



## MARIN VILLAGES WEEKLY UPDATE

April 6, 2021

Dear Marin Villages members and volunteers,



A bit chillier this week than last. Hope the change in the weather hasn't kept you from enjoying "the flowers that bloom in the spring, tra la" as Gilbert and Sullivan once wrote. The poppies are quite spectacular this year!

### COVID-19 UPDATE



Alas, on the COVID front, confusion still abounds! Things are better, things are going to get worse. People who are fully protected can travel safely but shouldn't leave home. We can throw away our masks, but we'll need to wear masks for another year at least. We are short of vaccine, we have more than enough. Everybody wants to get vaccinated, except those who don't. We can eat in restaurants again, but it's better to do take out. We need to get to herd immunity, but we may never get there!

### What does Larry say?



Lucky for us, we have a resident expert at Marin Villages in Larry Meredith, retired director of Marin's Health and Human Services Department, and currently on the board of Marin Villages and head of the

Twin Cities Village Steering Committee. We asked Larry for his practical perspective, based on his long career in public health. Here are his responses.

**So, Larry, why are things still so up in the air about what we can and can't do?**

Because it's so complicated. There are multiple and shifting variables; conducting the research and compiling the data is still a work in progress; and everything, including the virus itself, is evolving. We are still in a learning phase, particularly with the new variants. And risks are dependent on our own individual circumstances—age, preexisting health conditions, immune strength, where we live, the number of people in our households, where we work and what we do, etc. As a result, many experts have slightly different perspectives and advice. It can be confusing.

**What about you? Are you “fully protected” and what does that mean anyway?**

I'm two weeks past my second vaccine shot and I'd love to believe the vaccine fully protects me, but “fully protected” is not the same as invincible. I received the Moderna vaccine which is 95% effective but that's based on results with younger people. So far, none of the research—the clinical trials, the data from Israel, and recent real-world vaccination results in this country—includes enough older people to draw the same conclusions. I just turned 80 so my immune system is not what it used to be and we simply don't yet know if the vaccine is as effective for someone my age. So, in reality, I'm still susceptible to COVID-19, just less so. As a result, I still practice social distancing, mask wearing and careful hand hygiene to protect against the risk that remains. I even wear my mask while I'm biking. In part this is to model the behavior I think we all need to continue, but it is also because “fully protected” is really a misnomer.

**You mean you think we should all continue to wear masks, even when vaccinated?**

Yes, that's exactly right. Until we get to herd immunity, and even that is defined differently. My definition is when the public health experts I trust, such as Marin County's public health officer Dr. Matt Willis, confirm the virus is no longer a threat to the community. Until then, wearing masks and social distancing in public is necessary.

**Have you eaten at a restaurant with friends since getting vaccinated?**

Yes, a few times, but it was outdoors and with friends who are fully vaccinated. By outdoors I mean in a space that's actually *open*—no side walls, totally ventilated.

**Any travel plans?**

Conceivably by car with my wife to a place we have near the beach in Santa Monica. But definitely not planning any air trips or visits involving public accommodations.

**How are you handling things like haircuts and trips to the dentist?**

Well, I'm pretty cautious. While it's true that all open businesses have to comply with County guidelines, if I'm concerned, I also call to inquire about what protections have been adopted. I decided to postpone teeth cleaning until we have more data. I recently got a haircut indoors, but I was the first client of the day, the only one in the salon, and the stylist was two weeks post vaccination. I'm an activity junkie, but I haven't yet returned to my gym, which is relatively small and not well ventilated. For now, I'm going to continue working out in my DIY home gym. The best I can do for my hockey

addiction is something called “stick time” at the Snoopy ice rink in Santa Rosa. I’ve decided that the risk is minimal, given the protections the rink has put in place, which include masks and social distancing (no scrimmaging allowed!).

### **Any party plans?**

All my gatherings with friends are outside, usually in backyards, and never more than four or five people.

### **How safe is it for us to be around others—say our grandchildren—who haven’t been vaccinated?**

You know, this is so individual, it’s really hard to have a recommendation that applies to everyone. In my family, we’ve encountered contradictory advice. The CDC states that it’s safe for vaccinated grandparents to hug their grandchildren but my wife’s doctor says although she’s vaccinated, it’s not safe for her to hug our six-year-old granddaughter until *she’s* vaccinated. He says there isn’t enough data yet to know how protective the vaccination is for people in some risk groups. (In spite of that advice, we hugged her, but when she came to spend the night with us, we did have her take a COVID test first.) My general advice is just common sense: always assess the risks and take precautions to minimize them.

### **Are you optimistic things will get back to normal?**

I am. Not only do we have the vaccines, we have far greater public health awareness. Of course, we don’t yet know what getting back to normal will look like. We may redefine our practices around personal space. Will hugging, kissing and handshaking with people outside our close circle of family and friends return? Maybe not. Will mask wearing to avoid viruses become routine? Perhaps. My hope is that the lessons learned in this pandemic will prevail the next time we have a public health crisis and that we practice not an excess of caution, but just the right amount to keep us safe.

## **OUR SPRING SOLICITATION IS ON!**

You should receive our annual spring fundraising letter this week, if you haven’t already! Isn’t it great to see how busy we continued to be even during the pandemic? As we say in the letter, we are so grateful to all of you who helped us get through this challenging time. We hope you will consider a donation to help us continue our efforts of helping older adults be active, connected, and independent in this beautiful place we call home. [https://marin.helpfulvillage.com/fundraising\\_campaigns/8-annual-fund-spring-2021-campaign](https://marin.helpfulvillage.com/fundraising_campaigns/8-annual-fund-spring-2021-campaign)

## **MARIN VILLAGES PROGRAMS**

### **Finding Your Roots—A Personal Journey with Marin Villages Volunteer Colin Crawford**

Wednesday, April 21, 3:00pm



Come hear the fascinating personal story of Colin Crawford's 30-year journey, as the adopted child of a loving family, piecing together his family history, skeletons and all! To receive the Zoom link, please RSVP on our website at <https://marin.helpfulvillage.com/events/2799-finding-your-roots-with-colin-crawford>, or call or email the office. (415) 457-4633 or [info@marinvillages.org](mailto:info@marinvillages.org)

### **SAVE THE DATE: Marin Villages Donor Recognition Event**

Saturday, June 6, 5:00pm

Join us for a short program and a wonderful performance by Nancy Gilliland, who will entertain with songs from the Great American Songbook. Please RSVP here: <https://bit.ly/MVDonorEvent>

## **COMMUNITY PROGRAMS**

### **Age Friendly Marin Forum—*Emergency Preparedness for Aging Adults***

Wednesday, April 28, 10:30 – 11:45am

Your life might depend on being organized and ready should an emergency situation arise. Reacting as quickly as possible under pressure takes advanced preparation. Get the best advice available geared for older adults and learn how to survive. Speakers: Maggie Lang, coordinator, Marin County CERT, emergency preparedness consultant, Mill Valley Fire Department, Southern Marin Get Ready coordinator; Diana Lopez county commissioner, Commission on Aging, HICAP counselor. Zoom info to come in April or contact [SRobinson@MarinCounty.org](mailto:SRobinson@MarinCounty.org)

### **Is There a Doctor in the House? Telehealth and Bridging the Digital Health Divide**

Thursday, May 27, 10:00am – 12:30pm

This is the Commission on Aging's annual health forum—which is being held digitally this year. Stay tuned for information closer to the date on how to register for this event.

## **CLOSING THOUGHTS**

Here's a bit of optimism from the unlikely duo of Eleanor Roosevelt and Frank Sinatra. A musical reminder of how to stay positive when confronting seeming impossibilities!

**High Hopes—Sinatra tribute:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xkmaVcg2cnE>

Cherie Sorokin, President

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