

# Community MATTERS

front porch

COMMUNITIES  
FOUNDATION

*Pictured from left: Didi Boring, Pat Gordon, Jon Nakamatsu, Ann Stone and Donna Kline.*

## Turning passion into action — a new piano for San Francisco Towers

San Francisco Towers (SFT) residents joined together in a concerted effort, making gifts through Front Porch Communities Foundation to purchase a world-class Steinway grand piano for the main lounge. Four dynamic residents spearheaded the effort: Didi Boring, Pat Gordon, Ann Stone and Donna Kline.

Donna, a music educator by training, was the first to see — and hear — the need to upgrade the community's piano. "I thought we needed a new and larger piano the first time I heard it played almost six years ago when I moved in," she said. **New Piano** continues on page 2

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## Snapshots





*New piano continued from page 1*

Donna first mentioned her idea to Pat, who wholeheartedly agreed, and the women approached Mark Nitsche, SFT executive director, to gain his support.

With Mark on board, Donna and Pat then joined forces with Ann and Didi to meet with Kimberly Manning, the Foundation philanthropy officer at the Towers and Katharine Miller, Foundation executive director. The team put a fundraising plan into action quickly. The piano project group researched various pianos and presented the case for the new piano to the resident council and shared an article in the community newsletter. The information sharing raised awareness and excitement among residents, and gifts began to flow.

Edith Mendez, a donor to the piano fund, said, “Going to concerts in the lounge at the Towers is one of my favorite activities. I knew the aged piano in the lobby needed to be replaced, and pianist Donna Kline is a good friend as well as a convincing fundraiser. I believe the new piano will be a tremendous asset to San Francisco Towers, and I am proud to have been one of its sponsors.”

The inaugural performance for the piano took place in November, with acclaimed pianist Jon Nakamatsu at the keyboard. “Mr. Nakamatsu agrees that we made a truly wonderful choice with this piano,”

**“It is thrilling to see the leadership from these women. Their efforts galvanized San Francisco Towers around a common cause that will benefit residents for years to come. We’re grateful for their work and we at the Foundation are honored to have supported them through the process.”**

**— Kimberly Manning, Foundation philanthropy officer**

Didi Boring shared after the performance. “This opinion has been expressed often from my fellow residents. I hear, in fact, that it was well worth it, a sentiment with which I enthusiastically concur. Additionally, we are proud of ourselves for this very tangible accomplishment.”

“I am in awe of the focus, dedication and tenacity of these four women who presented an idea to bring a Steinway concert piano to the community and spearheaded a fundraising campaign with the Foundation,” said Mark. “Within months we had our brand new Steinway for all to enjoy for years to come. San Francisco Towers residents and supporters stepped up in a big way to fund this project. These four residents are an example of the heart and soul of our community, turning passion into action!” ●

Leadership Corner

Culture of philanthropy in action

The Foundation is honored to raise money for the HEART (Helping Employees at Risk Today) Fund to provide financial support to Front Porch staff members who face crisis situations. Much of the HEART Fund is raised through gifts from Front Porch staff members. Many sign up to give through regular payroll deductions.

Please join us to celebrate “leadership in action” from executive directors and divisional vice presidents who have made sustained gifts to the HEART Fund, modeling compassion and caring through their support. This “culture of philanthropy” radiates from the center of the organization, and we are grateful to our colleagues for representing the spirit of community that supports one another.

A few examples of leadership support of the Foundation’s HEART Fund:

- Ben Geske, executive director at Fredericka Manor (Chula Vista). His first gift to the Foundation was in 2008 and many of his gifts have supported the HEART Fund.
- Connie Yuen, executive director at St. Paul’s Towers (Oakland) and Douglas Tucker, executive director of Vista del Monte (Santa Barbara),



*Fredericka Manor Executive Director Ben Geske and his wife Rhonda make annual donations to the Foundation, supporting the HEART Fund and the Circle of Friends Fund.*

- have each supported the HEART Fund for 10 years or more.
- Craig Sumner and Chris Ichien, both divisional vice presidents who both served as executive directors of FP communities for many years, each made their first gifts to the Foundation 14 years ago and have been consistent HEART Fund supporters over the ensuing years.

We are proud to serve with colleagues whose leadership of their communities reflects a culture of compassion and care.

Katharine Miller  
*Executive Director*  
*Front Porch Communities Foundation* ●



Operation Snowflake continues a tradition of giving

For more than 20 years, Operation Snowflake, supported by Front Porch team members and business partners, has brought holiday joy to families and older adults living in Front Porch affordable housing communities. Front Porch owns or manages more than 30 affordable housing communities throughout California and Arizona that primarily serve low-income seniors and people with disabilities. Four of those communities serve low-income families with children. In 2002,

team members at the Front Porch Support Services office in Glendale started Operation Snowflake as a way to join together at the holidays and help those families fulfill their children’s holiday wish lists. The program, run by volunteer engagement manager Mary Kott, is made possible by Front Porch team members who volunteer

to shop for children’s wish lists. Gifts are then quietly delivered to the parents in time to wrap them before the holidays. Additional donations from staff and Front Porch business partners help fill in any gaps on the lists and provide grocery gift cards to each family as well. In 2023, Operation Snowflake made the holidays a little brighter for 34

children and also provided gift baskets to residents in two of the affordable communities serving older adults. “I’m so grateful for the support we receive for this program from the Front Porch team across California,” Mary said. “These families are a part of our Front Porch family, and this is a need we can help fill.” ●

*Jesse, a team member at South Bay Retirement in Compton, helped to hand out fruit baskets to residents during Operation Snowflake last year.*





## Igniting purpose and joy: the transformative power of creative engagement in aging services

Creativity has the powerful ability to transform our lives, both in the small moments and with life's big questions about meaning. Creative engagement programming fosters a sense of purpose, enhances physical wellbeing, and promotes a sense of resiliency. Making, observing, and discussing creative practices not only provides a platform for self-expression, it cultivates a supportive social environment that connects us to others.

Illustrating its mission “to cultivate meaningful relationships and experiences that respond creatively to changing needs,” Front Porch encourages creativity for individuals at every age. Creative aging allows people to express their history, who they are and who they are becoming,

recognizing that growth and change is possible for everyone.

To share the power of creativity, Creative Spark, a Front Porch Community Service, supports aging services and arts or culture organizations with consultation and training that energize staff and inspire innovative programming with older people. Within Front Porch, the Creative Spark team is able to bring these opportunities to residents at Front Porch communities through a grant funded by the California Dept. of Public Health (CDPH). Fines collected by the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), a federal agency, are put in a fund to provide quality of life improvements to residents of skilled nursing facilities (SNF).

This fund exists in every state, and is managed by the CDPH here in California. The new grant is for a three-year project to provide energizing and inspiring training to skilled nursing team members to magnify their creative engagement efforts and link SNF residents to the Social Call, Well Connected, and Creative Spark programs.

One key initiative, Explore Academy, offers a six-week staff training program delving into the history of creative aging and the research and best practices of creative engagement, inspiring staff to develop programming to enhance joy in themselves, residents and coworkers. There are five Front Porch communities participating: Webster House, Sunny View, Spring Lake Village,

**“I’m grateful for the opportunity to think about enriching our residents’ lives. It (Explore Academy) is making me think deeper.”**

— **Christine Davis, Webster House life enrichment specialist**

St. Paul’s Towers and Claremont Manor. The next phase involves training Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs) at these health care centers. “Collaborating with Front Porch communities in this way is thrilling,” Jessica McCracken, director of Creative Spark. “We see ourselves as

fueling the spark already present in staff and becoming a bridge to the incredible social connection programs of our Front Porch Community Services.”

“This type of creative, joy-filled, supportive training is necessary for staff who are experiencing unprecedented levels of burnout,” said Katie Wade, senior director of creative engagement. “The next phase is tackling a culture shift in how we think about the CNA role, which we hope provides an avenue to greater retention.”

For Front Porch team members, this has been an opportunity for many of them to infuse more of their creativity into work.

For others, it was a natural extension of who they are. Albert Mambou, life enrichment specialist, is a visual artist and musician who has worked at Claremont Manor for 20 years. He shared, “Whenever residents tell me they aren’t creative, I tell them it’s about the process of expressing yourself and not the final end product. The freedom of expression is therapeutic.”

At Webster House, residents are involved with the training too. “Creative projects change people for the better, especially new residents,” said Tim Larson, Webster House resident. “They...

***Igniting purpose and joy continues on page 7***



*Images show staff from multiple sites using experimental watercolor techniques to create butterflies representing personal transformation. Each butterfly joins a large collaborative art piece at Ruth’s Table’s Rediscovering in the Making exhibit, December 14<sup>th</sup>–February 8<sup>th</sup>. To learn more about Ruth’s Table, visit [ruthstable.org](http://ruthstable.org).*



# A lifeline in times of crisis for Front Porch team members



The Front Porch Communities Foundation’s HEART Fund was set up to help Front Porch team members who face a crisis. The HEART (Helping Employees At Risk Today) Fund has provided financial support to more than 275 of our team members who have faced an unexpected financial crisis. Help has ranged from critical medical care for a child to home repairs after a natural disaster, car repairs from an uninsured motorist crash to funeral costs for a parent.

Front Porch community residents and family members support the HEART Fund, but the majority of the funds are donated by Front Porch staff members, many of them with years of service to the organization. Greg Horner, a business systems analyst who has worked for the organization for seven years, has been giving since he started.

“Front Porch team members come from many backgrounds, and each has their personal circumstances which we don’t see,” Greg shared. “Any one of us can quickly find ourselves in a financial pinch, and it’s important to have a pool of support to draw from. The HEART Fund is a



Front Porch team members Greg Horner and Barbara Schwerdt are long-time supporters of the HEART Fund, supporting their colleagues who run into tough times.

**“We all run into tough times, and if I can make a difference in someone’s life by making a contribution to a fund that supports my colleagues, I’m all for it.”**

**— Barbara Schwerdt, CARING Housing Ministries director of training**

wonderful program that allows employees to help each other while keeping circumstances confidential, and I’m proud of our organization for administering it.”

Barbara Schwerdt has worked for CARING Housing Ministries (CHM), Front Porch’s affordable housing division, for over 30 years, starting as a resident manager at Pilgrim Tower in Los Angeles. She now serves as director of training for the CHM team, developing curriculum for the day-to-day work in the community and serving as a master trainer for Front Porch’s leadership development program, Front Porch University/5 Star College.

The motto of the CARING Housing Ministries team is One CARING Person Makes a Difference, and Barbara’s longtime support of the HEART Fund exemplifies that. “We all run into tough times, and if I can make a difference in someone’s life by making a contribution to a fund that supports my colleagues, I’m all for it,” Barbara said. “It seems like such a simple thing to do that has a huge impact on the lives of others.” ●

**To make a donation to the HEART Fund, visit [frontporch.net/donate](https://frontporch.net/donate) and choose HEART Fund from the dropdown menu. If you are a Front Porch team member who would like to donate through payroll deductions or would like to apply for emergency funds, please contact your local HR representative.**

# From resident to advocate: Charles Chapman’s impact on Spring Lake Village



Moving to Spring Lake Village (SLV) in Santa Rosa was a natural choice for Charles Chapman. “I lived in the area, so I rolled down the hill to Spring Lake Village,” he said with a laugh. Charlie was the first person to move into the newly built West Grove section of Spring Lake Village, in October 2014.

Since then he’s become deeply involved in the Spring Lake Village

community, serving on the Financial Study Group, the Bocce Ball Committee and the Emergency Preparedness Committee. He also acted in a holiday production of the play readers group. Charlie plays bridge four days a week, and helps to organize a tournament every Thursday afternoon. He typically goes swimming or to the gym in the mornings and then enjoys well-earned breakfasts with friends, but “It’s not just the food. It’s the camaraderie.”

Charlie is all about taking care of his community that he loves so much. As data chair of the Emergency Preparedness Committee, he works closely with staff on evacuation plans for Spring Lake Village, which is Front Porch’s largest community. He also served on the board of directors for Covia, before the affiliation with Front Porch.

During the past 18 years, Charlie has supported Spring Lake Village through gifts to the Foundation for the SLV Circle of Friends Residence Assistance Fund and the SLV Chapel Fund.

“Donating was a no brainer for me,” Charlie said. “It’s in my DNA. If you have the means, that’s what you do. It’s good to be part of giving back to something that’s going to help other people. It’s important to support the institutions you believe in, that you’re a part of.” ●

*Igniting purpose and joy continued from page 5*

make people happier and easier to get along with, and it gives them something to look forward to.”

That sentiment, that creative work increases quality of life, is a common refrain among trainees. “For patients with chronic pain, doing something artistic takes your mind off it,” Christine Davis, life enrichment specialist at Webster House, said. “It redirects it and allows it to be expressed, which is so helpful with pain management.”



While these stories show the effect of creative programming, the team will also measure the impact of Creative Spark’s creative engagement training through staff satisfaction measures, such as evidence of growth or workplace joy, and resident outcomes, such as changes in participation or increased social connection. Ultimately, the work is impacting how staff and residents connect to their source of meaning and purpose. ●

**To learn more about Creative Spark, visit [frontporch.net/community-services](https://frontporch.net/community-services) or email Jessica McCracken at [jmccracken@frontporch.net](mailto:jmccracken@frontporch.net)**



# Building brighter futures with scholarships for Front Porch team members

The residents of Front Porch communities are dedicated to showing their appreciation for the team members who consistently deliver exceptional care and service. One common expression of this support is through contributions to the Employee Scholarship Fund, a core fund of the Foundation at many communities.

At Sunny View, a Front Porch community in Cupertino, the scholarship fund was initially started with a gift from resident Wally Norum and his late wife Priscilla.

“It gives me a great sense of pride to help others who just need a little help to get to the next level in their careers,” Wally said. “My pride is most affected when I get a hug of gratitude from a scholarship recipient. It becomes an emotional event.”

Inspired by Wally’s generosity, other residents and family members of residents contribute to the fund as well. Since its inception in 2015, 20 team members have received scholarships to make their educational goals a reality.

“It is so incredible that residents like the Norums show how much



*Sunny View Chaplain Sam Schaar and Foundation Philanthropy Officer Kimberly Manning met with Wally Norum to thank him for his support of the Employee Scholarship at Sunny View, initially funded by Wally and his late wife Priscilla.*

they love our team by creating such a gift,” said Lynn North, chair of the Sunny View Philanthropy Committee. “It shows that we are a loving community that cares for one another.”

One recent scholarship recipient is Sunny View’s chaplain, Sam Schaar, who has served Sunny View residents for the past three years.

“I am deeply appreciative of the scholarship I received, because it is helping me toward my goal of becoming a board certified chaplain,” Sam said. “My goal is to become an instructor in this training so I can help train future generations of chaplains.”

**“It gives me a great sense of pride to help others who just need a little help to get to the next level in their careers.”**

**— Wally Norum, Sunny View resident and donor**

As chaplain, Sam seeks to meet the spiritual needs of residents at Sunny View. In order to do that, he must dive deeply into his own spiritual practices, including silence and poetry. Sam recently published a book of poetry called “Handles and Healing: Collected Poems.”

“The bulk of my time is spent connecting with residents,” Sam said. “This is the beating heart of what I do and, frankly, the part of my job which brings me the most joy. It can be difficult, to be sure, when you are talking with someone on hospice, or sitting with grieving family members as their loved one is passing, or encouraging staff

who are struggling — these types of experiences are tough; and yet, there is also the beauty of shared celebrations, recognizing special milestones and much more.”

“Our chaplaincy program has provided much needed spiritual support for our residents,” said Lynn. “We are blessed to have Sam’s beautiful and calm message, which has been such an inspiration to so many of our residents and team members.” ●



## Vista del Monte: looking to the future

Founded in 1964 as a community for retired teachers, Vista del Monte is located in Santa Barbara’s Hidden Valley, between the foothills and the sea. Throughout the decades since it first opened its doors, Vista grew into a senior living community serving people from all walks of life and expanded to include a health clinic and its renowned Fitness and Aquatic Center. The Fitness and Aquatic Center serves as a unique link with the surrounding community, a place open to all in the Santa Barbara area to enjoy exercise and recreation.

Several years ago, the community opened Summer House, a memory care neighborhood serving residents with Alzheimer’s and other dementias, and began offering Truly Yours, a program that brings personal assisted living services directly to residents in their homes at Vista. The community also recently enhanced resident amenities, including a new resident lounge, refurbished and expanded dining room and an outdoor patio.

In 2022, the Foundation partnered with Vista to pilot video touch-screens that tell resident and

community stories, provide information about the campus, and showcase the community’s compassion through charitable gifts to the Foundation.

Vista del Monte residents have a zest for life that matches the vitality of the entire Santa Barbara area. Some residents explore their creative sides, in groups like the Vista Voices Choral Group and the Vista del Monte Players theatre company. Others stretch their minds with lifelong learning classes taught by outside experts as well as by residents.

Vista del Monte has always been a generous community. Through gifts from residents, the community has been able to make numerous enhancements to its campus, including the opening of Summer House. Joanne Freeman, the chair of the VDM Philanthropy Committee, made a gift through her Donor Advised Fund (DAF) to support that project, and also regularly donates to the Employee Scholarship Fund. “When I was a child, my family...

**Vista del Monte continues on page 11**



# A new chapter of generosity for Judy Gilbert at Vista del Monte



For Judy Gilbert, the decision to move to Vista del Monte wasn't simply about downsizing. The challenges of maintaining a home and the isolation that often came with it had started to weigh heavily on her. She longed for companionship, for meaningful conversations and most importantly, for a community. "I felt like living in community is the best way to age," Judy shared. "After settling here a little over a year ago, the beautiful ambiance and the company of caring neighbors still bring a smile to my face."

As she delved deeper into her life at Vista del Monte, Judy learned about the Front Porch Communities Foundation through her new friends and neighbors. Their praises for the Foundation's work resonated with Judy's own values.

Eager to give back and be a part of something larger than herself, she discovered the benefits of a charitable gift annuity (CGA). A CGA offered Judy the chance to donate in a way that was both meaningful and financially prudent. Through this gift plan, available through the

Foundation, her gift annuity was funded by a Qualified Charitable Distribution, free of taxes, directly from her individual retirement account. The CGA provides Judy with lifetime income at a set rate. And after she passes away, the Foundation will receive the balance of her generous contribution to support the community she loves. "The numbers just worked for me," she explained. "It was a win-win situation."

## "Gift bunching" — one way to maximize charitable tax benefits

Fewer taxpayers have been itemizing deductions on their federal tax returns since 2018, when the standard deduction nearly doubled for everyone. While charitable giving has not decreased as a result, many donors are leaving money on the table when they cannot deduct their donations. Gift bunching, also called gift bundling, is a simple and effective strategy for taking advantage of charitable deductions when you would not otherwise be filing a Schedule A with your tax return.

By bunching two, three or even five years of donations into a single year and itemizing deductions, donors can enjoy tax savings in that year. For example, an individual over 65 years of

age who gives a total of \$10,000 to charity annually and has a standard deduction of \$15,700 for 2024 might instead "bunch" three years of gifts into one — giving a total of \$30,000 to her favorite charities in the year and itemizing her taxes. Doing so reduces her taxable income that year by nearly \$15,000 over her standard deduction and may allow her to further reduce her income by taking advantage of other available deductions (e.g. qualifying health-related expenses).

Donors can still designate their gifts for a specific purpose, program or favorite fund when bunching them. Consider talking with your tax advisor about a gift bunching plan to see if its right for you. ●

"It was important for me to be part of the tradition of giving at this community," Judy said. Her donation is designated for the Vista del Monte discretionary fund, which is directed to meet the community's most pressing needs. Judy does have certain causes close to her heart. She is particularly passionate about the Resident Assistance Fund, which serves as a "circle of friends" to help support residents who outlive their resources, and the Scholarship Fund, which helps Front Porch team members pursue their education goals. Her dream is for her contribution to also benefit the Fitness and Aquatic Center and the Caring Companions program, which trains resident volunteers to check on the well-being of other residents and offer one-on-one support.

"For many, there is a feeling in the back of our minds that we may run out of money and as a result, no longer be able to live at Vista. Having a resident assistance fund gives you a sense of security. I wanted to contribute to that," Judy said.

Her personal history played a major role in her support of the scholarship fund. "I'm a strong believer in education. I went to college on a scholarship, and I want others to have that same opportunity."

At Vista del Monte, Judy found not only a home but a purpose. Her journey turned out to be more than just a change of address; it became a journey of community, generosity, and shared dreams. ●

### Make a tax smart gift from your retirement account

Make a gift from your Individual Retirement Account directly to a charity (a "Qualified Charitable Distribution" or QCD) and avoid taxable income. You can satisfy all or part of your IRA required minimum distribution.

#### NEW SINCE 2023:

You can use up to \$50,000 from your IRA to establish a Charitable Gift Annuity and generate lifetime income.

### How can a Charitable Gift Annuity help you?

A Charitable Gift Annuity is a contract with the Front Porch Communities Foundation that provides you with fixed income for your lifetime.

**CGA rates increased in January 2024, providing greater returns. Contact the Foundation for a free illustration of your gift annuity rate and potential payment.**

**Phone: 818.254.4096**  
**Email: [fpcf@frontporch.net](mailto:fpcf@frontporch.net)**

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had a practice of giving back to others," Joanne said. "I've kept this practice throughout my adult life and love giving to programs that serve people in my local community."

Joanne's friend and neighbor Jeanne Giacobine chairs the Scholarship Committee, a role she took on because "it's a cause that means a lot to me." But Jeanne's charitable giving did not stop there. She has also donated to the Foundation's Resident Assistance Fund for her community, to assist those neighbors who, by no fault of their own, have outlived their resources. "I look at residents who have been here for a long time and think how scary it must be if they ran out of money," Jeanne said. "The Foundation elevates Front Porch and this community from just being a business to something bigger and greater. I'm happy to be part of that greater good." ●

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