

Residents Marilou and Peggy are Two Peas in a Pod at Vista del Monte

“Peggy is a carnivore and I’m closer to a vegetarian,” quipped resident Marilou Shiells when explaining the only significant issue on which she and longtime friend Peggy Stivers differ. “We only disagree at the dinner table. Other than that, we’re two peas in a pod.”



Marilou, left, and Peggy are like two peas in a pod.

Pals, amigos, confidants, chums, bosom buddies: no matter what you call them, Peggy and Marilou certainly fit the bill. Marilou has lived at Vista for 17 years and Peggy for eight. Peggy first met Marilou during a tour of Vista del Monte nearly 15 years ago. The community often arranges for prospective residents to meet current residents to discuss what life is like at the Santa Barbara community that sits between the foothills and the sea.

“I remember how friendly everyone was during that first visit,” Peggy said. “I was flabbergasted by all of the spontaneous smiles, hellos and waves I received including those from Marilou.”

Peggy was not quite ready to move in, but knew when it was time, Vista would be her new home. That time was five years later and the first person she remembered was Marilou and her infectious personality.

“Upon moving in I immediately started joining resident committees as a way of getting to know people,” Peggy said. “Every committee I joined, Marilou was there. I thought to myself ... this person likes all the same things I do, I better get to know her better.”

“It was like magic,” Marilou said. “We had so much in common. We like the same books and movies, we both like staying active and we both love to volunteer.”

“My family gets a kick out of how wonderful it is here,” Peggy said. “I don’t know why, but they thought it was going to be a traumatic experience when I moved here, but it was the opposite. My first day here, I felt like I belonged.”

Over time, their friendship only grew, and they truly became like family, a feeling both say is preserved at Vista del Monte by staff and their fellow residents.

“And if you notice today, we’re both wearing blue,” Peggy said with a smile. “That happens a lot.”

The fast friends dine together at least once a week, attend exercise classes three days a week together and talk on the phone every morning. However, Peggy likes music and Marilou likes art, two endeavors they enjoy on their own and with others at Vista.

Living in the same building has its perks, as the two can easily spend time together whenever they choose. Peggy and Marilou live only a few steps from each other. The two friends are enthusiastic members of a slew of resident-led committees. Among them are Vista’s Food Committee, Landscape Committee and both served as president of the Residents Council.

Friends are important to overall health. In fact, studies have shown that deep, long-lasting friendships—those outside of the family setting—contribute to a longer life with fewer health problems. And there is no better place to make friends than at Vista del Monte. Some studies also conclude that social connections have positive effects on mental well-being. In fact, friendships and socializing, like what is abundant at Vista del Monte, are considered one of the secrets to healthy aging.

Vista del Monte offers a range of opportunities to encourage social connections among residents. For folks who like to stay active, they can chat over daily walks, water aerobics, or yoga classes. Those with a competitive streak can join a bridge group or strike up a mahjong match. The outspoken can share their opinions during friendly current events discussions. Creative types bond over painting lessons, crafting sessions or perform during Vista’s famous resident-produced birthday shows. Lifelong learners can pursue their hobbies and interests and share their talents by teaching a class.

Marilou and Peggy know how fortunate they are to have each other, and Vista del Monte is fortunate they have chosen to spend their retirement here.