

Something for Everyone

by Lisa Crawford Watson

The Carmel Foundation has a wide reach into the community

The story of The Carmel Foundation is one of longevity and legacy. Since it was established in 1950, every ensuing decade has built upon the original premise to provide a place for members to gather and enjoy a variety of activities and services in an environment of respect and camaraderie.

Throughout the years, the organization is constantly evolving to provide programs and services that are most relevant to the current population. For many members, whether as a residence, a bit of revelry, or a moment of respite, The Carmel Foundation is a place to call home. "When The Carmel Founda-

tion was started, founders had a wonderful vision of how to assist the older folks in our community," said President and CEO Holly Zoller. "We still carry this vision, but the breadth of what constitutes 'older,' and the range of services warranted continues to change."

The Foundation welcomes members, ages 55 and better, 8:30am to 4:30pm, Monday through Friday, to enjoy a cup of coffee, take classes, work in the garden, meet for lunch four days a week, exercise, and attend workshops on how to make life easier, safer, healthier, fun. Many make a day of it.

"The misnomer is that we're known as a senior center, but these days," said Zoller,

"people at 55 don't consider themselves seniors. Many people in their 50s and 60s are still working, some still have kids at home, and have otherwise busy lives."

The question becomes how to define an organization for senior citizens, not just those who are older. The stumbling block is in the terminology, intended to refer to the full range of ages and to appeal to all within the spectrum via the services provided. Were the organization to shift its vocabulary from "senior citizens" to "mature adults," says Zoller, they'd run the risk of attracting the 30-year-old crowd.

"While we have membership in the full age range, we basically have two generations of seniors," Zoller said, "so it is a challenge to find activities



Provided photos from The Carmel Foundation

to engage the younger members and also those in their 90s or better. Still, we have quite a range of things to do." Members might want to participate in bridge or Bingo, chess or dominoes, as well as classes in the Technology Center on the iPhone, iPad, MacBook, and PCs. Others prefer piano lessons, Pilates, woodworking or watercolors, safe driving, dancing, journal writing and jazz appreciation, fitness, photography, and a wide range of discussion groups.

All activities take place on the Foundation's main campus, at the southeast corner of 8th Avenue on Lincoln Street, which, in response to COVID, introduced an outdoor expansion to the courtyard beautified by Carmel Gives. On any given day, members can be seen on the patio, playing chess or cribbage, or just enjoying the setting, with coffee and a muffin.

The Carmel Foundation's reach extends beyond its senior citizen center. When the Coronavirus came into the community, and the Carmel Foundation was temporarily closed, the organization continued to provide meals to homebound members and those who didn't feel comfortable going to the grocery store. The program was so popular and successful, says Zoller, that they added it to their ongoing schedule, including three days a week of curbside pickup and home delivery to the housebound. The Foundation began its affordable housing program, for members 65 years of age and better with limited resources, with the 1964 purchase of a motel, Hazeltine Court, an older building with "Carmel charm," which provides 12 apartments. The second property, acquired on a 50-year lease at \$1 a year, is Norton Court, whose three buildings house 24

apartments. And the third is Trevvett Court, which has 14 apartments, for a total of 50 apartments located in Carmel-by-the-Sea. The waiting list for affordable housing is currently five to seven years. Whether recognized by its members or a wider reach of local readers, The Carmel Foundation has been chosen this year as the Monterey Herald Readers' Choice for "Best Services for Seniors" and "Best Nonprofit Organization." "It's wonderful to be recognized for the services we provide our senior community and," said Zoller, "to know this matters to our members who rely on The Carmel Foundation for support and for their daily lifestyle activities. So many people end up finding close friends here, and sometimes a significant other. We see people smile and grow close to folks they otherwise might not have met. It's gratifying to know our mission actually works."



Provided photos from The Carmel Foundation