

Good Neighbors by Faith Barnidge: Donation supports produce distribution

By Faith Barnidge Columnist

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Meals on Wheels and Senior Outreach Services' free family caregiver workshop will help those caring for loved ones at home to learn about valuable resources and techniques to make the job a little easier.

The next workshop will be held from 2 to 5 p.m. Jan. 15, at Meals on Wheels and Senior Outreach Services, 1300 Civic Drive in Walnut Creek.

Workshop subjects will include: Communicating with Seniors, Fall Prevention, Lift and Transfer, Cognitive Issues, Senior Nutrition, Self-Care, Grief, Boundaries and Resources.

Almost half of family caregivers perform medical tasks normally associated as "nurse-delegated" functions, typically with little training from health and social service systems.

Rhonda Dietsch, program coordinator for Home Care Registry and Friendly Visitors Meals on Wheels and Senior Outreach Services, and other speakers will provide information and guidance, facilitated by a certified nursing assistant. Call 925-937-8311, ext. 130 or visit www.mowsos.org for more information.

SKATE FOR HOPE

Skate for Hope and raise funds for CASA from 1 to 4 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 10, at Walnut Creek on Ice, at Civic Park, 135 Civic Drive in Walnut Creek. Enjoy a hot chocolate bar, raffles and music by the band, PUSH, led by local favorite, ABC 7 News anchor Dan Ashley.

Tickets are available at the door. CASA volunteers and their CASA foster kids skate for free. Call 925-256-7284 for more information.

CASA, Court Appointed Special Advocates, are volunteers who, as a sworn officer of the court appointed by a juvenile dependency court judge, speak up for the best interests of a foster child or youth who has been abused, neglected or abandoned. Many times, the CASA volunteer may be the only consistent and caring adult presence in the child or youth's life.

FOR FOOD BANK

John Muir Health has donated \$25,000 to support the Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano Community Produce Program.

The program distributes fresh produce twice a month to more than 50 sites in Contra Costa and Solano counties. A grant in 2012 from the John Muir/Mt. Diablo Community Health Fund funded a beverage truck customized to serve as a mobile distribution vehicle for fresh produce. After a six-month pilot program, a second vehicle was added through Feeding America, a national organization.

Cal Knight, John Muir Health's president and CEO, said, "This donation also reflects the generosity of our doctors, nurses, staff and volunteers who are committed to helping members of our community, especially those in need, during the holiday season and throughout the year."

"We are extremely grateful for the generosity of John Muir Health," said Larry Sly, executive director of the Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano. "The Community Produce Program has an incredible impact on members of our community who are in need. People who visit the local distribution sites and meet income guidelines take home 20-30 pounds of fresh produce. They are receiving healthy food for their families that they might not otherwise be able to afford."

For more information on the Community Produce Program and a list of distribution sites, visit www.foodbankccs.org/get-help/community-produce-program.html.

WORKER RETRAINING

John Muir Health and Jewish Vocational Service launched a new program to retrain dislocated workers for in-demand roles in the growing health care field, and provide health care employers, like John Muir Health, with a pipeline of highly qualified medical administrative professionals.

Their first class of 20 graduates recently completed 10 weeks of classroom-based training and four-month internships at John Muir Physicians Network or John Muir Hospital.

Funding was provided by the California Workforce Investment Board, Y & H Soda Foundation and JP Morgan Chase Foundation. Jewish Vocational Service, a Bay Area agency for job training and placement, modeled this new program on EXCEL, pioneered by JVS and UCSF in 2010.

CAR DONATION

CSAA Insurance Group, a AAA insurer, donated a refurbished vehicle to Kathy and John Groebner of Clayton, to visit their daughter, Katie Grace, at Stanford Medical Center after complications arose following a heart and lung transplant and their car broke down.

"Our employees have a century-long legacy of helping communities from coast-to-coast," said CSAA Insurance Group senior vice president Michael Randall. "This is our 13th year donating a refurbished car to a deserving individual or organization."

The car was refurbished by longtime CSAA partner Mike's Auto Body's Benevolence Program in Walnut Creek.

"We feel very fortunate to be involved with CSAA Insurance Group and are excited to be able to give back to the community that has supported us for the past 42 years," said Mike Rose, owner of Mike's Auto Body.

RESTORATION TRUST

The Contra Costa Flood Control and Water Conservation District and The Restoration Trust annual project, Giving Natives a Chance, invites student volunteers to replace non-native with native plants to reduce flooding, fire hazards and provide a habitat for local wildlife in the flood plain of a tributary of Walnut Creek that flows through Concord.

Volunteers from Pleasant Hill Boy Scout Troop 239 joined Pittsburg High Club P.O.W.E.R. students for the project.

Troop leader Steve Bachofer said, "The Scouts initially looked at the site and questioned how the project could be completed. Yet within three hours, they looked around and were pleased to see all the new plants in the ground."

Mike Carlson of the Contra Costa Flood Control and Water Conservation District said, "Biologists have been and will continue to monitor the natural progress of this restoration project in the coming months and years. This habitat will become a healthy and self-sustaining ecosystem that will provide excellent habitat for native plants and animals and will require little to no maintenance."

The Restoration Trust is a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting native habitat restoration, stewardship and education in central California. More information can be found attherestorationtrustonline.org.

NO SCURVY IN CONCORD

The Concord-Diablo Rotary Picker Squadron has already collected 201 pounds of fruit the first weekend of this year. In the five years of the project, more than 20 tons of fruit has been donated to local pantries and food banks. Rotarians will come to your homes and pick the fruit themselves. Contact Edi Birsan at 925-798-3537 or EdiBirsan@astound.net.

The Concord-Diablo Rotary Club meets at 12:15 p.m. the first, third and fourth Wednesdays of each month, and at 6:30 p.m. on the second Wednesday, at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, 45 John Glenn Drive in Concord. Visit www.CDRotary.org.

"Good Neighbors" is compiled by Faith Barnidge. Send club and organization news, Scouting items, notices of awards and other submissions to goodneighbors@bayareanewsgroup.com.