

A Year of Empowered Expansion

...Continued from cover

Everywhere I look, I see forward progress at Ombudsman Services and so many impressive results. Together, with our community partners, we are changing the landscape for elder care, and I can't thank you enough for your continued support in making these huge milestones happen.

Now, let's step back to the future and top 2020 with even bigger milestones. I'll see you out there!

Best wishes,

Nicole Howell

A Reflection of Thanks

SUPPORTERS
DONORS
ADVOCATES

With the old year behind and a new year ahead, we can't help but celebrate all of the tremendous growth we've seen and the endless numbers of seniors we've helped. Protecting and defending our seniors, as you know, isn't one-size-fits-all. There are many moving parts, none of which would be possible without YOU, our supporters, our donors, the true advocates behind all the work we do. You truly make the difference, and we are incredibly grateful.

Elder Advocate

Ombudsman Services of Contra Costa, Solano and Alameda

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A Year of Empowered Expansion

Welcome to 2020! Are you ready to dig into a new year? I know all of us at Ombudsman Services are.

But, while a new year marks the beginning of so many things, it also marks a time for us to reflect. So, if you have a moment, I'd love to share with you a bit about what we have been up to in 2019 and our plans for 2020.

2019 was our biggest year yet, and I want to kick off a few of our most important highlights with one that was the cornerstone of our year, our expansion into Alameda County. As you may know, Alameda County Adult and Aging Services have been fostering vital programs for seniors in Alameda County for many years and, after deep reflection, decided to partner with a community-based organization to lead the LTC Ombudsman program. We're honored for the opportunity to continue and build upon the legacy that the entire Adult and Aging Services team has established and created systemic change as we work across three counties in the San Francisco Bay Area. Our immersion into the Alameda community has been a complete joy, and we're so grateful to be here.

You may have heard about the Elder Justice Program that formed early last year, anchored at our Solano Family Justice Center. Led by one of our Elder Abuse Victim Specialists, and fearless leader, Christy Timko, this is an innovative program aimed to develop a coordinated response to elder abuse in Solano County through several key objectives. The program includes a full-time Victim Specialist who is dedicated to working with older and dependent adults who have been the victim of abuse or neglect, and the launch of a monthly multi-disciplinary team (MDT) charged with

tackling complex and hard-to-handle cases of elder and dependent abuse by focusing resources on moving these victims beyond abuse with a host of supportive services. And last, but certainly not least, the Elder Justice Program launched the Elder Justice League – Solano. This is a core group of community members who are trained to recognize the signs of elder abuse and can direct victims to appropriate authorities and community resources via the elder abuse program.

We also debuted our Healthcare Career Pathway (HCP) program – an innovative partnership with Mt. Diablo Adult Education and Opportunity Junction via support from the John Muir Community Health Fund, which helps at-risk individuals enter the medical field, giving them support and opportunity for a bright and steady future. At the same time, this new group of trained professionals answers the need for skilled caregivers, working to end a chronic shortage and significantly improve the quality of life for our seniors in long-term care. November ended with a bang as our second group of Health Care Pathway (HCP) students graduated and are preparing to begin their work in 2020. To say I'm proud is an understatement. The effort and amount of work they put in is complete magic.

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“Not only are they changing their own lives and the lives of the seniors in our community, but they are changing the course of their family tree for all the generations to come.”



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Resident's Rights Month

#StandForQuality

October was Resident's Rights Month, and 2019's theme was "Stand for Quality." It's a time to celebrate, and recognize the rights of all long-term care residents. Standing for seniors' rights and quality of life can be as simple as checking in on an elder you know, having a conversation with them, or just listening. Here at Ombudsmen Services, our mission is to make our presence known so that we're always advocating for every senior we serve, ensuring that quality of life, in all aspects, is recognized. Thank you to all those who took time to take a stand with us. We hope you continue to stand with us for all the seniors in our community and beyond.

HOW OUR TEAM IS TAKING A STAND

"I will be available, use eyes to check on activities, and ask residents if they are satisfied or not."

"I will heighten resident awareness through social media across counties and demographic areas."

"I will ensure that residents participate in planning their routine and activities."

"I will ASK and LISTEN."



Board Spotlight

Representation for All

The board members who proudly oversee and lead Ombudsman Services are a group of talented individuals and leaders who are passionate about advocating for the dignity and respect of seniors everywhere. With that said, we want to take a moment to recognize two of our newest board members as a way of saying thank you for their time and commitment to Ombudsman Services, as well as their pledge to protect the rights of older and dependent adults living in long-term care.

Attorney Ivette M. Santaella



As an estate planning and elder law attorney, Ivette is passionate about securing the right benefits and protections available under the law to support and safeguard the elders in her community. With extensive experience in all aspects of estate planning and elder law, including nursing home abuse, long-term care, and Medi-Cal planning, Ivette is recognized for her customized planning approach for the unique needs of her clients.

Outside of the office, Ivette thrives on community involvement and has given various presentations on estate planning and business succession planning at community, library, and chamber events. She proudly volunteers in the "Lawyer in the Library" programs to provide families with pro bono assistance regarding the importance of starting an estate plan early and having the correct insurances in place. She is also a member of the Tri-Valley Estate Planning Council and now a proud member of our board.

"All seniors should be entitled to representation regardless of economic background, and the ombudsman achieves representation for all."

—Ivette Santaella, Esq.
Managing Partner, Santaella & Jahangiri, APC

Dr. Geoffery Adey



For Geoffery, medicine—and in particular, neuroscience—has been a part of his world for as long as he can remember. His mother was a nurse, and he has fond memories of growing up in his father's lab—who was a neuroscientist at UCLA. Geoffery, a fifth-generation surgeon, graduated from the University of Colorado School of Medicine, completed his residency at the University of Vermont College of Medicine, and his fellowship at the Mayo Graduate School of Medicine. After 17 years of studying, research, and working in snowbound states, he came back to California to focus on general practice in neurosurgery. There are not many neurosurgeons in the world, let alone the country, and his unique specialties and skills have been recognized as a great asset to the medical world in the greater Walnut Creek area.

Now a retired Chair of Neurosurgery, Geoffery enjoys spending time with his wife, who is also a Medical Director and Professor in Medicine at UCSF, their two daughters, and exploring the outdoors with his Australian Shepherd.

"In neurosurgery, there is a lot of exposure to the elder community. I've dealt with it and understand what they are facing. I'm honored to be a part of a mission to help those who can't defend and care for themselves."

—Geoffery Adey, MD

Volunteer Spotlight

Volunt-hero



Marjorie Levy is a busy woman, but not as you might think. Sure, she had two fulfilling careers, one teaching special-needs children for 10 years, and the other as a research scientist at Chevron for 20 years. And while two careers might be enough for most, giving her time to others is what really lights her fire. With thousands of hours and an extensive list of volunteer service since retiring, Marjorie can't imagine life any other way. Luckily for us, she found her way to Ombudsman Services.

"When my mom was 90, I moved her into a board-and-care facility in the Bay Area for the last six months of her life, and advocated daily for her care and well-being. I had no idea until about two years ago that you could become a volunteer ombudsman. I was immediately drawn to the opportunity to give voice and support to seniors that might not be able to speak up for themselves—to ensure they have the best possible care and a comfortable living situation, and for them to know that there is someone that is looking out for their best interests. I love chatting with the residents I visit, hearing their stories and memories, and hopefully bringing a little joy into their lives."

Marjorie was recently nominated for the East Bay Leadership Council's 2019 Philanthropy Awards by Debbie Toth, CEO of Choice in Aging, an adult day health program for seniors in Pleasant Hill, where she has been running a volunteer Horticultural Therapy Program for the past nine years.

Marjorie is a dream volunteer, and we're thankful for her vibrant effort and heart of gold.

Become a Volunteer

There are many ways to volunteer, from becoming a trained Field Ombudsman to helping out in the office. As a Field Ombudsman, you will be part of a staff-supported team of volunteers with countless opportunities to make an immediate impact on the safety and quality of life of those living in long-term care facilities. If you would like to learn more about our upcoming volunteer training, leadership opportunities on the board, the MSW Internship Program, or other ways to give of your time, please contact Tondenisha Coleman at (925) 242-9988 or tondenisha@ccombudsman.org.