

# Marin Independent Journal

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## Neighbors in need get help through wave of volunteers

### SHELTER ORDER

Community members deliver groceries, supplies to seniors

By Adrian Rodriguez

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With Marin ordered to stay home, county residents have stepped up to help their neighbors in need.

“I think this is what community is all about,” said Kathleen Maher, a volunteer at Sausalito Village, whose primary task has been picking up and delivering groceries to seniors in the nonprofit’s more than 200-member network.

Members like Joan Procter, 82, a former board member of the nonprofit, live an independent lifestyle, but now two weeks into a shelter-in-place order, she said, “I probably shouldn’t be going out and putting myself at risk. I’m very, very grateful,” she said after receiving her first grocery delivery this week from Maher.

The coronavirus pandemic has propelled a wave of volunteerism across the county. Existing volunteer organizations have ramped up services where possible and new grassroots efforts in which neighbors help neighbors have sprouted up in several communities.

In Fairfax, the Town Council formed a coronavirus support task force earlier this month to brainstorm ways to respond to the pandemic.

The group has a one-to-one matching program in which residents who need help with everyday errands are paired with a volunteer, said Stephanie Hellman, a town councilwoman who spearheaded the effort. More information is at [bit.ly/39j2hhj](https://bit.ly/39j2hhj).

“We wanted to be proactive in offering services and really get in front of the crisis before things get really hairy,” she said.

Wearing face masks and gloves, Hellman and other volunteers have been canvassing Fairfax neighborhoods and leaving flyers on front doors alerting residents to the new service. The group has recruited more than 60 volunteers since going live about a week ago.

“A lot of these people just need someone to talk to,” Hellman said. “Whether it’s a phone call or text, this social isolation is just exacerbating for seniors who live alone.”

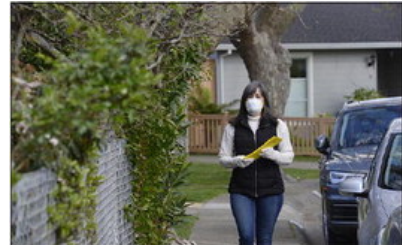
Resident BJ Hauge signed on to get a grocery order delivered.

“All I have to do is make my list and fax it over,” she said. “My main concern is that I don’t



Age-Friendly volunteer Kathleen Maher in Sausalito delivers food to seniors during the coronavirus shelter orders.

PHOTOS BY SHERRY LAVARS  
— MARIN INDEPENDENT JOURNAL



Fairfax Councilwoman Stephanie Hellman distributes flyers about the food delivery program.

Residents of the neighborhood can email Ganas at [villarealboard@gmail.com](mailto:villarealboard@gmail.com)

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## Neighbors

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want to go out and be exposed. I think it's marvelous what they are doing."

The residents of Ross have established a similar community network. Erik Masterson, chief of police, put out a call for volunteers last week to help seniors with everyday tasks.

"That includes, picking up mail, picking up prescriptions, getting groceries, and in some cases just making a couple of phone calls to check-in and add some personal contact," Masterson said. "We are neighbors helping neighbors."

Masterson said they have plenty of volunteers on hand and are seeking more residents who require support. Seniors in Ross can request help by emailing [emasterson@townofross.org](mailto:emasterson@townofross.org).

San Rafael neighborhoods have also been organizing help, some more formally than others.

Senta Ritter, a 17-year-old senior at San Rafael High School, works at Trader Joe's and has offered to pick up groceries for her neighbors and deliver the goods on her way home in Gerstle Park.

It started after her brother Andreas, 15, asked their neighbor Amy Likover, a teacher at San Rafael High School, if she would like help getting food and other supplies. Likover is chairwoman of the Federation

### Of San Rafael Neighborhoods.

Since then, Senta Ritter decided to announce her services on NextDoor.

"It's nice for all of us to come together and support each other," she said. "I'm going to the grocery store for work already, so this just made sense."

Andreas added, "it makes everyone feel better to help people. That positivity builds off of itself and helps everyone in a strange time like this."

Likover said she is impressed with her teen neighbors and other "neighborly acts of kindness" that she has heard about through the federation.

In the Villa Real neighborhood for example, an 88home community near Loch Lomond Marina, neighbors took it upon themselves to seek out those in need in the community.

"One neighbor said he lives next door to a senior and he told him, 'I'm your person. Contact me if you need anything,'" said Elaine Ganas, president of the property owners' association. "It's great to see. We're such a close-knit community. It's heartwarming and wonderful."

For those who may not have help, Ganas helped establish a volunteer program similar to the one in Fairfax in which a volunteer is paired with a person in need.

for more information.

Similarly, Age-Friendly San Anselmo has set up a volunteer phone check-in system. With the help of the town's recreation department, volunteers are also enlisting folks to help run online book clubs, music groups, morning coffee chats and more. Contact Kevin Macleod, recreation coordinator at [kmacleod@townofsananselmo.org](mailto:kmacleod@townofsananselmo.org) for more information.

Existing organizations, such as Sausalito Village, have been forced to put out calls for new recruits.

"Many of our volunteers are seniors," said Tricia Smith, president of Sausalito Village and director of its Call A Ride for Sausalito Seniors program, or CARRS. Smith said they are need of help.

The San Rafael-based Center for Nonprofit and Volunteer Leadership has seen the need trending in the nonprofit world, said Elaine Tokolahi, director of volunteer services.

CVNL has enlisted 284 volunteers who have made 485 connections with nonprofits, she said.

"We recognized there was a gap and we were able to help fill that void," she said.

Residents interested in volunteering can apply at [bit.ly/2WQeFmu](https://bit.ly/2WQeFmu).