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Palos Verdes Peninsula Village a 'stand-in' for seniors who can't rely on family, friends



Lisa Korn, a volunteer for the Palos Verdes Peninsula Village, takes Marion Parsons, 91, to the Peninsula Center Library. The PVP Village is a support group for the elderly, and volunteers such as Korn help seniors to appointments and with errands. They also organize social events in order to prevent seniors from becoming isolated and lonely. Feb. 10, 2017. (Photo by Brad Graverson/The Daily Breeze/SCNG)

By [Cynthia Washicko](#), The Daily Breeze

Posted: 02/11/17, 2:20 PM PST | Updated: 4 days ago

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Lisa Korn, a volunteer for the Palos Verdes Peninsula Village, takes Marion Parsons, 91, on a trip to the Peninsula Center Library. Feb. 10, 2017. (Photo by Brad Graverson/The Daily Breeze/SCNG)

When Neva Drages fell at 1 a.m. and broke her pelvis in her Rancho Palos Verdes home last September, she was rushed to the hospital in her nightgown and didn't return home for 18 days.

During that time, her bills needed to be paid and her plants watered. So she relied on volunteers from the Palos Verdes Peninsula Village, which she'd joined in April, to handle the day-to-day tasks while she recovered.

"I did trust them," Drages said. "I have taken advantage quite a number of times that they have done things for me. They have been absolutely wonderful."

After nearly two years of planning, [the nonprofit was officially launched a year ago](#) as part of a nationwide string of "villages" providing assistance and social activities for elderly people. The organization has grown to include 84 members and nearly 50 volunteers, with plans to continue that trend in 2017 by placing a strong emphasis on retaining its members while officials work with other South Bay organizations in an

effort to offer seniors more.

Privacy issues challenging

Although much planning by the group's founders helped drive a successful first year, connecting with seniors in some areas of the Peninsula that emphasize privacy has been challenging, said Colleen Cotter, executive director for the Palos Verdes Peninsula Village.

"Rolling Hills, I think, is a unique situation because of the gates and privacy elements," Cotter said. "There are elements we have to figure out on how we can work together."

That desire for privacy, coupled with the Peninsula's bucolic setting, are barriers seniors across the area face, especially those who no longer drive, Cotter said.

"(The Peninsula is) so beautiful, but it's also so private and that can become isolating," she said. "(Seniors) can't go down the street like you can in other communities to see friends at a coffee shop."

To remedy that, Village volunteers take seniors to and from appointments or on other errands, and the organization offers social events to give seniors a chance to get out and interact with other Peninsula residents.

Dedicated volunteers

For Drages, the service is a stand-in for family members or friends who would normally help, but are too far away to rely on regularly.

And for those seniors who are quite elderly and living alone, having children nearby isn't always a solution either, she said.

"Even if they had children or relatives around, a lot of times it takes more time than these people are willing to give," Drages said.



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Steve Jordan, a Village volunteer and board member, said he's seen the impact of the organization's efforts beyond simply helping seniors to and from appointments or on shopping trips.

"I think the biggest impact I've seen is it gets people out of the house, and not just for appointments or shopping necessarily, but for all the activities the Village has," Jordan said.

Isolation and loneliness are barriers for elderly people, Jordan said, adding that social events have brightened the lives of many, particularly elderly men.

Jordan said he's heard from several men that joining Village's the 12-person men's group was their chance to build new friendships.

"They have basically said, 'This is as many friends as I can remember having in a long time,' " Jordan said.

The Palos Verdes Peninsula Village will hold a first-anniversary celebration Monday in the Peninsula library. More information is available at 310-991-3324 or peninsulavillagepvp@gmail.com.

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