

# Senior Focus

**SPECIAL SERVICES ...** During the coronavirus pandemic, senior services agency Avenidas has closed its physical buildings and redeployed its staff to help local seniors. The organization will pick up and deliver groceries and prescriptions for older adults living in Redwood City, Atherton, Menlo Park, Portola Valley, East Palo Alto, Palo Alto, Los Altos, Los Altos Hills, Mountain View and Sunnyvale. For more information or to schedule a delivery, call 650-289-5411. The agency also has set up a friendship chat line at 650-289-5400, and a general assistance helpline at 650-289-5433.

**TECHNOLOGY RESOURCES ...** SeniorPlanet@Avenidas, the Palo Alto outpost of the New York-based technology-themed institute for older adults, is still providing online classes and other tech-related resources during the COVID-19 pandemic, including **online meet and greets, technology tutoring and virtual museum tours.** For more information, go to [seniorplanet.org/locations/palo-alto](http://seniorplanet.org/locations/palo-alto).

**VIRTUAL TOWN HALLS ...** Avenidas is hosting a series of **town hall meetings** focused on various topics from coping strategies for self-care to the challenges of COVID-19 in local nursing homes. The series, which is being posted for viewing on the organization's website, features a variety of special guests, including geriatrician Mehrdad Ayati, geriatric psychiatrist Grace Nadolny, Stanford geriatrician Marina Martin and Ellen Brown, the former medical director of Pathways Hospice. To view recordings of the events, go to [avenidas.org](http://avenidas.org).

**THE VILLAGE CONCEPT ...** Avenidas Village is offering special COVID-19 programming including **Friday happy hour socials, guided meditation, Zoom lunches and Zoom games.** For more information, go to [avenidas.org/programs/avenidas-village](http://avenidas.org/programs/avenidas-village).

**SUNDAYS IN THE GARDEN ...** Bringing Back the Natives Garden Tour has moved its annual tour of Bay Area gardens online with a series of **virtual Sunday garden talks and tours.** The tours will take place on May 3 and May 10. The group also is offering a free, online version of its "Garden Guide," which contains plant descriptions and more than 50 photographs from the 43 gardens that were to be featured in this year's tour. Registration is required and donations are accepted. For more information, go to [bringingbackthenatives.net/2020-virtual-tour](http://bringingbackthenatives.net/2020-virtual-tour). ■

*Items for Senior Focus may be emailed to Palo Alto Weekly Contributing Writer Chris Kenrick at [ckenrick@paweekly.com](mailto:ckenrick@paweekly.com).*

MAY 2020

# Living Well

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



*Palo Alto marathon runner Eric Spector has turned his garage into a gym and now carries a mask when he power walks on local trails. The 72-year-old, who was supposed to run in the "Superbowl" of ultramarathons this spring, said he isn't letting the coronavirus crisis prevent him from staying fit.*

## Adapting to stay fit

*With race canceled, 72-year-old marathon runner changes his routine, inspires other seniors to remain active*

Story by Chris Kenrick | Photos by Magali Gauthier

If these were normal times, Eric Spector would be in the final phase of training for the race of his dreams — the annual Western States Endurance Run, a 100-mile trail run from Squaw Valley to Auburn. It's an event he calls the Superbowl of ultramarathons.

But with the June event canceled, along with most other activities, due to the coronavirus crisis, the 72-year-old fitness enthusiast has been forced to adapt his fitness routine.

Rather than rigorously training in the hills above Palo Alto, Spector has turned to power walking. And rather than swimming and exercising at the Oshman Family Jewish Community Center, he has set up a gym in his garage where he can lift weights, ride a stationary bicycle and generally keep moving.

"The key is working up a sweat and getting the benefit of a cardiovascular workout," said the Palo Alto resident, who has participated in more than 20 marathons in the United States and abroad and was the oldest person to complete the 2018 Rio del Lago 100-Mile Endurance Run in the Sierra Nevada foothills.

Though a committed runner, Spector, who turns 73 on May 5, is no exercise snob. In fact, he's a promoter of exercise for anybody and everybody through his Twitter page, @fitatallages.

"It doesn't really matter what activity somebody chooses — the benefits of being fit are extraordinarily clear," he said. "It prevents so many diseases and, if you get

sick, your recovery time is usually much shorter because of your fitness.

"Whether you speed walk, bicycle, play racquetball, hike — the most important thing is that you do it regularly and that you sweat. With those two ingredients, it provides a longer, healthier, more vigorous life."

On his Twitter feed, Spector often shares links to inspirational stories of older athletes as well as small exercise tips like: "Well, you don't want to run? Then dance."

During the stay-at-home order, he has been sharing the many ways athletes, from Olympians to

coaches, have adapted their fitness routines. One marathoner who qualified for this year's Olympics in Tokyo, shared this philosophy with the New York Times: The only thing athletes can control at this point, since competitions and events are canceled, is their training routines. Another story that Spector shared from Sports Illustrated features a running coach who provided some creative inspiration to those looking to compete or exercise: He organized a virtual ultramarathon where participants mapped out their own running loop in their backyards, neighborhoods or treadmills and

livestreamed their runs on Zoom.

Spector said the key is to commit to staying fit, whether during a pandemic or not. He recommends picking an exercise and following through with a routine. This can be anything from walking around the block once a week to walking around the backyard everyday. Tracking when, where and for how long you do a particular activity will help you maintain a routine and stay motivated.

Exercise wasn't always a priority for Spector.

As a young man he was

(continued on page 29)



*Eric Spector walks on a trail in Los Altos on April 23. Spector said he still exercises, but he hasn't been training as vigorously since the coronavirus crisis canceled all upcoming competitive races.*

## Runner

(continued from page 27)

overweight and working long hours at a New York City startup.

“I wasn’t at all plugged in to athletics of any kind — I’d really done nothing more than work and eat and put on some weight,” he said.

But he became intrigued when some of his business school classmates flew in from California to run the 1978 New York City Marathon.

“I thought, ‘If these guys can do it, I should be able to do it,’ so I bought some sneakers, went out for a run to the west side of the Hudson River and barely made it,” he said.

Spector kept at it, and a little more than a year later, he entered the 1979 New York City Marathon.

“It was my first running event ever but I did quite well and loved it,” he said. “I really loved the fitness, the clarity of mind, the stream of consciousness as you’re running.”

He grew to love the “runner’s high,” which he describes as “a kind of a euphoria, where you’re not even conscious of the effort. It’s just the rhythm and the joy of physical activity.”

“For me, that kind of activity has been a mainstay of mental health and sanity, with the benefit of staying fit,” he said.

Spector moved to California in the 1980s.

“When I got to Marin and discovered trail running, that was the end of my road running — it’s a rare instance for me to go back to road running.” He did, however, complete the 2009 New York City Marathon in celebration of the 30th anniversary of his first race.

Spector said he fell in love with the hills above Palo Alto after moving here three years ago.

“Foothills Park is spectacular. Black Mountain has trails that are challenging and gorgeous,” he said. “Windy Hill Open Space Preserve is literally a treasure — there are some spectacularly different kinds of trails within a relatively small park. ... I can always find, within those three choices, whatever it is I’m trying to do that day.”

Spector’s sights are now set on next year’s Western States Endurance Run, scheduled for June 26-27. If he finishes, he’ll become the oldest person to complete the course in the event’s 44-year history.

To find Spector’s exercise tips and links to motivational stories, check out his twitter account, @fitatallages. ■

**Contributing Writer Chris Kenrick can be emailed at ckenrick@paweb.com.**

### 5 ways to stay fit

Gyms, pools and exercise classes at community centers may be off limits during the pandemic, but that shouldn’t create a roadblock to staying fit, according to Palo Alto marathon runner Eric Spector. Pandemic or no pandemic, the key goals for good health and fitness haven’t changed. Spector recommends following five tips for staying fit:

1. Commit to staying fit.
2. Pick an exercise.
3. Track your activities.
4. Eat well, hydrate.
5. Look in the mirror and see your progress.

## Private Duty Nursing In Palo Alto



NurseRegistry remains open and is committed to matching each client with a skilled nurse for care that fits his or her specific needs—whether it’s a short visit or 24 hour support.

### Services include:

- |                    |                        |
|--------------------|------------------------|
| Post-Hospital Care | Wellness Checks        |
| Wound Care         | Medication Management  |
| IV Therapies       | Airway/Ventilator Care |
| Palliative Care    | Patient Education      |
| Hospice Care       | Respite Care           |

Call (650) 462-1001 for private duty nursing.

(650) 462-1001 | NurseRegistry.com  
125 University Avenue, Palo Alto, CA



JOIN US NEXT YEAR FOR

### Lifetimes of Achievement 2021!

For the health and safety of our friends, Avenidas is postponing our 2020 Lifetimes of Achievement

Garden Party to **Sunday, May 16th, 2021!**

**SAVE THE DATE** and join us in celebrating the accomplishments of our honorees:

#### HONORING

Fran Codispoti  
Betsy Gifford  
Gay and Bill Krause  
Eliane and Armand Neukermans  
Alma and Jim Phillips  
Steve Player

#### CONTACT

Monica Davis,  
Events Manager,  
(650) 289-5445  
www.avenidas.org



For complete schedule or info about Avenidas events, call 650-289-5400

## Living Well

### May 1

**May Day**  
Also Mother Goose Day, just FYI.

### May 4

**Shakespeare Club via Zoom**  
Every Monday, 10:30am-12pm. For more information email info@avenidas.org. Free.

### LGBTQ Senior Empowerment & Connections Group

via Zoom. Topic: Older LGBTQ people who have made a difference/writing your memoir. Email tkingery@avenidas.org with subject LGBTQ for log on info. Free.

### May 5

**#GivingTuesday!**  
Donate to Avenidas at www.avenidas.org today.

**Celebrate Cinco de Mayo and Taco Tuesday** with homemade tacos!

### May 6

**Mindfulness Meditation via Zoom**  
Every Wednesday, 2-3pm. Visit www.Avenidas.org for log on information. Free.

### May 7

**Ukulele Jam Session via Zoom**  
Every Thursday, 2-4pm. For more info email info@avenidas.org. Free.

### May 8

**No Socks Day.**  
Set your toes free and go barefoot!

### May 11

**LGBTQ Senior Empowerment & Connections Group via Zoom**  
Topic: Individual strengths/community empowerment. Email tkingery@avenidas.org with subject LGBTQ for log on info. Free.

## MAY 2020

**Seminar via Zoom: “Medical Decision Making and Patient Advocacy in a Crisis: Being Prepared”**  
with Mike & Mark Gilfix, 1-2pm. Registration required. Email registration@avenidas.org. Free

### May 12

**Limerick Day.**  
If you have a good (clean) one, send it to info@avenidas.org by 12noon today. We’ll select the best for inclusion in this day’s e-newsletter.

### May 13

**International Hummus Day.**  
Make a spicy version with chickpeas, olive oil and a jalapeno pepper.

### May 14

**Gokhale Method Workshop via Zoom**  
12-1pm. Registration required. Email: registration@avenidas.org \$20

### May 15

**National Chocolate Chip Day.**  
Enough said.

### May 16

**LGBTQ Stay Home Scavenger Hunt**  
10am-1pm. Email tkingery@avenidas.org with subject “Scavenger Hunt.” Free

### May 18

**LGBTQ Senior Empowerment & Connections Group via Zoom**  
Topic: Celebrating National “Honor LGBTQ Elders Day.” Email tkingery@avenidas.org with subject LGBTQ for log on info. Free.

**Seminar via Zoom: “Multi-Generational Planning for Quality Long Term Care”**  
with Mike & Mark Gilfix, 1-2pm. Registration required. Email registration@avenidas.org. Free

## Calendar of Events

### May 19

**Happy Birthday, Pete Townsend!**  
Listen to your old The Who vinyl.

### May 20

**National Rescue Dog Day**  
#adoptdontshop

### May 21

**National American Red Cross Founder’s Day**  
You go, Clara Barton!

### May 22

**Harvey Milk Day**  
Watch “The Times of Harvey Milk,” “Castro” or “Milk.”

### May 25

**Memorial Day**  
Avenidas closed.

### May 26

**LGBTQ Senior Empowerment & Connections Group via Zoom**  
Topic: LGBTQ people who have served in the military. Email tkingery@avenidas.org with subject “LGBTQ” for log on info. Free

### May 27

**National Senior Health and Fitness Day**  
Try an online fitness class or take a good long walk.

### May 28

**Amnesty International Day**

### May 29

**National Learn about Composting Day**  
Do the “rot” thing.