



# Over the Back Fence

Masonic Homes of California at Covina

Volume 31, Issue 1

## Happy New Year!

### *New Year's Resolutions Seniors Can Actually Keep*

Submitted by John Feagans

Do you make New Year's resolutions? As one year ends and a new one begins it's a chance for a fresh start. Many people set goals such as starting new diets and exercise routines, however, they're often restrictive and unsustainable. This can lead to quitting your resolutions just a few weeks into the new year.

The good news is there are ways to prevent that from happening. And that starts with setting realistic goals that you can follow long term. If you're ready to start the new year off healthy and happy then check out these healthy New Year's resolutions seniors can actually keep!

#### **Sit Less, Move More**

Regular physical activity is one of the most important things you can do for your health. Unfortunately, by age 75, one in three men and one in two women engage in no physical activity. The good news is it's never too late to

start. So this year, why not make it a goal to sit less and move more!

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) states that older adults need about 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity per week. This can be broken up into 30-minute workouts five days a week.

#### **Stimulate Your Mind**

The brain is an important organ that is responsible for everything we do from emotions and motor skills to vision, breathing, body temperature, hunger, and memory. This is why taking care of your brain health is so important. Incorporating brain exercises can be easy and is a sustainable and healthy New Year's resolution you can make.

You can start slow by spending 10 to 20 minutes a day playing games such as crossword puzzles, Sudoku, or even making a jigsaw puzzle. Other ways to stimulate your mind include reading, writing, and learning a new skill.

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### **Masonic Assistance: Welcoming You to Retirement Living 2.0**

*At The Masonic Homes,  
Innovative Technology is  
Redefining Senior Care*

Submitted by John Feagans

About a year ago, Masonic Homes CEO Gary Charland sat down with his newly hired innovations project manager, James MacRae. MacRae had begun his career in information technology on a help desk, troubleshooting clients' problems with technology they used every day. This time, Charland said, his role would be a little different. "He told me, 'We want someone to go out and find new technology for the Masonic Homes,'" MacRae recalls. "'We want to look forward.'"

Since then, MacRae, Jasmine Meyers, and the rest of the nine-person technology team, newly led by Chris Smith, chief technology officer, have done just that, introducing cyber solutions that make residents and their families feel safe and happy on campus. In doing so, they've continued the

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## Over The Back Fence

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Over The Back Fence is published monthly as a vehicle of communication and entertainment for the Residents and Staff of the Masonic Homes at Covina with a focus on sharing information about Residents, Homes activities, and items of interest to the "Masonic Family." ALL RESIDENTS are welcome to contribute to *your* newsletter. Articles are subject to editing by the Editor. If you have an article you wish to have published, please give it to Jennifer before the 15th of the month. Space is limited so please restrict your article to a half page.

Volume 31 • Issue 1

**Masonic Homes of California at Covina**



## Retirement 2.0

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Masonic Homes's commitment to being on the cutting edge of advanced elder care – and remade its bucolic grounds into a bustling nerve center of futuristic gadgetry.

### Talking to Tech

One of the team's first and most transformative rollouts was Amazon's Alexa. With voice-activated Alexa speakers installed in residents' rooms and in common areas, residents can simply call out to ask a care team member for help. In the past, such a request would be phoned into the front desk, routed to the care team center, then forwarded to an individual caregiver, who'd respond in person. "That's a lot of steps," MacRae explains.

With the Alexa units in place, requests are sent directly to a care team member's cell phone. But the real coup was integrating the Alexa units with technologies already used by other parts of the organization. Now, thanks to MacRae and company – and countless conversations with tech providers – residents can use voice commands to access information previously siloed in various departments'

systems. For instance, a common request by residents was for an online calendar of meal options. First, MacRae worked with the company that created the Masonic Homes' digital activities calendar to develop a menu calendar. He then integrated the new calendar with the Alexa units, so residents could hear what was for dinner that night or see it displayed on their TV screen. For all that behind-the-scenes work, the end result is straightforward and effective: "Alexa, what's for dinner tonight?"

Alexa was also integrated into the system used by the maintenance team, so residents can submit a work order by voice, whether in their own apartment or in common areas like hallways. Saying "Alexa, there's a light out" creates a digital ticket that's sent to the maintenance team instantly. "Innovation isn't only about creating something that no one else has thought of," Smith says. "It's about taking an idea and giving it new life in a completely different field." The ultimate system is easy to use and easy to support – MacRae's goals for every new piece of technology. "I love looking at complicated things and making them simple," he says. "To me, it's like an art form."

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## NU 2 U IS OPEN!

Schedule your one-on-one shopping soon to pick out your holiday outfit!

**Tuesdays 10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.**  
**Thursdays 1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m.**

**STOP BY AND TAKE A LOOK AT OUR NEW INVENTORY!**

## HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

**Dean McAdams**  
**January 8**

**Sequoyah Dawes**  
**January 24**



## Masonic Homes Covina Resident Census

**TOTAL POPULATION** = 62

**Women** = 31    **Men** = 31

**COUPLES** = 8 (Incl. 6 Outplacements)

### OUTPLACEMENTS

**Bente, Clare** - Claremont Care Center

**Long, Pat** - Garden View Post-Acute

**Riedel, Robert** - Alta Loma Gardens

**Ripley, Daisy** - Pilgrim Place - SNF

**Scovill, Robert** - Silverado Sierra Vista

**Stoddart, Yvonne** - St. Simon Home

for the Elderly



# Retirement 2.0

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## Pilots and Puppies

The Masonic Homes have been enthusiastic about studying technology that supports medical care. When the Stanford Research Institute International approached the campus in 2019 about evaluating a new smart toilet, residents were skeptical. But after hearing what the technology could mean for health care, a test group signed on.

Participants were given toilets equipped with cameras to analyze their, well, deposits. The images were then sent to medical professionals for evaluation, which can help detect signs of several types of illness, including urinary tract infections, which are common in the elderly and, if not treated early, can become life-threatening. After the study ended in March, the Masonic Homes signed on for a second test, which will run through February 2021. Both programs are helping companies develop and refine the technology while concurrently giving Masonic Homes leaders a glimpse of products the organization may decide to roll out in the future. “This technology is not just for flair,” MacRae says. “It helps residents maintain their independence longer. It gives them more information, and gets it to them faster.”

That’s been a mantra at the Masonic Homes for years, and it has participated in programs to test, among other things, smart watches that track movement, heart rate, and blood pressure, and senior-friendly tablets equipped with video-chat software and games that promote brain health. Another initiative, to introduce virtual reality goggles to bedridden patients, has been on hold because of COVID-19, but staff are eager to get the devices into the hands of patients in the memory care program. By providing residents with goggles and their families with 360-degree cameras, they’ll be able to facilitate immersive remote experiences – say, enabling a resident to participate in a grandchild’s birthday party when they can’t physically attend. The program is called Memory Lane.

Another pilot set to launch soon will



test a robotic caddy – essentially a motorized tray on wheels – that responds to voice commands. Say “Take the remote to the living room” and the caddy scoots off to perform the task, guided by a digitized layout of the apartment or building. For residents who struggle with mobility, a robotic valet can be a game changer, helping them live on their own longer.

Speaking of robots, the Masonic Homes has been looking into the health benefits of an especially cuddly one. Masonic Outreach Services recently delivered its first robotic pet dog to a patient living with dementia. Emotional-companion robots are growing in popularity,

***“Innovation isn’t only about creating something that no one else has thought of. It’s about taking an idea and giving it new life in a completely different field.”***

offering those with cognitive impairments like Alzheimer’s a simple form of companionship. Studies show they can reduce stress, improve mood, and help maintain social connections, all without the demands of pet ownership. Innovations like the Tombot, a computerized golden retriever puppy, or the Japanese Paro (a less realistic but similarly animatronic fuzzy white seal) are programmed to act in lifelike ways: Many respond to light or touch and look up when spoken to. They wag their tails and cock their heads. For certain patients, these aren’t just high-tech teddy bears. They serve an important therapeutic purpose. “We don’t just roll out new tech because it’s fun. It has to improve lives.”

## The Human Touch

Future-focused initiatives like these are already having a big impact on residents’

lives. They’re also helping the organization strike the right balance between high-tech and human touch. Nobody is envisioning a future where seniors are served solely by a team of robot caregivers. Finding the sweet spot is all about enhancing patient care.

“Innovation doesn’t require advanced training – it’s born out of a deep and abiding commitment to a cause,” Smith says.

To MacRae, it’s simple: “We don’t just roll out new tech because it’s fun. It has to improve lives.” For that to happen, residents and staff need to feel comfortable with the new tools. The key is education. So the technology team introduces technology in phases. For the Alexa units, they started with a single floor of the Union City campus, expanding to all five floors over the next several months, taking time along the way to make adjustments based on feedback from residents and staff. They posted flyers around campus with reminders about key features and, at least before the Coronavirus outbreak, held training sessions in the library. The team even created a PSA introducing the voice commands and aired it on the Masonic Homes’ internal TV channel.

All these advances go toward one goal: delivering the best possible experience to residents. That spirit of continuous improvement has already made the Masonic Homes a leader in senior care in so many ways, from healthy aging initiatives to employee satisfaction. Now you can add technology to the list. “Technology is ever-evolving,” says MacRae. “The Homes are evolving with it.”

**Source: <https://californiafreemason.org/2020/11/29/retirement-living-2-0/>**



# Making Spirits Bright!

*MHC Covina staff (our own holiday lighting pros) spruced up our campus with colorful and festive lights to help celebrate the Christmas season.*





The holidays aren't just about spectacle, but it certainly helps enhance the magical, celebratory qualities for which the season is so beloved. That's why, despite the pandemic, most communities around the nation strung up lights (or held tree lighting ceremonies) this year. To help enhance your holidays, the Masonic Homes staff set up sparkling, wondrously bright Christmas light displays around our campus. Thank you to our staff for taking the extra time and effort to put them up. They always make a difference in our campus, and it's appreciated.

*Thanks for spreading extra joy this season. We celebrated with you!*



Photos and story submitted by John Feagans



# Masonic Homes of California at Covina

## RESIDENT COUNCIL

December 8, 2020

The meeting was called to order at 1:05 PM by Chairperson Lenore Upson. 5 members present. 5 Residents, plus Jennifer Shapiro assembled in the dining room with one member per table wearing masks. It was announced that Pearl Chandler and Nancy Freer were elected to the council. We had a Zoom meeting with Gary on the vaccine, we will be getting the vaccine between mid-December and the end of December. We go by the guidelines as well as: CDC, DSS, LA County Health Services.

### **REPORTS – BY BILLIE KARZ**

The balance as of 12-8-2020 is \$11,888.00

### **ACTIVITIES - LYN EFFREN**

Due to the COVID -19 virus all off campus outings have been suspended until further notice. This includes shopping, lunches, and dinners. This month was more active, we have hallway Bingo once a week, and library is now open with limit of 2 people. General store weekly, coffee social for Pink Hats, root beer floats or ice cream on Saturdays. A very successful meeting was held about where and what to get for take-out. Busy Bee talk show Monday and Wednesday 11:00 AM and 2:30 PM in Upper R4. Happy Hour every Friday.

### **BUILDING/GROUNDS AND HOUSEKEEPING - KARLA JOHNSON AND ERNIE MARUMOTO**

The exit sign lights have been completed and reinstalled. The A2 building air conditioning project has been completed. Mike starts Monday for the Landscaping position Everything else has been full of Christmas decorations for the campus.

### **HEALTH SERVICES - RITA DOW**

Let us all welcome the new member of our Nursing staff, Crystal our new LVN. Jessica is now on call, and new applicants are being reviewed.

### **FOOD SERVICES - LENORE UPSON**

Yolanda is planning to open the dining room for 10 people; she also plans to open a second seating in the patio at 8:30 AM. Vegetables can be steamed and buttered (not grilled). Salad greens to be cut in smaller pieces.

### **DESTINY LODGE - JERRY CHANDLER**

We had our first Zoom stated meeting.

### **RESIDENT BOARD REPRESENTATIVE - HERSH MAZER**

The day was consumed with financial reports, how MOS and CAC were doing in their relief of "A Worthy Brother Program" as well as support to all Brothers they work with. The Masonic Foundation was in on the donations this year, as well as how much financial support has been given to Brothers in distress. The R4 project and the remodel of the two apartments will begin shortly. The architect is still working on the plans for the new pool construction in Covina. Two current trustees will be replaced by the Grand Master, one due to retirement, the other is moving to Texas.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:45 PM

Respectfully submitted, Howard Steinore - Secretary





# Resolutions

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## Sleep Better

Good quality sleep is important at any age. It benefits your physical and emotional health from improving your concentration and memory to helping your body repair cell damage and more. If you feel like you could get better sleep, make it a resolution to work on that this year.

The good news is there are things you can start doing now to get a better night's rest. For starters, you'll want to create a relaxing and inviting environment, unwind before bed, and stick to a sleep schedule.

## Take Time for Self Care

You've spent your entire life taking care of others and now it's time to really take care of yourself. In fact, self-care is an essential part of maintaining your health and can even help prevent chronic illnesses. This year dedicate time for self-care.

The first step is to make sure you view self-care as taking care of yourself and not as being selfish. Keep in mind, it doesn't have to be complicated nor time-consuming. You can start small by enjoying a walk every day, getting a little extra sleep, or taking a bath. Choose to do things that bring you happiness.

## Keep Up With Medical Checkups

This is the year to start taking care of your health! Visiting your doctor regularly is essential to diagnosing potential problems before they become more serious. Make sure you see your primary care physician at least once a year.

Oral health is important too! Make it a resolution to stay on track with brushing and flossing regularly as this is important for preventing oral conditions like gum disease. Also, make sure you don't skip your dental checkups and see your dentist at least once a year.

## Eat Whole Foods

Instead of dieting this year, focus on nourishing your body with more



whole foods. Diets are hard to follow because they can be restrictive and unsustainable. If you focus on healthy lifestyle changes like consuming more healthy foods and enjoying unhealthy foods in moderation you may find it more sustainable.

Some great examples of whole foods include vegetables, fruits, whole grains, fish, nuts, and seeds. These foods are full of nutrients that your body needs. Studies show that a diet rich in whole foods may help reduce the risk of heart disease, as well as other diseases such as type 2 diabetes.

## Focus on Gratitude

Focusing on gratitude instead of focusing on the negative aspects of your life can have positive effects on your health. In fact, a study showed those who wrote about gratitude were more optimistic, felt better, had fewer visits to the physician, and exercised more.

So this year why don't you make it a goal to focus on gratitude. An easy way to start doing this is to keep a gratitude journal. Every day spend five to 10 minutes writing down things you are grateful for. A year from now you'll be able to look at all the positive things that have happened.

## Use Cleaner Products

What you put on your body is just as important as what you put in your body. The products you use in your home can impact your health too. That's why this year you might want to make it a New Year's resolution to switch to

cleaner products.

You can start by switching your beauty and personal hygiene products to natural products. These products typically go on your skin and are absorbed into your body which is why you'll want to make the switch to cleaner options. Next, go through your household cleaners and laundry detergent and look for natural or environmentally friendly products.

## Volunteer

If you don't volunteer already this might be a good year to start. Volunteering can be great for seniors and offers plenty of health benefits. Research shows that volunteering can help reduce stress and may even lead to lower rates of depression.

Further, volunteering also helps you stay physically and mentally active. It can also give you a sense of purpose. Finally, it also helps you stay socially active as you'll get to meet new people and develop new relationships.

## Try a New Hobby

It's common to let go of hobbies especially when life gets busy. But what better way to spend retirement than to pick up a once-loved hobby or to try a new one! In fact, research shows that enjoying hobbies can help you live longer and healthier!

This year make it a resolution to set time aside to enjoy a hobby that excites you and brings you happiness.

**Source:** [www.activebeat.com/your-health/senior/healthy-new-years-resolutions-seniors-can-actually-keep/](http://www.activebeat.com/your-health/senior/healthy-new-years-resolutions-seniors-can-actually-keep/)

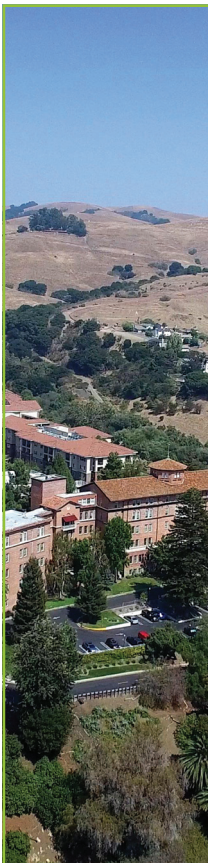


# Don We Now Our Ugly Sweaters!

## *Activities Department Hosts Annual Ugly Sweater Contest*

Submitted By John Feagans

Every December our Activities Department hosts our Ugly Christmas Sweater Contest. A good Ugly Christmas sweater can draw a smile or a smirk, and a great one can get a belly laugh. They're perfect for a special holiday party, or happy hour in December. Turnout for this year's contest was good, and a great time was had by everyone who attended. The hors d'oeuvres for the get-together were the best I've had in a while. Pearl Chandler took first place with the ugliest sweater. Sharanne Wick came in second place, and Carole Haggart took third place. All entrants in the contest received honorable mention as well as gifts or prizes. Many thanks to Susan and Hazel for hosting the event.



## Welcome, Covina Residents to **viibrant**<sup>®</sup>

Take a moment to check out Covina's Viibrant portal found online at [www.mhccovina.org](http://www.mhccovina.org).

This is a great resource for both of our communities, which allows the staff to send out the latest information as efficiently as possible, including Announcements, Events, and the Dining Menu.

In addition to staying up to date, residents have the ability to do a number of things from the comfort (and safety) of home. Check out the Dining Menu in advance, submit maintenance or housekeeping requests, submit a comment card, and chat with other residents using the message feature.

## How to log-in to **viibrant**<sup>®</sup>

1. In your web browser's address bar, type: **www.mhccovina.org**
2. Your Username will be: **First.Last Name** (Example: John.Smith)
3. Your default password will be **mhc2020** (No capitals needed)
  - a. You will be asked to change your password the first time you sign in.
4. For Username assistance, email **Jmyers@mhcuc.org** or call **x26354**.

If you have any questions, feel free to email or reach out to your staff at Covina for help.

**Thank you and have a wonderful day!**

**Jasmine Myers • Implementation Specialist • [Jmyers@mhcuc.org](mailto:Jmyers@mhcuc.org)**