

Aging in Place



BY **SUSAN NOACK, CHAIR, TUALATIN AREA AGING TASK FORCE**

Last month's column was on social isolation. It is such an important topic, it is worth repeating.

Social isolation is on the rise – one out of three adults over 65 years old lives alone. Reducing senior isolation is being able to get out of the house and interacting with other people. Isolation can lead to depression, poor health, loss of mobility or cognitive decline. The secret to reducing isolation is to start somewhere.

Remaining an active participant in the community is not only critical to mental health but a key component of successful aging with the highest level of health, vitality and energy possible. Being active and social has an unexpectedly strong impact on physical and mental health.

Andy Rooney is quoted as saying “The idea of living a long life appeals to everyone, but the idea of getting old doesn't appeal to anyone.” We are all aging but how we age is the key. Here are a few suggestions to take that first step to living a long life well and reduce isolation:

1. Ride Connection is free to seniors and those with disabilities. They have safe, responsible drivers who have been background checked and trained to drive the Ride Connection mini-vans. You can get to the grocery store, pharmacy, medical appointments, Juanita Pohl Center, post office, library, your favorite restaurant with a phone call – 503-226-0700. Now you won't be isolated in your home.

2. Our Library is a wonderful place to visit with many opportunities – volunteer to be a tutor for students from kindergarten to 12th grade, volunteer to assist the library staff, take a class with a tech tutor for help navigating your computer or smart phone, access to computers, relax by the fire with a magazine or check out a book. Call 503-691-3070 for more information.

3. The Tualatin Heritage Center and Tualatin Historical Society is a fascinating treasure in our community. They work very hard

to preserve our city's history and offer reading material, visuals in the building and classes on our history. They also have knitting/crocheting classes and art classes for your creative side and being among friends socially. Call 503-885-1926 for more information. They are located in the building right next to our police department.

4. The Juanita Pohl Center is the place to go for older adults – join an exercise class, play cards, pool or bingo, attend a workshop on issues pertaining to seniors, enjoy one of their day trips to special places in the region, volunteer to be a greeter, have lunch, meet new people and socialize. For more information, check out the Explore Tualatin Activity Guide or call 503-691-3061.

If you are under 65 and reading this column, you can help too. Do you have a neighbor or family member who isn't able to get out and about? A phone call to say hi and a short chat does wonders. Maybe drop off a special treat now and then or a pretty plant or flowers. Offer to pick up groceries when you do your shopping or even take your neighbor with you. It's the small touches of kindness that make the difference and what better reward than a smile, hug and appreciation from the recipient. The social contact you can provide goes a long way to making someone's day brighter.

Susan Noack has lived in Tualatin for 15 years. Before retirement, she was a development director/event planner for non-profits. Now as an “Aging in Place” senior, her passion is being an advocate for seniors and giving back to the community. She is a member of both the Meals on Wheels People and Juanita Pohl Center advisory committees and chair the Tualatin Area Aging Task Force committee.

