



HAPPY ANNIVERSARY SEQUOIA VILLAGE
FIVE YEARS OF SERVING THE SENIOR
COMMUNITY WITH MANY MORE YEARS TO
FOLLOW!

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It was a magical moment five years ago when Sequoia Village opened its virtual doors on July 10, 2015. The dignitaries who officiated at this special moment were State Senator Jerry Hill and the Mayors representing those communities served by Sequoia Village—Belmont, San Carlos, Redwood City and Redwood Shores. Also present were the new charter members and volunteers cheering the officials on as they ceremoniously cut the ribbon. Today, a combination of 310 members and volunteers makes up the Sequoia Village community.

Yet, the story of this magical moment truly began when a small group of resourceful, energetic and passionate visionaries decided to create Sequoia Village. With a great amount of imagination and persistence, they diligently carried out research to identify a concept that could be used for fulfilling the needs of seniors who wanted to remain in their own homes as they aged. As realists, they knew that at some point some assistance would be needed to keep the homes of these seniors livable, comfortable and safe.

They came across an interesting senior plan that seemed cost-effective and was mushrooming throughout the United States. This movement, referred to as a “Virtual Village,” appeared to have all the needed elements to serve today’s growing senior population. It embraced a lifestyle that included physical independence, an active mind and the ability to manage overall health and well-being. In addition, it allowed socializing and volunteering to play a significant role in senior’s lives in order to help them feel connected to a community where they felt purposeful and valued.

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Typically, visionaries are able to see the big picture before anyone else. Instinctively, these visionaries viewed the Village concept to be a winner. Quickly, a blueprint on forming a new Virtual Village materialized. From there, each of these core volunteers found his or her place where their valuable talents and skills would fit in. Committees were formed. Within eighteen months Sequoia Village was set to open.

The spirit of this group inspired other vibrant and talented volunteers to join in the planning and organizing process. Partnerships were formed with local community centers, libraries and other nonprofit organizations. Community leaders, businesses, service organizations and many funding foundations recognized the potential benefits for our senior population and provided strong support, both financially and with in-kind gifts.

Initially, simple services—such as changing light bulbs, home safety repairs, cleaning out gutters, and flipping mattresses—were offered. Gradually, transportation to grocery stores, hairdressers, medical appointments and airports became the most frequently requested services by our members. In fact, Sequoia Village has provided over 15,000 rides during its five-year existence. Over time, even more services were added, such as home-safety checks and computer tech services.

One of the selling points of Sequoia Village was its ability to bring people together through various social events. These included monthly Coffee Connections and bi-annual Special Events—such as a Mardi Gras party, a Western BBQ and a 50's Sock Hop. Also, there were excursions into San Francisco and other interesting Bay Area locations that were topped off with experiencing fine cuisine at nearby restaurants.

After attending one of these events, many members and volunteers found they had much in common, and many new friendships were formed that, in some cases, resulted in weekly dates for tea. Even some friendships that had been established long ago, but for various reasons had been lost, were reconnected. Indeed, Sequoia Village was a way to connect people together and to become a community within a community.

Collaboration, a successful component of Sequoia Village, established trust among its members, volunteers and leadership. This was especially apparent when COVID-19 became a pandemic. Many of the Village services had to be curtailed. But that didn't

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stop these inspiring leaders from finding ways to continue to provide services to members under very new and unique circumstances.

A mentoring program began wherein volunteers phone members weekly to inquire about how they were managing. Bi-monthly letters were sent to members giving them up-to-date information on what to expect from the Village going forward. Home-made masks were made by members and volunteers and were delivered to those members/volunteers who wanted them. Safe-distance, non-contact grocery and pharmacy runs as well as the pick-up/delivery of meals from local restaurants were provided. Taking into account the strained economy, the Village Board voted to extend all memberships for seven months at no additional fee.

Coffee Connections, previously held monthly in person, are now offered on Zoom and have included interesting lecturers, musicians, exercise classes and information on how to use the currently available county library services. An emergency preparedness committee has been created. While “non-essential” rides are still not offered, emergency transportation to medical appointments has resumed under designated and strict guidelines.

In celebration of Sequoia Village’s Fifth Anniversary, each member and volunteer recently received a hand-delivered ‘thank you’ gift in gratitude for their involvement —a beautifully wrapped individual bundt cake.

Now, the full story has been revealed. This magical group, who were not magicians at all, were a truly inspirational, passionate, caring, talented and skilled group of individuals. They turned Sequoia Village into a community within a community that, in turn, attracted others to become leaders, members and volunteers!

For more information, please contact Villages of San Mateo County (VSMC) at 650-260-4569 or visit their website at info@villagesofsmc.org.

~ article by Victoria Kline, a co-founder of Sequoia Village



“All of you are doing such a generous gift as volunteers. It’s comforting to know that kindness is all around us. Thank you and take care of yourself.”

~ Dulcie Findlay, former San Carlos Citizen of the Year, after receiving her cake.

