

# Community MATTERS

front porch

COMMUNITIES  
FOUNDATION

Photo Credit: Timothy M. Schmidt

## Let the light in: why transparency makes philanthropy stronger *(and more joyful!)*

Philanthropy is built on a simple idea: trust. People give resources hoping to make the world better and trust organizations to use those gifts wisely. But trust needs sunlight to thrive. Transparency isn't just corporate jargon; it's the key ingredient for a vibrant, effective future of giving.

While respecting donor privacy is important, too much secrecy can accidentally create doubt, slow down progress, and hide what's really working (or not!). But when we throw open the doors? That's where the magic happens. Sharing the plans and the real

results — warts and all — shows accountability. It lets everyone see how donations turn into action, building confidence and making people want to get involved.

Transparency makes us smarter, together. When we can be open about our strategies, it sparks collaboration. Think of the energy and joy that comes when everyone is pulling in the same direction!

We see this firsthand in the stories of the Front Porch residents, team members and program participants in

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## Snapshots



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this issue. At Front Porch Communities Foundation, we work closely and openly with staff and residents to unlock creative solutions and builds a stronger sense of shared purpose in achieving great things through philanthropy. It shifts the focus from just giving to thriving together.

Finally, being open can actually inspire more giving. Donors want to see the impact and understand the story behind the work. Showing clear results and honest operations is way more compelling than a closed door. By embracing transparency, we don't just satisfy curiosity; we build a more trustworthy, effective, collaborative, and ultimately, more joyful way of giving back. ●

## Ruth's Table takes part in SFMOMA Retrospective

The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) celebrated the opening of Ruth Asawa: Retrospective, the first major national and international museum retrospective of the groundbreaking work of Ruth Asawa, with a Free Community Day earlier this year, designed in collaboration with Ruth's Table.

In 2009, Ruth Asawa donated her dining table to Bethany Center, a CARING Housing Ministries affordable housing community for seniors located in San Francisco's Mission District. The table, symbolic of social gathering, community and creativity, formed the start of the community art center and making space now called Ruth's Table, a Front Porch program.

"The work table sitting in our gallery was designed by Ruth's husband, architect Albert Lanier, whom she met as a student at Black Mountain College, and with whom she raised six kids in San Francisco's Noe Valley neighborhood," Evan Johnson, director of Ruth's Table, explained. "Ruth's way of weaving creativity into her daily life, well into her eighties, continues to inspire intergenerational arts offerings we serve up at Ruth's Table."

Due to its connection with the artist, Ruth's Table was invited by SFMOMA to collaborate on the Free Community Day celebrating the opening of the retrospective at the museum. As part of the event, Evan and his team curated "a day of performances and hands-on making, facilitated by local teaching artists who share Asawa's belief in the power of art making to build connection and community" in partnership with SFMOMA.

“We were tapped to produce these activity zones, inspired by Ruth Asawa’s approach to after school arts education,” Evan said. “It was a really exciting event that celebrated community projects and people working together to share in creative outcomes.”

In addition to the exhibition, SFMOMA shared a map from the Ruth Asawa website with the locations of the artist’s public works throughout San Francisco, including the mosaic Growth created for Bethany Center in 1968–1969. “It’s an inspiring message at this senior center entryway, symbolizing the new directions and beginnings that aging can bring,” the tour’s audio guide explained.

Ruth’s Table also partnered with SFMOMA for another event called Create and Connect. “We booked an amazing artist, Nobuko Miyamoto, who shared a performance in tribute to Ruth Asawa. Like Ruth, Miyamoto’s family experienced forced removal during World War II. Her performance invited the audience to come together in a shared experience and featured over 200 hundred paper fans made by Ruth’s Table’s Creative Re-use workshop participants,” Evan said.

Ruth Asawa was born in California in 1926. During World War II, she and her family were among the many Japanese Americans placed in internment camps, first at the Santa Anita racetracks and then Arkansas where she spent her senior year of high school at the Rohwer Relocation Center, “surrounded by eight watchtowers and barbed wire fences,” according to ruthasawa.com. After studying at Black Mountain College, she moved to San Francisco where she married architect Albert Lanier. She created her art, including her iconic looped wire sculptures, while raising six children. She created many pieces of public art for the city of San Francisco, was appointed to the city’s Art Commission, and co-founded the Alvarado School Arts Workshop, among other achievements.

“In addition to being a maker of her own art, she was also a very fierce advocate for arts education,” Evan said. Throughout her life, Asawa continued to work to provide access to art, including her work to create San Francisco’s public high school for the arts, renamed Ruth Asawa School of the Arts in 2010. Asawa died in 2013.

The SFMOMA exhibition is the first posthumous retrospective of her work. Later this year, it will also be presented at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, followed by Guggenheim Bilbao, Spain and Fondation Beyeler, Riehen/Basel, Switzerland. The tour coincides with what would have been Asawa’s 100th birthday on January 24, 2026.

Along with its involvement with the public programs related to Ruth Asawa: Retrospective, Ruth’s Table also hosted an exhibition called Rooted, featuring Bay Area-based Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander identified artists. Jun Yang, the show’s curator, shared, “In honor of AANHPI History Month and inspired by the transformative legacy of Ruth Asawa, Rooted is a visual manifesto that reminds us of the fierce battles fought for our rights and the enduring strength of our community.”



*Front Porch Senior Director of Creative Engagement Jessica McCracken and her sister Bridget attended the Free Community Day at SFMOMA, where local teaching artists led hands-on making workshops using repurposed materials.*

Through Ruth’s Table, Asawa continues to inspire people of all ages and cultures to create art. “The vision continues for intergenerational inclusion,” Evan said. “We have programming in multiple languages. And we do a lot of outreach with folks of all ability levels, including cognitive levels.”

***Ruth’s Table continues on page 4***



*The Free Community Day at SFMOMA was an opportunity for generations of all ages to come together with local artists to make art together and celebrate the legacy of Ruth Asawa.*

“Today, we had a program for memory care participants and their caregivers, and then neighborhood school groups that come and access the space for after school programs.”

Johnson is also inspired by Asawa’s life and legacy. “I think of her as a spiritual godmother,” he said. “If I’m ever feeling down or looking for inspiration, I can look to her story — not just her time as an arts educator and all her art making, but also her resilience.” ●

**Ruth Asawa: Retrospective will be showing at SFMOMA until September 2. Visit [sfmoma.org](https://sfmoma.org) for more information.**

**Visit [ruthstable.org](https://ruthstable.org) for more information about their exhibitions and creative opportunities.**

## Villa Gardens: where history, community and philanthropy intertwine

Villa Gardens, nestled in Pasadena, California, is a vibrant community woven together with threads of history, community spirit and a deep commitment to philanthropy. From its roots as a haven for retired teachers to its recent foray into filmmaking, Villa Gardens stands as a testament to the enriching power of connection and giving back.

Villa Gardens’ story began with a foundation laid by Ethel Percy Andrus, the visionary founder of AARP. In 1933, she established a haven for retired teachers in a refurbished Pasadena home. Her legacy of care evolved, and in 1987, the modern Villa Gardens opened its doors, welcoming not only teachers but a diverse community of residents. The historical significance of its founding, particularly the involvement of female educators, continues to resonate. To this day, the community embodies a spirit of intellectual curiosity and service.

Cherie Laaperi, who moved to Villa Gardens from Chicago to be closer to her family, emphasizes the sense of belonging and the ability to live life on her own terms she finds here. “I can do whatever I want to do, even if I just want to go home and read a book,” she says. “It’s down to earth. It’s a place where teachers and nurses live.”

Cherie’s passion for giving back is a shining example of the philanthropy that is deeply ingrained in the Villa Gardens ethos. This year, she chose to support the Villa Gardens discretionary fund and the HEART Fund, which aids Front Porch employees facing hardships, such as the Southern California fires this year.

The down-to-earth, supportive environment at Villa Gardens fosters genuine connections and a sense of shared purpose. The community illustrates this by actively supporting resident assistance, employee scholarships, and performing arts funds. Villa Gardens, with its rich history, vibrant community

and unwavering commitment to philanthropy stands as a beacon of what retirement living can be. It's a place where residents are empowered to live fulfilling lives, contribute to their community and

leave a lasting legacy. From supporting local causes to creating award-winning films, Villa Gardens embodies the true meaning of community and the transformative power of giving back.

In June 2023, Villa Gardens embarked on an extraordinary adventure, transforming into a film set for *Familiar Touch*, a film directed by Sarah Friedland that explores themes of aging, memory, and the relationship between residents and caregivers. This coming-of-(old)-age film premiered at the Venice Film Festival and won three awards: best director, best actress and best first feature.

The project was a testament to collaboration and mutual respect. Friedland and her crew engaged residents in hands-on workshops, teaching them about filmmaking. This process, facilitated by donations to the Villa Gardens community discretionary fund and part of Front Porch Communities Foundation, allowed residents to explore their creativity and contribute to the film in meaningful ways, including serving as members of the cast and crew.

The film's production was a deeply collaborative effort. Residents contributed their artwork to the set, and staff members, like Magali Galvez, shared their experiences to ensure authenticity. Resident Dick Myers, who played a character with cognitive impairment, delivered a poignant performance that moved the crew to tears.

In April, Front Porch hosted an exclusive screening of the film at the Music Box Theatre in Chicago, providing an opportunity for senior living and aging services leaders to preview the film before its summer theatrical release and discuss methods for amplifying its message and increasing its national audience. Villa Gardens Executive Director Shaun Rushforth, who attended with his family, said, "My mom's experience as a caregiver to her aging parents and aunt is what inspired my career choices, so it made sharing the film extra meaningful."

For Villa Gardens, *Familiar Touch* not only showcased the talent and spirit of the community but also fostered a deeper understanding between residents and staff. Creating the film left a lasting impact, with residents expressing a renewed sense of connection and purpose. "The experience changed us so we're not the same people that we were before we started," resident Lisa Tanahashi stated. "We got to know each other and we got to laugh with and at each other and now, we walk a little taller and we feel things a little deeper." ●



*Members of the Front Porch leadership team and Board of Directors joined the cast and director of Familiar Touch at a screening at Chicago's Music Box Theatre.*

*Photo credit: Timothy M. Schmidt*

**To learn more about the film and find showings near you, visit [familiartouchfilm.com](https://familiartouchfilm.com)**



## The heart of community: Circle of Friends

Imagine a group of friends who look out for you, care about you, and will always be there for you, especially when times get tough. This is the essence of the Circle of Friends, a vital fund of Front Porch Communities Foundation.

The Circle of Friends resident assistance fund supports residents who, through unforeseen circumstances, may outlive their financial resources. It represents the heartfelt community spirit thriving throughout Front Porch communities, where neighbors genuinely care for and help one another in times of need. Since the first Front Porch Community opened, residents and their families have generously supported what is now known as the Circle of Friends through annual gifts and legacy planning.

Communities across Front Porch celebrate and bolster the Circle of Friends in diverse ways, such as hosting a Philanthropy Week or a special event to promote the Circle of Friends fund. This year, a particularly creative and heartwarming approach to supporting the Circle of Friends blossomed in Northern California, inspired by the literary talents of one Spring Lake Village (SLV) resident, Patricia Snyder.

Patricia moved to the community in January 2023 from Southern Oregon, a move that unexpectedly led her to become both a humor writer and SLV historian. She chose SLV for its excellent reputation and its proximity to her daughter. Her writing adventure commenced in mid-2023 when she heard about the Annual Variety Show. “I wondered what I could do,” Patricia recalls. “So I wrote my first Fractured Fairy Tale and presented it to the audience at the show in August.” It was a hit. Since then, she has become a regular contributor to SLV’s “Wellsprings” publication, discovering an unexpected knack for humor. “I didn’t realize I could write comedy, but now it has become a part of my life,” she shares.

A tip from another resident led Patricia to a short history of SLV stored in the library. This discovery inspired her to write a fictionalized account of the village’s history, weaving in the true facts of SLV’s development with fictional residents, “Mildred and Marvin”. In December, she shared her “history” with Foundation team members Kimberly Manning and Leslie O’Brien. “Leslie,” Patricia notes, “with all her creativity, turned it into the Circle of Friends Residents Revue.” When Leslie sought a resident actor to portray Mildred, Patricia eagerly raised her hand. “And the rest,” she says with a smile, “is ‘history.’”



# and Patricia Snyder's inspiring tale

Inspired by Patricia's example, groups of residents at St. Paul's Towers and San Francisco Towers (pictured above) also developed and presented performances that told the story of the resident experience and underscored the importance of the Circle of Friends to their specific community, complete with a medley of songs. Leslie O'Brien, Associate Philanthropy Officer for the Northern California communities, provided extensive creative direction and logistical support.

Patricia has embraced her new role as a community storyteller and philanthropist. Her motivation for giving is heartfelt and personal: "I gave my first donation early because I loved the concert series. This year, I gave more and split my donation between the Circle of Friends and the concert series. I plan to do this every year because the people here do wonderful things and I love living here."

The Circle of Friends events inspired by her historical reenactments were a resounding success. "Everyone had such a wonderful time," Patricia enthused. "What are we going to do next year? More people want to participate, everyone is just so excited!" She praised Leslie O'Brien for her supportive role, noting, "Leslie was so easy to work with, and made everyone so comfortable." The sentiment was widely shared, with one attendee remarking it was "the best one yet." For Patricia and many others, it was a "labor of love," and the enthusiasm to repeat the experience is palpable, a testament to the vibrant community spirit fostered by creative residents such as Patricia as well as initiatives that communities work on together, such as the Circle of Friends. ●





*Deihleen Claffey, pictured here with her friends (from left, Gustavo Serifa, Teri Follett, James Carlson, Deihleen, Paula Busch, SFT executive director Mark Nitsche), supports her community through philanthropy because of a deep-rooted commitment to give back.*

## Learn, earn, return: Deihleen Claffey's guiding principle

Deihleen Claffey, a resident of San Francisco Towers for the past six years, embodies a commitment to community and a philanthropic spirit. Through her childhood on the San Francisco Peninsula and career in technology, Deihleen has cultivated a deep-seated desire to give back to the communities that have nurtured her.

"I was raised with the guiding principle of learn, earn, return," Deihleen shares, a philosophy that has been the cornerstone of the life she has built. During her "earn" phase, she had a distinguished career at Hewlett Packard, where she began as a developer and ascended to the role of Vice President of Human Resources before retiring at the age of 50.

This milestone marked the beginning of her dedicated "return" phase. Initially, this took the form of direct service and engagement. "It was important to give back to the community that had given me so much," she explains. Deihleen generously volunteered her time and energy, serving on the San Mateo Grand Jury and on the board of her local Soroptimists chapter.

A particularly impactful part of her volunteer journey was her years at the Catherine Center in San Mateo. Operated by St. Vincent de Paul, the Catherine Center is a residential program dedicated to supporting women recently released from prison. It provides a safe home and a holistic approach to re-entry, offering

practical support, emotional and spiritual counseling, and resources to help women rebuild their lives, understand the root causes of their incarceration and prepare for employment. "I worked with women who had gotten out of prison and prepared them for getting a job and all that entails," Deihleen recalls. "It meant helping them really get to know themselves."

After years of dedicated volunteering, Deihleen transitioned to a new phase, focusing on enjoying life, which included joining the Metropolitan Club and, eventually, making San Francisco Towers her home.

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# A qualified charitable distribution from your IRA is a winning strategy

A Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) from an Individual Retirement Account (IRA) offers a tax-efficient way for individuals aged 70½ or older to support a public charity, like Front Porch Communities Foundation. QCDs are direct transfers of funds from an IRA to a qualified charitable organization and can satisfy all or part of your required minimum distribution (RMD). This strategy has become increasingly popular among residents and retirees looking to align their charitable giving with their tax planning.

## Tax advantages

One of the primary benefits of a QCD is its favorable tax treatment. Although traditional IRA withdrawals are typically included in taxable income, a QCD allows donors to exclude up to \$108,000 per year from their gross income. This exclusion is especially useful for those who do not itemize deductions and instead take the standard deduction, as charitable gifts made through QCDs *can provide a tax benefit even without itemizing*.

Reducing taxable income through a QCD can also help in other ways, such as lowering adjusted gross income (AGI), which in turn may reduce Medicare premiums or the taxable portion of Social Security benefits. By keeping their AGI lower, donors can potentially avoid income-related surcharges and other tax thresholds.

## Meeting required minimum distributions (RMDs)

For IRA owners aged 73 or older (as of 2025), annual RMDs are mandatory. Failure to take RMDs can result in significant penalties. A QCD can be used to satisfy all or part of the RMD requirement, while also supporting a charitable

cause. This makes it a valuable tool for individuals who do not need the additional income from their IRA and prefer to use it for philanthropy.

## Streamlined giving and long-term impact

A QCD is a straightforward way to make a charitable gift. The distribution must be made directly from the IRA custodian to the qualified charity, meaning the donor does not receive the funds. This direct transfer ensures compliance with IRS rules and simplifies recordkeeping. Making a QCD allows donors to preserve their legacy and have a meaningful impact on causes they care about, while also managing their retirement income in a tax-smart way. For those with charitable intentions, a QCD offers a powerful combination of generosity and financial efficiency.

## The right choice for many of our supporters

An IRA QCD gift provides a unique opportunity for eligible donors to make a lasting charitable impact in their community while enjoying significant tax benefits. It's an ideal strategy for retirees who want to maximize their giving potential and minimize their tax liability. Front Porch Communities Foundation staff can provide you with a simple, one-page instruction sheet and direction letter to simplify the process. As always, individuals should consult with financial or tax advisors to determine how a QCD might fit into their overall retirement and estate planning strategy.

Keith Church  
Director of Planned Giving  
Front Porch Communities Foundation ●



## A movement of connection and community powers the 14th annual fundraising golf tournament

Earlier this summer, community friends, dedicated staff, and valued business partners joined Front Porch Communities Foundation for the 14th Annual Celtic Cup, uniting to support Front Porch Community Services, a suite of programs that empower individuals with the tools and the community they need to thrive.

This year's tournament was held at the La Cañada Flintridge Country Club where golfers enjoyed a challenging course and stunning scenery. Following the tournament, participants gathered for lunch and an inspiring presentation. The power of this work was brought to life through the stories of those whose lives have been transformed.

Guests watched a video featuring Russ and Anne, a Home Match pair whose story showcased the program's ability to create not just housing solutions, but deep, familial bonds and a new vision for community.





The group also heard the powerful testimonial of Patricia, a participant in Well Connected Español. She shared how the program was a vital lifeline that combatted isolation and enriched her life, connecting her to a vibrant hub for learning and belonging.

A heartfelt thank you to everyone who supported this year's Celtic Cup. The passion for this work was echoed by our partners, including Susan Bogan from AgePop X, who shared:

"Thank you Front Porch Communities Foundation and Services for hosting such an amazing event. . .this is special work you are doing — connecting people and changing lives. And challenging how we think about aging — it's not retiring or stopping — it's what else might there be and what else might we do."

The Celtic Cup remains a beloved tradition that beautifully illustrates the power of coming together to make a difference. We are grateful for the partnership and friendship of all who attended and look forward to continuing this important work together.

The energy from this year's event provides incredible momentum. We are already looking forward to building on this success at the 2026 Celtic Cup and will be sharing more information in the months to come. Stay tuned! ●





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“Moving into the Towers was my way of creating community for myself, seeing as I don’t have much close family,” she notes. “There are phenomenal people from all backgrounds at the Towers; you can create as much joy as you can handle here.”

Now, her “return” is primarily asset-based, though her passion for community remains the driving force. “I give to a number of causes, but again, it’s important to give to my community,” she emphasizes. This commitment is clearly demonstrated through

her generous support of San Francisco Towers and, notably, the Circle of Friends resident assistance fund that supports those who may have outlived their resources.

Reflecting on a Circle of Friends event, Deihleen felt a strong call to action. “I felt that, as a community, we could give more. There are so many people here living into their 90s and 100s that weren’t expecting to live this long and a few may be facing financial challenges,” she observes. “I would hope if I found myself

there, I would be able to continue to live proudly in my community.”

Deihleen Claffey’s journey to a philanthropic leader within San Francisco Towers is a testament to her enduring “learn, earn, return” philosophy. Her generosity, rooted in a deep appreciation for community and a desire to support her neighbors, creates a lasting impact, ensuring that San Francisco Towers remains a place where residents not only thrive, but also care for one another with compassion and dignity. ●

**Make a difference today with a gift  
at [frontporch.net/philanthropy](https://frontporch.net/philanthropy)**

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