

A TOAST TO OUR VOLUNTEERS

Over the past couple of months, we've had the joy of celebrating the people who make everything we do possible, YOU. Back in August, our South Santa Barbara County volunteers gathered for a special appreciation dinner at El Paseo Restaurant in Santa Barbara. Last month, our San Luis Obispo County volunteers celebrated at Me-n-Ed's Pizza in Pismo Beach. **Two counties, two very different menus, and one shared reason to celebrate.**

These evenings weren't just dinners, they were a chance to say out loud what we feel every day: **that none of this works without you.** Every mile driven, every grocery run, and every ride to an appointment represents **a choice someone made to show up for a neighbor who needed them.** Across both rooms, that same spirit was impossible to miss, volunteers swapping stories over shared clients and finally meeting staff members they'd only ever spoken to by phone, or never spoken to at all.



EL PASEO RESTAURANT 8/19/2026



ME-N-ED'S PIZZA 9/22/2026



ME-N-ED'S PIZZA 9/22/2026

To every volunteer who joined us in Santa Barbara and Pismo Beach, and to every volunteer who couldn't make it but shows up for a client anyway, **THANK YOU.** We hope the Mexican food, the pizza, and the company made it clear how much you mean to this community.

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Meet the newest member of our team

Join us in welcoming Refugio "Cuco" Rodríguez as the new Deputy Director for Community Partners in Caring! He brings decades of experience serving the community and leading nonprofit endeavors. He is a seasoned leader in philanthropy, racial equity, and community engagement. Most recently Chief Equity & Program Officer at the Hope and Heal Fund, he also spent years as a Program Officer at the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

Locally, he previously led Santa Barbara County's implementation of the Mental Health Services Act and established the Santa Barbara's first Latino Mental Health Consumer and Family Advocacy Network.

In his new role, Cuco will be working closely with Hilda Zacarias, our Executive Director across the organization, with a particular focus on programming, helping shape and strengthen the services that connect our volunteers with the clients who need them most.



October brings three meaningful reminders about those who live with limited sight, the health information we all deserve to understand, and the emotional well-being we all deserve to feel.

Blindness Awareness Month

1

Each October, Blindness Awareness Month shifts the focus away from perceived limitations and toward the **resilience, independence, and everyday abilities** of people who are blind or have low vision. More than 7 million Americans live with significant vision loss, and the month exists to help the rest of us understand what that experience is actually like, and how to be a better neighbor, friend, or stranger in passing .



October 15 marks **Blind Americans Equality Day**, originally established in 1964 as White Cane Safety Day and renamed in 2011 to reflect its deeper purpose: celebrating the achievements of people who are blind and promoting their equal place in every part of community life. The white cane itself isn't just a mobility tool, it's a symbol of independence, and by law, drivers and cyclists must yield the right of way to anyone carrying one.

The people living with vision loss in our community aren't defined by what they can't see, but by everything they continue to do, **independently**, every single day.

Health Literacy Month

2

Understanding your own health information shouldn't feel like translating a foreign language, but for many older adults, it does. Studies show that 71% of adults over 60 have difficulty using printed health materials, and 68% find it hard to interpret numbers like dosages or lab results.

That's not a reflection of intelligence, it's a reflection of how complicated the healthcare system can be.

Health Literacy Month is a reminder that **you have every right to ask for information in a way that actually makes sense to you**. A few ways to make health information easier to manage:

- Don't hesitate to say "I don't understand, can you explain that differently?"
- Bring someone with you to appointments to help take notes or ask questions
- Keep a written list of your medications and what each one is for
- Repeat instructions back in your own words to make sure you've got them right



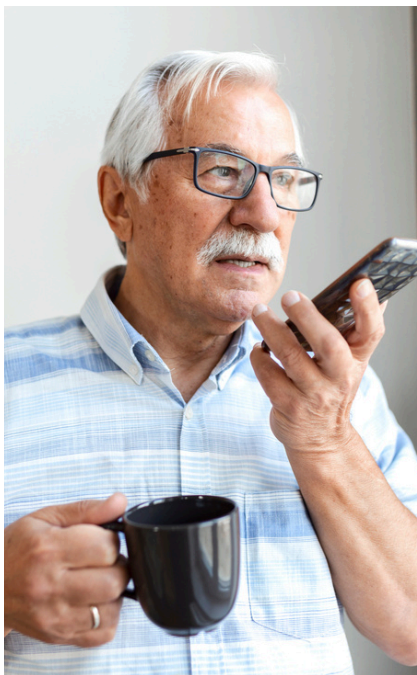
Feeling emotionally well isn't about being happy all the time, it's about staying connected and resilient, even when life gets hard. Research from the National Institute on Aging links loneliness and social isolation to real health risks, including high blood pressure, heart disease, and cognitive decline. Interestingly, isolation and loneliness aren't the same thing, you can live alone without feeling lonely, or feel lonely surrounded by people. What matters most is a sense of purpose and genuine connection.

A few ways to nurture emotional wellness this month:

- Reach out to someone you haven't spoken with in a while, a call counts
- Say yes to one small social invitation this week
- Volunteer or help someone else, purpose is protective
- Talk to your doctor if sadness or isolation lasts more than two weeks



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The Power of a Weekly Check-In

It doesn't take much to make someone feel less alone, sometimes it's just a phone ringing at the right moment. Research from the National Institute on Aging has found that older adults who maintain regular, meaningful contact with others tend to have lower rates of depression, stronger immune function, and even better cognitive health over time. The key word is regular. A single visit helps, but a standing rhythm, the same day each week, the same familiar voice, is what actually protects against the slow drift into isolation.

That's part of why consistency matters so much in the work our volunteers do. A ride to an appointment or a weekly grocery run isn't just a errand getting done, it's a scheduled point of connection that a client can count on, week after week. For someone living alone, knowing that Tuesday means a familiar face at the door can matter as much as the errand itself.

Make it a habit

Once a week, reach out to someone just to say hello, a call, a text, or a short visit all count. **It doesn't need to be a big gesture.** Even a brief "thinking of you" can brighten someone's day and strengthen the connection on both ends. Put it on the calendar like an appointment. The people who benefit most from connection are often the ones least likely to ask for it, so making the first move, consistently, is a quiet but powerful gift.

Meet Our Guide Dog in Training Dr. Miles

Dr. Miles is back this month in a new role: honorary Guide Dog in Training, in honor of Blindness Awareness Month. While he's not actually trained to guide anyone (he still gets distracted by squirrels during rounds), Dr. Miles is here to remind our community **how much independence a trained guide dog, a volunteer ride, or a steady helping hand can offer someone living with vision loss.**

A trained guide dog gives someone the confidence to move through the world independently. Our volunteers offer that same gift in a different form, showing up to drive someone to an appointment, run an errand, or simply check in, one ride at a time.



Meet Our Health Literacy Officer Ms. Daisy

Ms. Daisy is trading her Feline Safety Officer badge for a new title this month: Health Literacy Officer. In honor of Health Literacy Month, Ms. Daisy wants **every neighbor to feel confident asking questions at the doctor's office, no question is too small, and no explanation is too basic to ask for twice.**

Ms. Daisy will be sharing simple tips on social media all month long for making sense of medications, appointments, and paperwork, because feeling informed is part of feeling well.



Find Community Partners in Caring on Facebook and Instagram, and when you spot Dr. Miles or Ms. Daisy, drop a comment and let them know you're rooting for them. **A simple "hello" or a paw print emoji** goes a long way in helping more neighbors discover the volunteers making a difference, one mile at a time.

[instagram.com/cpcaring/](https://www.instagram.com/cpcaring/)
[facebook.com/PartnersInCaring](https://www.facebook.com/PartnersInCaring)

Sharing their posts with your own friends and followers is an even bigger help, and it means so much to us!

FUN PAGE 1

HOROSCOPES

Mexican Restaurant

C H I L E R E L L E N O S
A L B O N D I G A S Q J K
I E T A L O C O H C T O H
O N E P A L A J F L A N E
D C M E H C I V E C V S P
A U P F L A U T A S E A A
E N A Q S L O A A M T D S
R O N L C H O R I Z O A O
B L A C K B E A N S M L L
N S D M F T A C O S A I E
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C H U R R O S Y R L C N U
Q I S A D A T S O T I E B
A L I U Q E T A M A L E S
R I U S O P A P I L L A V

ALBONDIGAS

FLAN

BLACK BEANS

FLAUTAS

BUNUELOS

HOT CHOCOLATE

CAMOTE

JALAPENO

CEVICHE

MENUDO

CHILE RELLENOS

MOLE

CHILI

SALSA

CHORIZO

SOPAPILLA

CHURROS

TACOS

CORNBREAD

TAMALES

EMPANADAS



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Aries (March 21 - April 19): A name you have not thought about in months comes to mind. Call, write, or knock – the reconnection is worth the small effort. Lucky Number: 8

Taurus (April 20 - May 20): Something you meant to learn years ago turns up again. Give it one hour, Taurus, and you will want to keep going. Lucky Day: October 11

Gemini (May 21 - June 20): You have carried an idea around long enough. Put it on paper this month, Gemini – rough is fine. Finished can wait. Lucky Number: 1

Cancer (June 21 - July 22): Get out and see the color while it lasts. An afternoon drive with no particular destination does you more good than you expect. Lucky Day: October 4

Leo (July 23 - August 22): Someone near you is quietly stuck. Your offer of help costs you an hour and means far more than an hour to them. Lucky Number: 6

Virgo (August 23 - September 22): You have been careful for a long stretch, Virgo. Spend a little on something that pleases you, and skip the arithmetic this once. Lucky Day: October 19

Libra (September 23 - October 22): Your season opens, and so does a door you thought had shut. Start the thing, Libra. The first step is smaller than you think. Lucky Number: 4

Scorpio (October 23 - November 21): Your season arrives with cooler evenings. Make one room warmer – a lamp, a chair moved closer – and you will use it all winter. Lucky Day: October 26

Sagittarius (November 22 - December 21): You do not have to go anywhere this month. A slow Sunday with nothing scheduled restores more than another trip would. Lucky Number: 9

Capricorn (December 22 - January 19): The end of the year is closer than it looks. An hour spent now on next year's plans saves a scramble in December. Lucky Day: October 8

Aquarius (January 20 - February 18): A kindness you did and forgot about comes back around. Accept it graciously, Aquarius – letting someone return a favor is its own gift. Lucky Number: 2

Pisces (February 19 - March 20): One box, one shelf, one drawer. Clear a single small space, and the lightness surprises you enough to go do another. Lucky Day: October 30

FUN PAGE 2

TRIVIA TEASER: Puppet Show

1. On "Captain Kangaroo," the puppet Mr. Moose was always dropping what items onto the head of the Captain? a-Keys, b-Mushrooms, c-Kittens, d-Ping-pong balls.
2. Which ventriloquist used puppets named Charley Horse and Lamb Chop? a-Jeff Dunham, b-Edgar Bergen, c-Shari Lewis, d-Paul Winchell.
3. Which Muppet performer operated and voiced Yoda in "The Empire Strikes Back"? a-Jim Henson, b-Frank Oz, c-Dave Goelz, d-Richard Hunt.
4. What was the name of the puppet king who ruled the Neighborhood of Make-Believe on "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood"? a-Joffrey, b-Porthos, c-Palpatine, d-Friday XIII.
5. Who played the puppeteer who discovered the portal into John Malkovich's mind in the movie "Being John Malkovich"? a-Christopher Walken, b-John Cusack, c-Tobey Maguire, d-Billy Crystal.
6. Often seen on "The Ed Sullivan Show," what kind of animal was the puppet character Topo Gigio? a-Mouse, b-Dog, c-Dragon, d-Alligator.
7. Which Muppet made the cover of "Life" magazine in August 1980? a-Kermit the Frog, b-Big Bird, c-Miss Piggy, d-Rowlf the Dog.
8. On the early television favorite "Kukla, Fran and Ollie," what sort of creature was Ollie? a-A bear, b-A rabbit, c-A horse, d-A dragon.
9. What was the name of the car-driving cat puppet seen on "Saturday Night Live"? a-Toonies, b-Rex, c-Miss Kitty, d-Sterling.
10. Who brought Pinocchio to life in the Disney movie? a-The Black Knight, b-The White Lady, c-The Blue Fairy, d-The Red Dwarf.



"I don't have anything where troubles melt like lemon drops for at least three months."

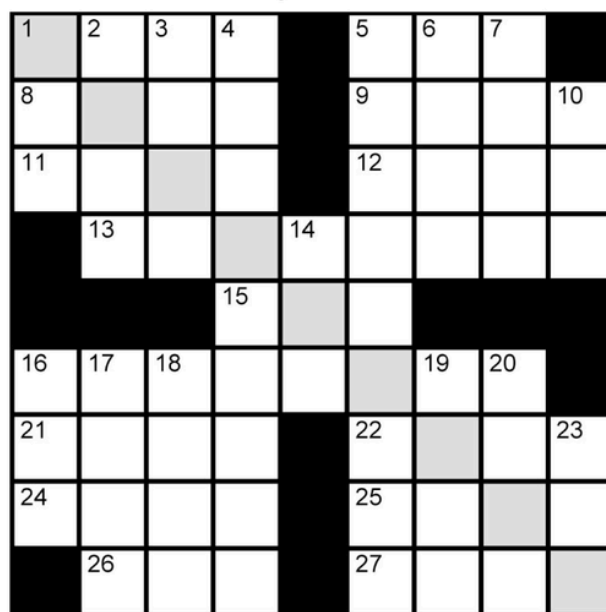
Emotional Response

Across

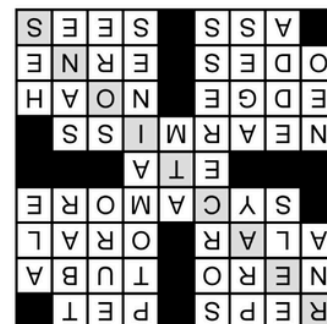
1. Gym set
5. Darling
8. "I, Claudius" role
9. Band member
11. Apple spray
12. Face-to-face exam
13. Buttonwood
15. In-flight info, for short
16. Close call
21. Halftime lead, e.g.
22. Wyle of "ER"
24. Horace volume
25. Coastal raptor
26. Balaam's mount
27. Attends

Down

1. Biochemistry abbr.
2. Congers
3. Beseech
4. Witch
5. Food poisoning
6. 100 cents
7. Alpine transport



10. A pint, maybe
14. Store convenience, for short
16. "The Matrix" hero
17. Icelandic epic
18. Long, long time
19. Achy
20. All there
23. "For ___ a jolly ..."



The headline is a clue to the answer in the diagonal.

ANSWERS: 1-D, PING-PONG BALLS. 2-C, SHARI LEWIS. 3-B, FRANK OZ. 4-D, FRIDAY XIII. 5-B, JOHN CUSACK. 6-A, MOUSE. 7-C, MISS PIGGY. 8-D, A DRAGON. 9-A, TOONIES. 10-C, THE BLUE FAIRY.

DID YOU KNOW...

...shorter days can actually affect mood, not just energy?

As daylight hours shrink in the fall, some people experience a dip in mood known as seasonal affective disorder, and older adults are especially susceptible. Getting outside during daylight hours, even for a short walk, and keeping indoor spaces well-lit can help offset the seasonal shift.



... raking leaves and light gardening count as real exercise?

Fall yard work, like raking or planting bulbs, is a gentle, functional way to maintain flexibility, balance, and strength. It's a good reminder that movement doesn't have to look like a formal workout to be good for you, a little time outdoors in crisp autumn air benefits both body and mood.



...when the keys go away, so can everything else

For many older adults, **giving up driving isn't just an inconvenience, it's a turning point.** Research shows that non-drivers are more than twice as likely to become socially isolated, and the decline in health and mood often begins within the first year of giving up the keys. Fewer errands, fewer appointments, fewer visits with friends, it all adds up quickly.

That's exactly where **a volunteer driver changes the story.** A single ride to an appointment or a weekly grocery trip isn't just an errand, it's a lifeline that keeps someone connected to the world outside their front door.

And the benefits go both ways. Studies show that older adults who volunteer regularly report less depression and anxiety, lower blood pressure, and even a slower rate of cognitive aging. In one national program, nearly two-thirds of volunteers felt less isolated after just one year of service.

If you've ever thought about becoming a volunteer driver, **this is the moment.** One ride can keep someone connected, and it might do more for your own health than you expect.



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HILDA'S CORNER



WE'RE ALL CAREGIVERS, WHETHER WE CALL OURSELVES THAT OR NOT

Almost all of us have served as a "family caregiver," whether for an aging parent, a grandparent, or simply a friend who needed help. AARP's newest report found that family caregivers nationwide provided nearly 50 billion hours of unpaid care in 2024, worth an estimated 1.01 trillion dollars, more than all federal, state, and local Medicaid spending combined. Read the report yourself at www.aarp.org/valuing.

If you're quietly carrying this role, you don't have to carry it alone. Caring Together Santa Barbara County offers resources for unpaid family caregivers at caringtogethersbc.org.

OCTOBER 2026

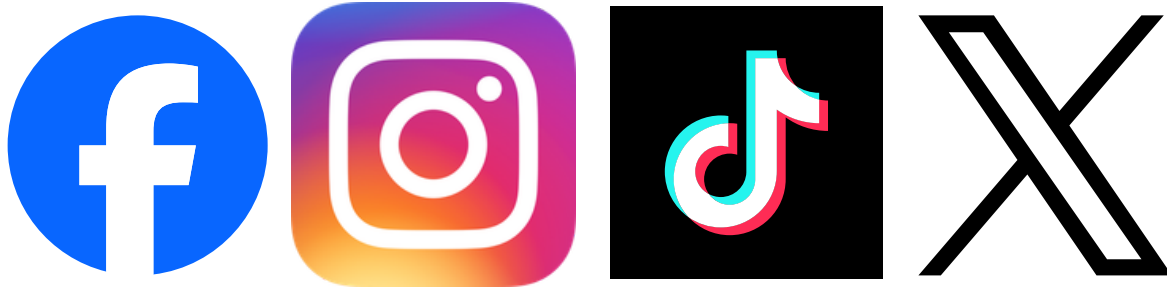
At Community Partners in Caring, we believe in building "Communities of Caring," and each of you plays an important part in that mission.

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Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3
4 Fire Prevention Week	5 World Teachers' Day	6	7	8	9	10 World Mental Health Day
11	12	13	14 Senior Expo of Santa Barbara County @Earl Warren Showgrounds 9am - 12pm	15	16	17 80th Annual Pismo Beach Clam Festival @ Pismo Beach Pier Plaza
18 80th Annual Pismo Beach Clam Festival @ Pismo Beach Pier Plaza	19	20 World Osteoporosis Day	21	22	23	24 Make a Difference Day
25	26	27	28	29 Cat Day	30 Candy Corn Day	31 Halloween



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