

LOS ALTOS

NEIGHBORHOOD NETWORK



An Independent Voice for our Residential Community

Community Services Agency – An incredible Resource for our Elderly

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Just days before her 83rd birthday, my neighbor and dear friend, Betty, slipped and fell in the middle of the night. She didn't seek a doctor's care, at least not at first... Five days later, her pain was so acute that I took her to Urgent Care where an x-ray revealed a compression fracture on her spine. An MRI two weeks later revealed fractures of two vertebrae and the possibility of a spinal cord complication. Until she is done running the gauntlet of specialists, rest and pain management are all that is certain for the next twelve weeks.

Betty is an incredible lady and like family to me. A strong and clear-headed woman, she lives an active life. She goes dancing nearly every Friday and Saturday night, and let me tell you she does one mean polka! She attends her Widow and Widowers meetings and walks a mile or more seven days a week. She meets her friends for coffee or breakfast at least once a week. And the list goes on. Needless to say, this fall has taken the spring out of her step, but more importantly it has taken a toll on her spirit. Her loss of mobility, albeit temporary, has caused her to question how much longer she can continue to live alone in her home. This is a question all of us will face, at one time or another, whether we are talking about a parent, a loved one, or ourselves.

But if you live in Los Altos, consider yourself fortunate! We have a wonderful resource that is here to assist – Community Services Agency (CSA) serving Mountain View, Los Altos and Los Altos Hills. Before I tell you about the agency and my first hand experience with one of their programs aimed at assisting the elderly, let me disclose that I have the pleasure of serving on their board of directors. I've been on the board for over a year, and quite frankly, I felt that I had a good handle on what services the agency provided in our communities. What I didn't have was a genuine understanding of how these services are delivered – with care, compassion, respect and dignity!

First, a bit about this local non-profit: “CSA provides a safety-net for elderly, low income, and homeless residents of Mountain View, Los Altos, and Los Altos Hills. It provides critical support services that preserve and promote stability, reliance, and dignity.” CSA provides emergency assistance services to low-income families to keep a roof over their heads by helping them make ends meet while they get their feet back on the ground. For the homeless, CSA helps in locating and securing housing, providing food and some hygiene supplies. And, for the elderly in our communities, CSA provides a hot lunch program, transportation services, and case management for those in need. It is this later program that I write about here.

Aging is a process; it is not something our society can prevent or eradicate. In general, seniors want to stay in their homes as long as possible. To this end, the goal of CSA's Senior Case Management program is to help seniors over 60 remain in their homes by performing safety, nutrition, medical and financial assessments to prioritize, address and prevent risk factors.

Betty's situation warranted a call to CSA. It is probably one of the best calls I have made. A simple overview of her situation was all it took to get Megan Wadkins, Senior Services Director, out to the house. With a smile on her face and genuine concern in her heart, Megan greeted Betty. I sat there in awe and watched their interchange. It was amazing. Have you ever noticed how some people automatically raise their voice when talking to a senior, assuming loss of hearing comes with age? Well not Megan. With a soft, caring voice she asked some questions, had Betty show her around the house, assessed the situation and quickly offered some suggestions and resources. In no time Megan was contacting Betty's primary care physician requesting a prescription for in home occupational therapy (OT). Next, she engaged Pathways, and then she set up Lifeline with Stanford Hospital.

Betty's doctor prescribed a hospital bed and Megan took it from there, ordering the bed and expediting the OT so a professional could teach Betty how to get in and out of the bed safely without aggravating her back. A fall prevention inspection was conducted. The grab bars in the shower were positioned by an expert then installed by family members. When meal preparation became a challenge a simple call from Betty's daughter to CSA had Megan setting up Meals on Wheels. Medical supplies were needed and Megan had a list of local suppliers.

Just one call to CSA and Betty had a plethora of resources available to her. Betty's road to recovery will be a long one, but I know my dear friend has her kind neighbors, loving family and CSA (Megan) there to support her every step of the way. I hope to see her back on the dance floor again by mid-summer. To learn more about Community Services Agency (CSA) go to www.csacares.org