

# Living Well

*A monthly special section of news & information for seniors*

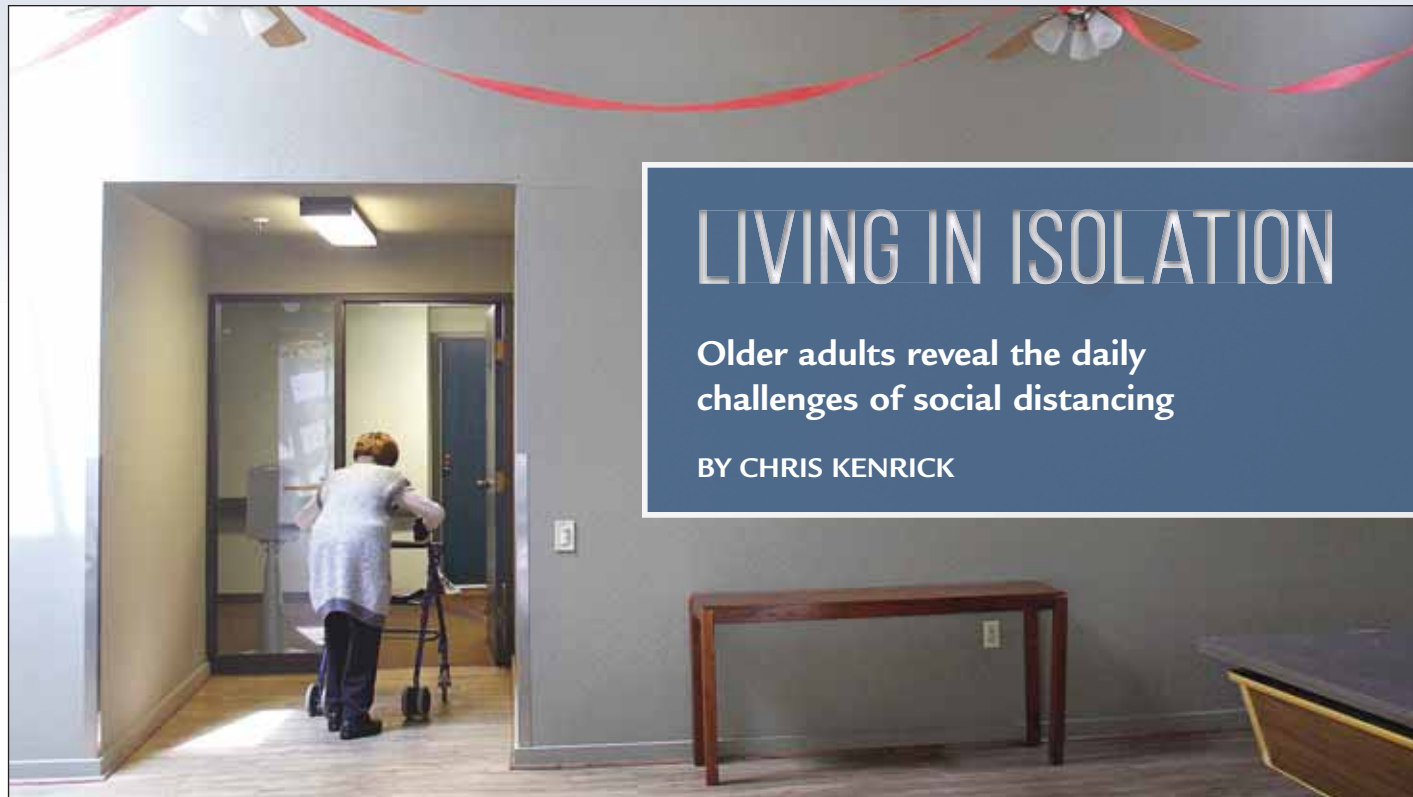
**AVENIDAS HOME HELP ...** Palo Alto senior services agency Avenidas has closed its physical facilities for the duration of the stay-home-order but has redeployed its staff to **help seniors at home.** For general help, go to [Avenidas.org](http://Avenidas.org) or call 650-289-5400; for help with food and medicine deliveries, call 650-289-5411.

**TAKEOUT MEALS ...** The Palo Alto senior nutrition program **La Comida** is offering takeout meals Mondays through Fridays. Pickup locations are at Stevenson House, 455 E. Charleston Road, between 11:15 a.m. and 12:15 p.m.; and the downtown Palo Alto Masonic Lodge, 457 Florence St., between 11:45 a.m. and 12:15 p.m. For more information, go to [lacomida.org](http://lacomida.org) or call 650-322-3742. **Community Services Agency's Senior Nutrition Program** is offering curbside pickup for boxed lunches at 266 Escuela Ave., Mountain View, from 11:30 a.m. to 12:15 p.m., Mondays through Fridays. For more information, call 650-968-0386.

**MEAL DELIVERIES ... Meals on Wheels** is delivering meals to those in need in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties. San Mateo County Meals on Wheels, run by the nonprofit Peninsula Volunteers, Inc., is delivering 3,000 meals per week and reports that its new client call volumes are "off the charts." If you live in San Mateo County, go to [penvol.org/mealsonwheels](http://penvol.org/mealsonwheels). If you live in Santa Clara County, go to [mysourcewise.com/meals](http://mysourcewise.com/meals) or call 408-350-3200.

**LIVESTREAM TOWN HALL ...** Dr. Mehrad Ayati, director of the Geriatric Center in Los Altos, will lead a virtual town hall **discussion on COVID-19 via ZOOM** on Friday, April 3, 11:15 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., free. RSVP required. Ayati will provide the latest updates on COVID-19, particularly as they pertain to the senior community. He also will be available to answer questions submitted in advance to [info@avenidas.org](mailto:info@avenidas.org). For more information or to register, go to [avenidas.org](http://avenidas.org) (online events).

**SENIORS-ONLY SHOPPING ...** The following local grocers are offering priority checkout or special shopping hours for seniors during the COVID-19 crisis: **Country Sun**, Wednesdays, 8-10 a.m., 650-324-9190; **Market at Edgewood**, Limited pick-up and delivery services for vulnerable individuals, [marketatedgewood.com/delivery](http://marketatedgewood.com/delivery), 650-665-7590; **Mollie Stone's**, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, 7-8 a.m., 650-323-8361; **Piazza's**, Priority checkout 7-8 a.m., 650-494-1629; **Safeway**, Tuesdays and Thursdays, 6-9 a.m., 650-321-8400; **Sigona's**, Mondays through Thursdays, 8-9 a.m., 650-329-1340; **Target**, Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 8-9 a.m., 650-965-7764; **Trader Joe's**, Daily 8-9 a.m., 650-327-7018; **Whole Foods**, Daily 8-9 a.m., 650-326-8676. ■



## LIVING IN ISOLATION

Older adults reveal the daily challenges of social distancing

BY CHRIS KENRICK

*Tough new social-distancing regulations have left many seniors living alone behind closed doors with no access to family members, outside visitors or their regular support network.*

Some have lost caregivers in their homes. Many are now barred from visiting their spouses in local care facilities. Others have been forced to cancel travel plans.

About a dozen older adults answered the Weekly's request to share how the COVID-19 shutdown has affected seniors in the community. Here are their responses:

From The Sequoias in Portola Valley, a resident noted that senior living complexes such as hers as well as Channing House, Palo Alto Commons, Sunrise and Vi are under severe restrictions, including prohibitions on visits from outside relatives. Spouses living in differing care levels within the same facility also are barred from visiting one another.

"I'm sure the spouse in 'independent living' stresses a great deal on how their husband or wife (in 'assisted living' or 'skilled nursing') is faring," she wrote in an email to the Weekly.

"You eat only what is brought to you with few options other than to accept or refuse each type of offering — the entrée, the small salad, the fruit, the dessert. At least there is coffee at each meal. However, if you ate everything, you likely would need larger clothing in no time," she added. "Not leaving (the facility), along with many other

restrictions, is strictly enforced. There are barricades manned by security. If you somehow manage to leave — and I can't imagine how that would happen — you are totally locked down for two weeks upon return and visited daily by the nurse."

Maggie, a Palo Alto resident, had been planning to bring her husband of 62 years, who suffers from Alzheimer's and had been living at Sunrise, back home to care for him. Then, she fell while grocery shopping, broke her femur and was hospitalized following surgery. Now she is almost recovered but a "no visitation" policy has prevented her from seeing her husband.

"We have been apart now for what seems far too long," Maggie wrote in an email. "I am really looking forward to being with Paul again as soon as possible. The coronavirus is not helping anything. Hope that will be gone soon, but that seems unlikely."

For one Palo Alto couple in their 80s, a spring agenda filled with travel suddenly turned into a drama of end-of-life contingency planning.

Just back from a cruise to

Mexico, the couple was notified by the cruise company that a fellow passenger might have had COVID-19.

"We immediately quarantined ourselves inside our house," said the husband. The couple canceled plans for trips to Arizona for spring training and to the east coast to visit their children and grandchildren.

Realizing their family probably would not be able to visit them should they come down with the virus, the husband contacted Avenidas senior services agency and

asked: "If I should die at home, how would you support my wife?"

"My wife is computer-phobic and she's going to need assistance — local assistance," the husband explained by telephone. "We both feel fine for now and we're

pretty sure we didn't pick up anything, but we're staring at what we think might be the end of life as we've known it."

The COVID-19 shutdown has caused many local seniors to lose the support of in-home caregivers they previously had counted on.

After developing flu-like symptoms, a woman in her 60s caring for her mother decided to get tested for the coronavirus. The duo ended up losing their

outside caregivers — including overnight help — pending the results. "Since we can't have a cleaner come in, I'm taking care of everything and I'm exhausted," the daughter said.

Another Palo Alto woman, in her 70s, is caring for her 83-year-old husband as well as his twin brother, both of whom have dementia and, in one case, limited mobility. With the stay-at-home order, she lost the help of a part-time male caregiver as well as her weekly house cleaner.

"It is hard not to see what is my responsibility in sustaining the emotional and physical well-being of these two at-risk seniors," she wrote in an email. "Homemaking, nursing, caregiving, meal planning and prep, laundry, gardening, household business matters and cheerful companionship to the twins has now all fallen on me."

While these older adults represent only a small portion of the local senior community, their responses are stark and honest and provide insight into the challenges that some of our most vulnerable residents are facing during this uncertain time. ■

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File photo by Veronica Weber