands long sessions in a rigid cross-legged posture. In reality, meditation can be practiced sitting in a chair, lying down or walking, and even short sessions can be beneficial.

## A Brief History of Meditation

Meditation's origins trace back thousands of years. Early practices emerged in India as far back as 5000 BCE,

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described in Vedic texts such as the Upanishads. Across Asia, Buddhist and Taoist traditions further shaped meditation techniques, while Greek thinkers like Plato and Plotinus explored contemplative practices aimed at spiritual union. By the medieval period, meditation appeared in Christian monasticism and Sufi mysticism. Western interest expanded in the 19th and 20th centuries, culminating in the global spread of practices like Transcendental Meditation and mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR). In the 21st century, scientific research and public acceptance have made meditation a mainstream tool for mental and physical well-being.

### How Meditation Affects the Brain

Decades of neuroscience research have revealed remarkable insights into how meditation reshapes the brain. Regular practice is associated with increased gray matter in regions governing attention, memory and emotional regulation. The amygdala — central to the fight-or-flight response — shows reduced activity and even structural shrinkage in long-term meditators, correlating with lower stress and anxiety. The prefrontal cortex, key for planning and decision-making, becomes thicker and more efficient. Meditation also increases connectivity across brain networks and shifts brainwave patterns from high-alert beta states toward slower, calmer alpha and theta waves. These changes support improved mood, reduced cortisol, enhanced concentration and even protection against age-related cognitive decline.

A groundbreaking 2025 study from Mount Sinai advanced this understanding by recording electrical activity from deep within the brain — specifically the amygdala and hippocampus — during meditation. Using intracranial EEG

in patients with implanted electrodes, researchers found that even first-time practitioners experienced shifts in beta and gamma brain waves during meditation. These brain regions are central to memory and emotional regulation, and the findings help explain why meditation can benefit individuals with anxiety, depression or stress-related challenges. Although the study sample was small, it sets the stage for future research on meditation-based psychological interventions.

### Benefits and Limitations

Meditation offers a wide range of proven benefits, with moderate but meaningful effects for conditions like anxiety, depression, chronic pain and stress. Numerous research studies show that brain changes induced by meditation can persist even outside of actual practice, influencing everyday emotional responses.

Despite these positive outcomes, meditation is not universally beneficial. Some individuals experience heightened anxiety, resurfacing trauma, dissociation or physical discomfort. These effects are typically associated with underlying mental health conditions or overly intense practice, suggesting the need for proper guidance and moderation.

### A Powerful but Nuanced Tool

Meditation is not a cure-all, but as research continues to deepen, its value as a complementary mental health tool grows increasingly clear. Accessible, adaptable and grounded in centuries of practice, meditation offers a meaningful path toward greater awareness, emotional resilience and well-being.

And maybe, just maybe, it can help us not feel so crazy now. ●

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## Meditation Made Personal

**Our meditation practice** began over 30 years ago with the mantra-based method of Transcendental Meditation. This technique is widely known for its ability to induce deep relaxation, a benefit we found so powerful it sometimes put us to sleep.

In 2012, our meditation journey shifted with the discovery of *Vipassana*, which translates to “seeing things as they really are.” This tradition moves the focus away from simple relaxation toward cultivating a deep, non-judgmental awareness of the present moment. The practice involves perceiving physical and mental phenomena not as permanent realities meriting a reaction, but rather as changing experiences that

constantly arise and pass away.

This deliberate, non-reactive observation serves as a path to understanding the impermanent nature of all experiences. The ultimate (for us, seemingly unreachable) goal is to remain perfectly equanimous — a state of mental balance that acknowledges over and over again that “this, too, shall pass.” By consistently training the unconscious mind to recognize the temporary nature of both pleasure and pain, we gradually reduce our tendency to cling to desirable experiences or resist undesirable ones.

For us, it’s a lifelong journey, one tiny step at a time.

— **Ed O’Connor and Marlena Fiol**

## Poem: Life Cycle

By **BILL YOUNG**

Leaning against majestic redwood  
Rubbing reddish brown bark close  
Towering tree, tall, steady, anchored  
Me, medium, unsteady, searching.

Both awing the cosmos, both old  
Both with the same ancestor, billions ago  
Scarred bark and ancient cuts  
Two-man crosscut saws

Some still standing, some not.  
By the river, old logs and stumps float by  
Scoured off banks of rising water  
A redwood today

Just like some old friends  
Sitting by the riverbank of life  
Scoured by disease and age  
Just yesterday, my old friend Westy



A few Portland redwoods.

Photo: Karen Guenther



Photo: Robert French

## An ICE Arrest

Federal Immigration Custom Enforcement officers arrest a protester in front of the ICE building, five blocks south of Mirabella.

## Portland Diary

I

Walking the Greenway, I hear a sudden cacophony of crows squawking above me. I look up and see two crows on one of the high branches. Above them a hawk soars.

I have just heard a crow's warning call.

II

She kept a record. A resident reports that "in 12 months, I received 403 ASKS from 77 different groups. Some ask as many as 36 times a year." She plans to eliminate the worst offenders from her list, explaining to them why, and send a copy of the letter to the charities she keeps "hoping they recognize the error of their ways."

I'll ask her about her results and let you know.

III

By the Spaghetti Factory, two men in orange vests with noisy leaf blowers. I think of something Oscar Wilde said about bagpipes, "At least they don't smell bad."

Leaf blowers, however, stink of gasoline.

IV

A postage-size park in Sellwood, Save the Giants, has three giant sequoias, saved by civil disobedience. When a developer planned to raze the lot to build a house on it, neighbors, led by children, opposed that. Led by children and including a tree-sitter, protesters filled the park. Police eventually cleared the protest, but the tree-sitter remained. Eventually the opposing sides reached a compromise. The park has a shady picnic area and displays the tree-sitter's bed. The towering trees remain, an oasis of quiet.

— Nancy Moss

## Old Actors

By NEAL MILNER



Photo: Stanley Berman

Neal Milner, soon to be seen onstage.

Originally published in *Civil Beat*.

On New Year's, the old saying goes, it's time to ring out the old and ring in the new. Except that famous phrase has it backwards.

Actually, we need to ring in the old because they're the ones ringing in the new all the time. Old folks are the real risk-takers, boundary-crossers and adventurers. It's the young who are enfeebled.

Typically, people who aren't old see seniors in terms of their infirmities and incapacities. The lame, the halt and the blind.

That health-above-everything-else view is so one-dimensional. There is so much else to an older person's life besides how well she walks, how clearly he sees, or how acute her hearing is.

But enough cranky criticism. I want to focus on the bright side — what the elderly add to life, things that will encourage

risk-taking, not because the old person used to take risks years ago, but because she's taking them right now.

When old folks try new things, it's tempting to call it "dabbling." Like "uncle is dabbling in making bird houses."

"Dabble" is a trivializing term. A dabbler is not to be taken seriously. When old people try woodworking, take tap dance lessons, Spanish or creative writing, why, they couldn't possibly be serious.

A better way of looking at it, one that takes them more seriously, is that they are studying, investigating and even risk-taking.

The risk may be physical, like fear of falling, or emotional, like fear of failing and making an ass of yourself.

Whatever it is, though, it takes guts of one sort or another,

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one boundary or another, one challenge or another.

Instead of talking generally about this, I'll get personal because now I live in a retirement community. I am going through this boundary process myself, specifically what it's like to move from being an occasional actor in Honolulu theater to being in a drama club in a retirement community.

Kumu Kahua Theatre in Honolulu was my favorite place to act. I loved performing there and believed strongly in Kumu's mission: "Plays about life in Hawai'i. Plays by Hawai'i's playwrights. Plays for the people of Hawai'i."

No surprise, though, with that mission I always played a haole (white person), as did all the other white guys who were cast: insensitive, insufferable, predatory, unintentionally funny, all variations of bad haole.

After a performance of Alani Apio's "Kamau," where I played a tourist industry boss, a local woman came up to me and said, "You were a great haole. We hated you."

A wonderful compliment. I did my job.

The job had limits, though. There was no other role I could have auditioned for because of what I looked like and who I am. Just as it made no sense to have cast my role with a dreadlocked 20-year-old local male.

Now compare that to the place where I live now. There is a small drama club with varying acting experience. Most of the performances are staged readings rather than fully performed plays.

Old folks performing for a captive audience of other old folks in the building? It sounds pretty cheesy, even a little sad. Sure, on the surface.

But for the performers it's much more than that. It's liberating.

You are eligible to play any character you want. If the play has child characters, some 85-year-old great-grandma is going to have to do it and relish the challenge.

Putting yourself out there in public performance when you never did it before or when your on-stage circumstances

were more big-time and conventional — that's an adventure.

Why do it? It's performance, the chance to express, to work hard, to feel the power of the spoken word even though those words are spoken in a very different setting.

For a new performer, it's a chance to get over your fears. For a more experienced actor, it's a chance to get over yourself.

Most of all, it's a gig — a chance to perform and exercise your chops in a new place in a new way. Something old, but at the same time something new.

And that's a high.

Dick Van Dyke, who turned 100 in December, says he's lived so long because he stubbornly refused to give in to the bad stuff about aging. Instead, he says, "I have been in a full-on bear hug with the experience of living."

And the guy is still performing. Not as in his big-star days as an amazing actor, dancer and comedian.

He still gets invitations to perform in big venues in New York and Chicago, but that's become too hard physically.

Now, his performances are in situations many notches below his stardom days, like singing with the Vantastix, a group of guys he's been singing with for 20 years. Low key for sure. There's a video of them performing from a table at an LA diner.

That's not the same as performing with Julie Andrews, Mary Tyler Moore or Carl Reiner. So what?

"When we sing," Van Dyke says, "my heart just soars. Because I'm still doing what I love."

Dick Van Dyke is definitely not a washed-up actor because washed-up actors succumb to the boundary they can no longer cross. Van Dyke found new boundaries and took them on.

That's pretty much the same with the grandmas and grandpas who decide to take tap dancing. Or people with Parkinson's disease who take dancing classes.

Taking on new challenges. Still doing what they love.

And by the way, Van Dyke still dances: The old soft shoe. Spontaneously in his kitchen with his wife when the spirit moves them. ●

## THE BEST EYE DROPS COME FROM YOU

### USING YOUR BLOOD TO TREAT DRY EYE DISEASE

By Dr. Mila Ioussifova, OD, FAAO



If you have been experiencing dry, irritated, and red eyes—especially since the pandemic—you are not alone! Although **dry eye disease (DED)** is already one of the most common eye disorders that eye doctors treat, a 2021 study published in the *International Journal of Occupational Safety and Ergonomics* found that in people who switched to working remotely during the pandemic, a large number had an increase in eye strain symptoms, with over 28 percent experiencing severe DED. Researchers attributed this to their increased digital screen usage. Besides eye dryness and redness, DED can cause other symptoms like a gritty and sandy feeling, itchy or painful eyes, and even blurry vision. This condition can be simply annoying for some people and downright debilitating for others.

Patients suffering from DED are often frustrated with traditional treatments, which include artificial tears and prescription eye drops.

While these can be effective for people with occasional or mild dry eyes, they are usually insufficient for those with moderate or severe DED. That's because while these options help to lubricate your eyes, they do not replace what is found in natural tears: critical substances like proteins, lipids, enzymes, vitamins, and growth factors. These biochemical molecules, especially growth factors, are important in corneal (front part of the eye) cell division and wound healing.

Here is the good news: you can get these healing molecules from your blood plasma—the clear liquid of your blood.

At South Waterfront Eye Care, we have been making autologous (from the patient) serum eye drops to treat dry eye disease for years. This service is not offered by many clinics, so most patients have never heard of it, and accessibility is often limited. We have a convenient and straightforward process of drawing blood and making the drops within one hour.

Platelet Rich Plasma (PRP) is a regenerative therapy used in all areas of medicine and aesthetics. And now we are using it for the eyes! PRP eye drops provide more concentrated growth factors and therefore healing properties. We see incredible results in corneal healing, pain reduction, and vision improvement in patients who have tried and failed with many other therapies for dry eye.



Our doctors treat DED as the multifactorial disease it is, approaching it with holistic and functional medicine solutions and assessing nutrition, gut health, and overall wellness. We address the underlying causes of dry eye, such as ocular rosacea, meibomian gland (eyelid glands) dysfunction, and blepharitis (eyelid inflammation and bacterial overgrowth) with highly effective treatments such as Intense Pulsed Light (IPL), Lipiflow Thermal Pulsation, Radiofrequency, Miboflow, and BlephEx.

Although DED is common, it is still an underdiagnosed and undertreated condition. Addressing the root cause and utilizing the regenerative powers of our biologics can be critical factors in treating this disease. I love that we now have so many options to offer our patients struggling with DED, and I never get tired of hearing patients say, "I am not using lubricating drops all day long anymore; I feel like I have my life back!"



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