

MARIN
VILLAGES



Our Paths - Our Choices

San Rafael Village

Empowering older adults to remain active, connected,
and independent in the place they call home

Spring 2021 Quarterly Newsletter

Contents

- Light at the End of the Tunnel
- Welcome New Members & Volunteers
- Valentines Day Happy Hour – and cards
- Steering Committee – Coming Out Meeting
- SRV Movie Group
- May Happy Hour Future & Missed Travels
- New Walking Group
- New Member Profile: Sandy Sverdloff

Light at the End of the Tunnel

It's happening! Covid is *almost* under control – though we're not quite there yet. Most of us are now fully vaccinated. Marin is opening up, from restaurants to gyms to swimming pools. We're cautiously venturing out, wearing masks and staying distanced for indoor activities, gathering with small groups of friends beyond our personal "bubbles." Throughout the pandemic, Marin Villages has provided tremendous support, with dedicated members and volunteers offering information, advice, ideas and a huge array of Zoom events. We happily look forward to gradually starting to enjoy activities together once again – in person!

Welcome, New Members and Volunteers

Members: Gilda Meyers and Sandy Sverdloff

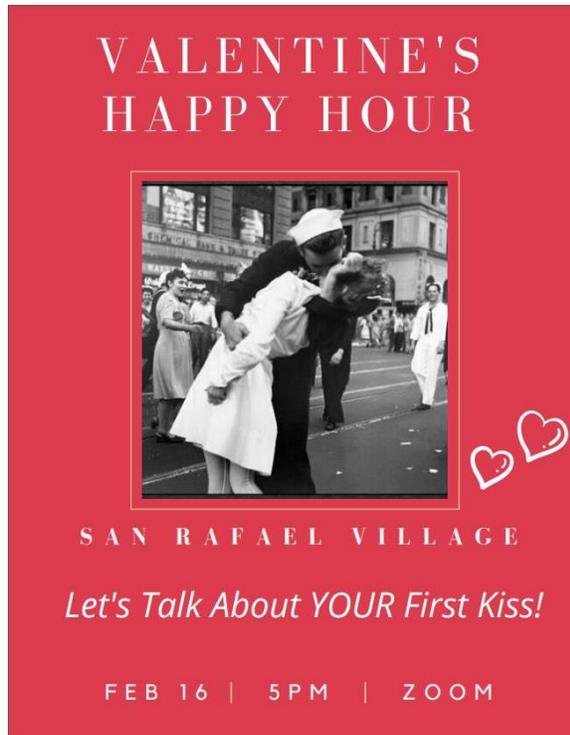
Volunteers: Susan Lachtman, Mariel Claxton, Drake Johnson, Jill Crowe and 11-year old Colin Crowe

Thank you for joining us. We look forward to having you share your energy and interests with us and hope to see you participate in an event soon!

Valentine's Day Happy Hour

Pandemic or not, SRV could not let Valentine's Day go by unmarked. Suzie Pollak and Sandy Yoffie created our perfect February 16th Happy Hour theme: "Your First Kiss." Over a dozen SR Villagers gathered on Zoom to share stories that were wonderful, often hilarious, and always triggered memories of our younger years.

A Sampling of "First Kiss" Memories



I wasn't allowed to date until I was 16, and when I finally did and got my first kiss, it was a huge disappointment. Closed dry lips briefly touching. What was all the excitement about?

A handsome older boy (15), snuck a kiss in the dark tack room of the stables where I was taking riding lessons (at age 13). It was the most romantic thing I could ever imagine. I later learned he did that with all the girls who took lessons there!

I liked a boy when I was a junior in high school but had never kissed him. My best girlfriend and I realized we didn't know how to kiss, so we got together and

practiced "French Kissing" with each other until we got it down right!

I went on a date with a boyfriend in the Presidio and he swept me up and kissed me there, in a lovely, wooded area. I'd been kissed before but not like this. It felt like a scene from "Gone with the Wind," my most romantic kiss ever.

And from the only man in the group, a memory not of his first kiss but of his most memorable. While a soldier stationed in France during WW II, he rode a "borrowed" bicycle to a nearby town to see – and kiss – a beautiful girl he'd met at a dance, the last night before his unit was due to ship out. He rode the bike back at 4 am to discover that his unit had already left! He found his pack, grabbed the bike, rode as fast as he could to the train station, and just managed to catch his unit before they left without him! The kiss was worth it, he said!

Valentine's Day Cards

In addition to the Happy Hour, SRV wished members a happy holiday with lovely, hand-made cards created by a mother/daughter non-profit service group called the San Rafael Mission Belles, part of the National Charity League.



Coordinated by Meridith Werstler, aided by SRV member Lorraine Voskanian, the Belles – girls in grades 7 through 12 - designed and painted the cards and delivered them to Lorraine so the Villages office could mail them out. It was a sweet way to connect part of the San Rafael community to the SRV, especially important during a time when no physical contact could take place.

SRV looks forward to doing other projects with the SR Mission Belles.

Steering Committee Meeting – Getting Back to Normal

On April 16th, the SRV Steering Committee met in person, outdoors, in the lovely yard of the home of our Chair, Sparkie Spaeth.



It's been a long time since we've been able to get together and meet in person. Now all fully vaccinated, we could safely remove our masks. While we did conduct a business meeting, we ended up celebrating our reclaimed freedom with wine and munchies as we chatted and welcomed new Committee Member, Sandy Sverdloff.

Sparkie Spaeth, Jane Solomons, Suzie Pollak, Sandy Sverdloff & Marlene Berkoff
We missed Carole Sherick, Sandy Yoffie and Chris Asimos.

The SRV Movie Group

Nearly all SRV activity groups have continued to function throughout the pandemic, meeting on Zoom. Most meet once a month, but one group – the Movie Group – has upped the ante and has successfully met once a week.

Organized and coordinated by Karen Gray, the group has a process which is working exceedingly well. Each week, based on her own research and suggestions from attendees, Karen announces the film for the week, one which is always available on Netflix. The only requirement for participation is that you must have a subscription to Netflix, one of the most common, reasonably priced and easily accessible streaming platforms. Each person watches the selected film at their own convenience during the week and then, they gather – on Zoom of course – each Sunday evening at 7:00 pm to discuss the movie.

Karen says the movie choices are “not overly academic, not just for film buffs, and not excessively intellectual.” They steer away from gratuitous violence, and no one seems to be a fan of sci-fi. Overall, the group tries to strike a balance that satisfies a variety of tastes. Still, it was unusual when the group decided, a few months ago, to watch the Netflix series “Shtisel,” a drama about life and family relationships in an ultra-Orthodox Jewish community living in Jerusalem. In Hebrew, with English subtitles, the three seasons of the show dealt with a wide variety of family issues – marriages, children, divorce, careers – all against a background of age-old traditions confronting modern times. Conflicts involving arranged marriages, head-strong young adult children, cell-phone restrictions, bans on internet use, unacceptable career choices, even TV program choices, made for intense dramatic events.

Karen says the group planned to watch one episode each week but got so hooked on the series, they ended up watching and discussing several episodes at a time. Despite how very different the culture and social setting was from our way of life here in Marin, Karen says they all ended up saying, “At the end of the day, their issues are not very different from our own.”

Future choices include the British film, “Croupier” and the documentary, “Searching for Sugar Man.” If you are interested in joining the Movie Group, please contact Karen Gray, (714) 403-3345. (karenkasavana@gmail.com)

A New Activity: The SRV Village Walking Group

On Tuesday, May 11, six SRV women met for a delightful mask-free outdoor walk to inaugurate a new activity group organized by Judy Denning: The SRV Walkers. The group walked on the Jean and John Starkweather Trail, from just east of Pickleweed Park toward Target. The trail was paved and flat, along the water and through a residential development with lovely gardens. Judy said there were other people out walking, but it was not crowded. There were great views of San Francisco Bay plus plenty of shore birds. More unexpected was an uninvited but friendly slithery companion, pictured below.



Ginny Saunders, Claudia Johansen, Jane Solomons, Diana Vine and Judy Denning. The photographer was Suzie Pollak – and the friendly companion is on the right.

The trail was a little over a mile and the walk took about an hour. Watch the calendar for an announcement if you'd like to join the walk next month.

May Happy Hour: Traveling Once Again

On Thursday, May 13, at 5:30 pm, SR Villagers met on Zoom for cocktails (provide your own) to talk about the intriguing idea of travelling once again. Many of our SRV members and volunteers are devoted travelers, going all over the world for

new adventures and experiences. Having been constrained for the last year, we are now enthusiastically contemplating when – and where – we might go next.

Some of us are reluctant to book any long-distance travel just yet, and cruises are a bit suspect for others. And all of us have had to cancel trips planned for the last year, whether to visit family and friends or to undertake a major new adventure.

But the travel spirit is by no means gone. Joy Bloom, always optimistic, has already signed up for several new trips over the coming months. Sandy Sverdloff just returned from a visit to San Miguel de Allende in Mexico, which she said was marvelous. Sparkie Spaeth is disappointed that she had to cancel a trip to South Africa planned before the pandemic but is looking forward to a cruise around the islands off the coast of New Zealand.

Most of us are thinking about, or booking, travel in the late summer or fall, but we talked about the fact that some destinations may not be possible in the near future. So much depends on the spread and global situation with the virus. Those who have already booked future travel noted that many group trips and cruises are rapidly filling up, the result of pent-up demand.

This led to a suggestion that SRV form a new “travel” group, not just to talk about where we’ve been or want to go, but to share the travel information and expertise that many of us have accumulated over decades of travel, especially for those who are often solo travelers. Such a group might be a valuable resource to provide help, support and information for less-experienced fellow Villagers. This idea will be passed along to the Program Committee. Watch for future news!

Profile: New SRV Member Sandy Sverdloff

For Sandy Sverdloff, the Villages Is a Chance to Give—and Receive

When you meet Sandy Sverdloff, you're immediately charmed by her positive and generous spirit. Sandy's enthusiasm for the Villages—both its message and its purpose—is evident in her desire to spread the word and increase awareness throughout the County. For Sandy, a new member and San Rafael Village volunteer, the Villages is a chance to give. "Giving brings me tremendous joy," she

says. But what initially drew her to the Villages was a personal crossroads in her life.

Sandy lost her husband to COVID in March of 2020. He was the second person in Marin to succumb to the illness. Feeling alone and adrift, Sandy was looking to add more meaning to her life by making a contribution, but she also understood firsthand the importance of community, of being there for each other. The Villages offered an opportunity to give service to others—and also to receive.



Sandy in her natural habitat: Hiking in Joshua Tree National Park, in front of the ruins of an old gold mine.

Graduating in 1976 from San Diego State with a degree in Sociology, Sandy always anticipated a service-oriented career. But as the fates would have it, a job offer from the San Diego Public Health Department took her in a totally new direction. They wanted her to become a computer programmer! So off she went, determined to do what was needed even in a completely unrelated field. Programming was brand new at the time, and Sandy joined a team of young programmers who kind of created the rules as they went along. It was exciting, exhausting and financially rewarding, culminating in a successful career in banking. Sandy was the first Senior VP of Information Technology at Wells Fargo Bank in San Francisco.

Of course, corporate life also has a "people" side, and that's what always appealed most to Sandy. After Y2K, she decided to change direction and dedicate herself to the personal rather than the technical. She first went into real estate, working mainly with friends and family. She found it particularly gratifying to help people through the process, solving problems and resolving conflicts. She also volunteered a lot, primarily for senior services. Sandy was a long-term care ombudsman for Marin County, and worked with Jewish Family and Children's Services among others, focusing on providing food for homebound seniors. So when she discovered the Villages, it was a natural fit.

"The Villages is doing the best job of recognizing the needs of seniors in Marin and delivering services," says Sandy. "But we need to do more to raise the level of awareness." As a volunteer and member of the San Rafael Village steering committee, Sandy is doing her part. She's already connected with her Gerstle Park Neighborhood Association and is getting the word out about all the great things San Rafael Village has to offer. And she's particularly excited to be participating in a pilot program between Age Song and Marin Villages to provide support-group services to seniors.

Sandy is rebuilding her life, with the help of her stepdaughter, family and friends—and the extended family that the Villages provides. As Sandy says, she's reaching out to continue to lead a vibrant, energetic life. By providing opportunities to give of her talents and share her spirit, the Villages is reaching back.

—Interviewed by Terry Humphrey

Help Us Help Others

If you know someone who could use our services, is interested in volunteering, or would like to donate to an organization serving older adults in Marin, please have them call the office at (415) 457-4633, or visit our website (www.marinvillages.org) for application forms and online donations.

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