



Curry Senior Center

# Senior Independence

Spring 2013  
News about Seniors in the Central City

## Client Assistance Fund

# Helping Dreams Come True

Diane Evans, 66, was thrilled when an apartment at Curry Senior Center opened up in October.

“I had been essentially homeless since my daughter, grandson, and I lost everything when Katrina hit New Orleans,” said Evans. “We came to San Francisco and stayed with friends for a while, but in the end, I was sleeping in a car after my daughter and grandson moved to the Midwest. I learned about Curry from someone at Compass Family Services. Its shelter is for families, so I had to move out when my children were no longer with me.

“I didn’t know what to do. When you’re homeless, everything is scattered, and you get information by word of mouth. Here at Curry, they have all the information. Now I don’t have to beat all the bushes myself. I’m even learning how to use the computer at Curry’s Computer Learning Center. I really wanted to learn about computers because for a long time I’ve felt like everyone was in a universe that I wasn’t a part of.

“My case manager has been so helpful. When I came here, I only had five teeth in my mouth. Jeffrey got me into the program at Pacific Dental School and now I have a full set of dentures. I also needed glasses; now I have bifocals. My left knee is bad from my years of kneeling on concrete and steel as a construction worker. But in two months, I’m scheduled for knee replacement surgery at San Francisco General Hospital.

“Now I have a chance. I’m around supportive people who don’t coddle old people. They challenge us to do as much as we can and they observe what our needs are even before we realize them ourselves.”



Diane Evans

### Matching Fund Established for New Donations

For Diane Evans, we were able to contribute the security deposit for her to move into her apartment. During the past six months, we assisted seven other elders with security deposits and first month’s rent at an average of \$300 each. Other expenses the fund has enabled are for glasses, moving assistance, utility bills, medical care, and needed apparel like coats and shoes.

Won’t you consider making a contribution to the Client Assistance Fund and help our seniors? Your donation—large or small—will have a big impact. If you are new to Curry, a generous supporter will match your donation. That’s right, our supporter is matching all new donations, dollar-for-dollar to this program.

To learn how you can contribute any amount to the Curry Client Assistance Fund, please contact Tod Thorpe, at 415-292-1040. Or donate directly at [www.curryseniorcenter.org](http://www.curryseniorcenter.org).

59 homeless seniors were assisted in securing housing since July 2012.

Located in San Francisco’s Tenderloin district, Curry Senior Center helps meet homeless or isolated seniors’ essential needs for health care, meals, housing, and social connections, right in their own neighborhood.  
Visit [www.curryseniorcenter.org](http://www.curryseniorcenter.org) to learn more.

San Francisco, CA 94102

333 Turk Street

SF-DPH Community Health Network

Curry Senior Center



## Newsworthy

All Donations Before March 15th  
Will Be Matched  
Double Your Impact Now!

Save the Date – May 9th!  
Curry Senior Center’s Annual Gala —  
Helping Hands, Healing Hearts



Thanks to Bread & Roses and Leftover Dreams for providing music at our holiday party.

# Bridging the Gap

Much of Curry Senior Center's work focuses on bridging gaps: gaps in health care, gaps in income, and gaps in practical and social support. In fact, most of our clients are affected by huge resource gaps, whether financial or social and personal.

For those lacking food, the Curry Dining Room is a welcome oasis. We provide breakfast and lunch every day of the year for seniors who can't afford groceries or have no kitchen or even hot plate for cooking.

Our case managers provide many types of practical support, maneuvering skillfully through paperwork and partnering with seniors who don't have a close personal connection or family member nearby.

The newest gap Curry is tackling—featured in this newsletter—is the digital

divide. Using the client-centered approach we're so well known for, we have partnered with other organizations and volunteers to teach elders basic computer skills and how to use the Internet. Volunteers work one-on-one with seniors, giving them hands-on experience with everything from using a mouse or touchpad to Skyping.



David Knego,  
Executive Director

**You, too, can join us in bridging the gaps—whether by volunteering, spreading the word about Curry, or directly supporting our efforts through a financial donation. Your contributions—large or small—will make a big difference in**

**the lives of the most vulnerable seniors in San Francisco.** Thank you for your consideration, and please take the time to support all of the seniors in your life!

Your donation will be matched through March 15th!  
Donate directly at [www.curryseniorcenter.org](http://www.curryseniorcenter.org).  
Questions? Call 415-292-1040.

## Legacy and Longevity: Securing Curry's Future

During our annual luncheon on November 1, 2012, we thanked seven generous members of our Legacy and Longevity Society. These are individuals who have generously included Curry Senior Center in their planned giving. This marked the third year since the creation of this club, now totaling 11 members.

You, too, can become a member. Please ask your accountant about it, or we can refer you to someone as well. By joining this group, you can gain the satisfaction

of knowing Curry's important services—health care, nutrition, socialization, and celebrations—will continue for years to come, offering dignity to seniors in their declining years. With dwindling resources in the public sector, we count on your kindness and compassion. And you can earmark your gift to the programs closest to your heart. Thank you for all that you do to support our agency's mission in the Tenderloin.

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## Computer Learning

# New Computer Center Helps Seniors Bridge the Digital Divide

On October 31, 2012 Curry opened a Computer Learning Center at our offices at 315 Turk St. It is one site in a wide network set up by San Francisco's Department of Aging and Adult Services just for seniors and people with disabilities.

"It's amazing how helpful using the Internet and new social media platforms can be for seniors," says Marqui LaPoe, Curry's Community Outreach Program Supervisor.

"First of all, as younger users know, the Internet is an incredible information source for everything from services and resources to entertainment and education. And social media have opened up the possibilities for people to stay connected with family and friends far and wide."

"This program, established with a grant from the Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications Information Administration, was highly sought after by many cities and organizations," notes Sybil Boutilier, from the Department of Aging and Adult Services. "San Francisco, Chicago, and Los Angeles were a handful of cities that competed with 2,000 other organizations nationally for the 38 grants awarded. So we are very lucky."

The computer learning centers are at 53 adult day health care, senior services, public housing, and supportive housing service sites around the city. At Curry, we have partnered with Community Living Campaign, Community Technology Network, and Self-Help for the Elderly to

offer classes—taught by volunteers and paid trainers. These help older adults become familiar with the computer and the Internet. They learn how to navigate to find the things they need, such as doctors' communications and



medical test results, food stamps, and many other government and medical services now available online.

Equally important is the ability to use social media to connect with others: friends, family, and far-flung relatives around the world. The free classes introduce participants to Skype and Facebook.

One of the upcoming challenges is keeping this citywide network of computer learning centers viable when the three-year funding cycle ends on September 30, 2013. The Community Living Campaign is

organizing a small, growing coalition of participating agencies into a "Keep Us Connected" campaign.

Its goals are:

- Increasing the network of volunteer tutors and trainers
- Providing funding for ongoing maintenance and software upgrades
- Showcasing assistive technology that can help people use the computers to stay connected regardless of vision, hearing, or other disabilities

Please stay tuned for updates on these advocacy efforts and do consider lending your time to train seniors to bridge the (technology) gap and become connected.

Thank you.

## Volunteering

# Why I Volunteer at Curry

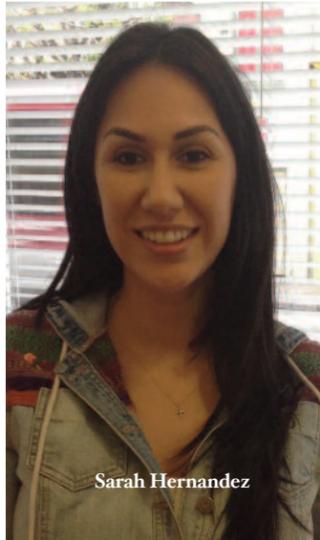
An Interview with Sarah Hernandez

### Q. What do you like about working with seniors?

I like how comfortable they are in their own skin. They accept who they are, and now I'm in a place where I can appreciate that.

### Q. Why did you want to volunteer in the first place?

I have been a bartender for a number of years, and I wanted to change my life—go to college and find my passion. It's important to me to find something in line with my values—and not just make money. I'm on a mission to do that. I thought that volunteering would help, and it has. In fact, my experience at Curry has been life-changing. As a result of it, I have decided to go into social work. Right now, I am completing my general education credits at a community college. I hope to transfer to City College in a year and go on to get a master's degree.



Sarah Hernandez

### Q. What programs do you volunteer in at Curry?

For the past six months I have been volunteering in the dining room. One of the skills that has transferred from my bartending days is being a good listener. Now I listen for a better reason! Also, I smile a lot while serving our clients, and they love it. I'm also volunteering in the new Computer Learning Center at Curry. I'm helping seniors learn how to use email and Skype. They're nervous and excited at the same time. It's fun teaching them how to use this technology.

### Q. What do you think the clients give you in return for what you offer them?

They show me that there is always hopefulness, even in difficult situations. Volunteering is something I will continue to do as long as possible.

(See sidebar below for ways that you can help as a volunteer or contributor.)

## Be the Difference: How You Can Help

**Dining Room:** Everyday, we need up to five people, 10:30 am – 12:30 pm. We need seven volunteers on Wednesdays and Saturdays for bingo before meal service.

**Computer Learning Center:** We need volunteers from 2:00 to 3:00 pm on Wednesdays starting March 6. They will help teach seniors about email, social media, and other Internet basics. We are also looking for volunteers who can speak Vietnamese and Russian that can help with computer learning.

**Special Events:** We also need volunteers to help us with these celebrations: Chinese Vietnamese New Year (February 21); History Month (February 5); Valentine's Party (February 12); Laotian and Cambodian New Year's Party (April 18).

**Community Thrift Store:** (623 Valencia St.) accepts donations on behalf of Curry Senior Center. Bring your old clothes, jewelry, books, sports equipment, furniture, CDs, electronics, and luggage and tell them you want all sales proceeds to benefit Curry Senior Center.

**Cole Hardware:** Mention Curry Senior Center and account #21235 and a percentage of your purchase will benefit our clients and services. Cole Hardware has the following locations in San Francisco: 70 4th St., 956 Cole St., 3312 Mission St., and 2254 Polk St.

Call 415-292-1040 for more information.

26,760 breakfasts and 30,303 lunches were served in the last six months.

## Special Events

# Save the Date—May 9—for Annual Gala

Curry Senior Center's Annual Gala: *Helping Hands, Healing Hearts*, is scheduled for Thursday, May 9, 2013 at 5:30 pm in the **Crown Room of the Fairmont Hotel**. It will be a festive evening filled with many special guests; delicious food and libations; live music; an exciting live auction presented by **Diane Dwyer, Weekend Anchor for NBC Bay Area News**; and many wonderful silent auction items.

This year the Gala honors the **San Francisco Giants** to thank them for their partnership with Curry Senior Center which has enhanced the agency's promotional and fundraising efforts both on and off the field, and **Moli Steinert, Executive Director of Stepping Stone**, for her advocacy on behalf of Adult Day Health Care and her over 30 years of community activism working on issues ranging from civil rights and health care to international development.



David Knego (center) with Jim Illig and Diane Dwyer at last year's gala.

Please join us!

For sponsorship opportunities, to donate live or silent auction items, and to purchase tickets, go to [www.curryseniorcenter.org](http://www.curryseniorcenter.org); email to [currygala@curryseniorcenter.org](mailto:currygala@curryseniorcenter.org), or call 415-252-1040 for more information.

## 2012 Holiday Party

The Holiday Party was a great success, with dozens of clients in attendance and a special appearance by California Senator Mark Leno as well as Santa Claus.



### Our Thanks to Holiday Gift Bag Donors

Tom Ammiano, California State Assemblymember  
Bingham  
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UCSF Medical Center  
Amy Whalen  
Hannah Wong

Special thanks to Project Open Hand and Walmart, whose volunteers helped serve at the party.

# Empowering Seniors to Build a Network of Support

Curry offered a new, four-part workshop series at year-end entitled “Connections for Healthy Aging.” Led by Marcia Peterzell and Marie Jobling from Community Living Campaign, this workshop helps participants learn how to assess their personal goals, build a network of support, and survive short-term hospitalizations and transitions back home.

“One of the most important things for seniors without family nearby,” says Jobling, “is to build a network of support as they age. Everyone needs advocates. They don’t have to have a medical background, but they should know you well and not be shy about asking for what you need.”

Having an advocate is especially helpful during doctor or hospital visits. “For instance, if you don’t think you are ready to be discharged from a hospital, you or your advocate can call Medicare and say, ‘This is an unsafe discharge,’” Jobling says. “Many seniors don’t realize they have this right.”

Another important role for advocacy is having someone who can make decisions for you if you become incapacitated. This advocate is called a durable power of attorney for healthcare.

The workshop encouraged participants to use technology to find resources (see article about new Computer Learning Center) and to establish both an elder checklist of things to complete before the end of life and an elder “wish list” of things to enjoy: Do you want to get back to your singing or music? What are the things you wish people knew about you?

The main point is to reach out and learn about the resources at hand. It really helps to know you are not alone with your worries. Creating a network of support in advance of a crisis is empowering and even liberating.



# Curry Offers Health Monitoring for Seniors at Risk for Heart Attack, Stroke, and Diabetes

Sixty-five percent of older adults in Curry’s service area have high blood pressure. Among all of San Francisco seniors, older adults here also have the highest rate of preventable emergency room visits and hospitalizations due to cardiac problems and uncontrolled diabetes.

To complicate matters, 40% of these clients do not speak English. Many are also challenged by homelessness, substance abuse, mental health issues, and other chronic diseases.

A two-year grant from **Kaiser Permanente** has helped us focus on more than 300 of these high-risk seniors through a program called PHASE: Prevent Heart Attacks and Strokes Everyday. The program focuses on managing all chronic conditions that increase the risk of heart disease.

Additional funding from the **McKesson Foundation** has helped us treat the 75% of seniors in our PHASE program who have diabetes. The treatment for diabetes involves educating clients about medications and lifestyle changes (smoking cessation, diet, and exercise) to help their condition. Our clinicians monitor and treat the vital risk markers. These include hemoglobin, cholesterol, and blood-pressure levels.

Leroy Robinson is one of them. He says, “I feel a lot better these days. My cholesterol and diabetes are under control because — with the help of Curry’s program — I am eating better.”

“By routine monitoring and continuing education we will be able to help these seniors control their symptoms and slow or prevent the progression of this disease,” says Dr. Richard Zercher, medical director at Curry’s clinic — the only geriatric clinic in the San Francisco Safety Net, a network of 26 city-funded and independent primary care clinics.

Grateful for the support we receive, we have a need for more nurse educators and will be searching for funding for this vital role in 2013.

Of approximately 400 patients in our PHASE panel, measured from July 2011 through January 2013:

- Those who have lowered their blood pressures (under 135/85) increased from 32% to 50%.
- Those with blood sugar under control (glucose -HbA1c- score less than 7) have increased from 35% to 43%.

1,364 patients were seen in our primary care clinic during the last six months.

Leroy Robinson gets help at the clinic.

