

SENIORS

Homewatch – helping Piedmonters age in place

By Benjamin Bloom

Piedmont is our home. As we age, why should we be forced to leave? It is the mission of Homewatch CareGivers to help you age in place.

I grew up in Piedmont, attended Piedmont schools, worked on Piedmont Avenue, and volunteered at Piedmont Gardens Retirement Community. My Eagle Scout project involved creating a sensory garden for the memory care unit at that facility. Ever since I was 15 years old I have been passionately involved with the senior and disabled communities of Piedmont and the greater Bay Area.

But why? Why work in this difficult and emotionally challenging field? For me, the answer is very personal. I lost my mother, Susan Bloom, to Multiple Sclerosis when she was

38 and I was only 6 years old. My mom had family and professional caregivers by her side throughout this ordeal. The care she received was instrumental in maintaining her quality of life and made a lasting impression upon me.

After completing my MBA at UC Davis and spending nearly 10 years as a Financial Planner, I decided to follow my passion and start an in-home caregiving business in February 2016. My soon-to-be wife, Leah, and I took a big leap, invested our savings and took out a loan, and embarked on this journey together. Now with almost two years behind us, we couldn't be happier with our decision.

Leah and I are committed to helping Piedmonters remain in their homes. Moreover, a recent AARP study found that 89 percent of seniors prefer to age in

place. So if you or a loved one is considering moving into a facility because of a chronic condition or disability, consider calling Homewatch CareGivers instead.

Homewatch CareGivers service providers focus on the whole individual — both the physical and emotional health of a person. All services are delivered by well-trained, compassionate caregivers, ensuring quality of life for clients and peace of mind for their loved ones. Our goal is to provide a service that makes our clients feel safe and cared for as well as honoring their wishes to age in place at home.

Homewatch CareGivers is located at 3820 Broadway in Oakland and is owned and operated by Ben and Leah Bloom. You can reach them at 835-9362 or find them at www.CarePiedmont.com.

Release your inner artist

By Johanna Leonard

In March last year, Peter Hewitt, his wife, Madeline, and their terrier Harry, moved to The Lake Merritt - Independent Senior Living. Soon afterwards, our arts and crafts facilitator moved to the Sacramento area and Peter jumped in and “volunteered” to guide and teach the class. We were thrilled.

“I’ve always been very interested in art,” Peter said. “I minored in art in college and I am really self-taught. I did art on my own until about 10 years ago when I went to the Albany Senior Center and got involved in an art class. We had a great teacher who really challenged us”

“When she retired, the group of artists she had led decided to self-facilitate our class. It was very stimulating to work with different people with many art specialties. We were able to use our skills to help each other in different ways.

We often combined our talents to complete group projects,” he said.

Here at The Lake Merritt, Peter chooses projects that will allow our residents to express their individualism. He will offer a challenge and set a limitation to inspire the artists and to foster their creativity.

Recently, the group started a birdhouse project. The limitation was that the roof had to be painted in a primary color. Then, each artist could do anything else to personalize their birdhouse. The end results were very different, but when placed together, the birdhouses were a stunning matched set.

Peter says his group of students is always up for new challenges. Recently the enthusiasts in his class created hippopotamuses.

“I brought some raw materials to our meeting – foam, tubes, stuffing and other items,” he explained. “We set out to surprise The Lake Merritt’s Program Director, Ryan, who had once told our arts group of a stuffed hippo that he loved when growing up. The group had a lot of fun on this

challenge and we presented all our hippos to Ryan. He was delighted, charmed and touched by the group’s creations.”

In addition to teaching arts and crafts, Peter continues to work on his personal art projects. His preferred mediums are paper-mâché and collage. He participates in local art exhibitions and is very proud of his recent work which was displayed at the El Cerrito Art Show.

Peter’s class is a hit. I believe that we all have an inner artist and can benefit from participation in arts programs. Physical and mental health benefits abound. There are gains to be had in concentration, creativity and, of course, companionship – so release your inner artist!

Johanna Leonard is Executive Director of The Lake Merritt. For more information or for a tour of The Lake Merritt - Independent Senior Living, visit the website at www.thelakemerrittsenior.com or call 903-3600.

Trouble hearing your favorite holiday sounds?

By Courtney Cook, Au.D

With the holidays quickly approaching, Hearing Zone would like to give some helpful communication skills to use with your loved ones this season.

The four main factors that influence understanding conversational speech are:

Environment

- Background noise (music at a party)
- Room acoustics (tall ceilings)
- Lighting (dimly lit)

Speaker:

- Loudness of voice (volume)
- Rate of speech (talking too fast)
- Clarity of speech (mumblers)

Listener:

- Hearing Loss (severity of hearing impairment)
- Familiarity of speaker (new person)

Distractions (lots of commotion going on around you)

Message:

- Auditory (spoken words)
- Visual (facial expressions)

Here are some helpful tips to achieve the ideal communicative environment. Keep a distance no greater than 6 feet from the speaker. Arrive early for situations that are more formal or structured so that you can stake out the best spot. Concentrate on phrases and ideas rather than trying to pick out single words. Watch the speaker’s lips, not their eyes (you’re a better lip-reader than you realize). Adjust the communication situation so that the noise sources are nearer the speaker than to you. Reduce noise as much as possible. Most importantly, advocate for yourself. If you are hearing impaired, let the speaker be aware of your impairment.

Ultimately, if you feel like you are struggling with your hearing, it’s a good idea to get your hearing checked by your local audiologist. Our address is 3346 Lakeshore Ave. Call us at 444-9773 or visit us at hearingzonedoctors.com.

Happy Holidays from all of us at Hearing Zone.

Travel experiences

By Judith Glendinning

My late husband and I spent many years traveling together. We traveled independently, did house exchanges in Europe, and occasionally went on group tours. Several months after his death I realized that I still wanted to explore the world. The challenge would be how to do this and with whom. I have learned that there are many options.

I have taken several trips with friends during the last four years. Flexibility, compromise and kindness have been essential aspects of each adventure. Health concerns, budget issues and personal preferences are taken into consideration. Discuss expectations and your need for quiet and alone time. This is a crucial part of planning.

Group Travel

Traveling with a tour group has advantages. The planning and arrangements are done for you. Before signing up be certain you understand the physical requirements, length of bus rides and number of one-night hotel stays. All of these things impact the enjoyment of your trip. Show up with a smile and your suitcase and the tour leader takes it from there.

A friend’s enthusiasm and gorgeous pictures of Sicily led two of us to book the same trip with Overseas Adventure Travel (OAT). We each had our own room and did not pay a single supplement. Our small group of 12 toured Palermo, visited the Valley of the Temples, experienced a landscape full of olive groves and indulged in delicious food.

Sicily was so successful that the same friend and I decided to go to Cuba. We did some research and decided on a group tour with Road Scholar. The whole country vibrated with the Afro-Cuban beat. We enjoyed farm to table meals in the mountains, attended ballet rehearsals, rode in a 1957 Chevy convertible, and danced in a nightclub on top of a water tower.

I intend to continue my quest for knowledge, fun and adventure.

Travel tips

- Always buy travel insurance (I use Travel Guard).
- Provide your family and house sitter with your itinerary and contact information.
- Order World Wide service for your cell phone. (\$40 for 30 days).
- When traveling to remote or less developed regions, consult with a travel nurse.
- If sharing a room discuss possible differences in sleeping patterns.
- Take a jacket.
- Pack prescription medications, wipes, essential makeup and an additional change of clothes in your small carryon.
- Avoid checking your suitcase if possible. It can be difficult, though liberating, to have a missing suitcase for five days while on safari in Kenya.
- Start taking probiotics a few days before you leave home and continue on a daily basis until you return home.
- Avoid eating meat and dairy in areas with iffy refrigeration.
- If you hang wet laundry in the bathroom, make sure it does not drip on the toilet paper.
- Relax and have fun. Be open to new experiences and plan on the unexpected.

Judith Glendinning shares her experience on topics relating to transitions and travel in Mindful Transitions, a monthly newsletter by Joanne Devereaux. For more information, see www.mtransitions.com or call 510-757-7340.

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