



RETIRED PUBLIC EMPLOYEES' ASSOCIATION OF CALIFORNIA

## Santa Clara County Chapter 031 Newsletter

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March 2021

*An Association of CalPERS Annuitants committed to the goal of helping all  
public employees maintain their physical and economic health during retirement*

***NEXT ZOOM MEETING –  
April 28, 2021 at 12:30 PM***

**OUR GUEST SPEAKER WILL BE  
RHONDA SCHMIT, Employee Benefits  
Program Manager of Santa Clara County  
SUBJECT – BENEFITS**

**The Zoom invitation will be sent out in  
April. There will be Zoom information in  
the April newsletter.**

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**A VERY WARM WELCOME TO  
OUR NEW MEMBERS!**

**F**ollowing is the name of our new  
member – Kim Hicks-Burns.  
***Welcome!***

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***IN MEMORIAM:*** Our deepest  
sympathy to the families and loved ones of  
Sylvie Brown, Jessie Eason, Andrew  
Henriques, Nha Huynh, Evangeline Malin,  
Irene Mercado, Florence Rabourn, Lavern  
Shrum, and Minnie Wendling.

***.They will truly be missed.***

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## COVID-19 VACCINE UPDATE!

**T**he following is a public service  
announcement from the Santa Clara  
County Public Health Department. Our  
Chapter sent it via email to all of our members  
who have an email address listed with RPEA  
Headquarters. We are printing it in our  
newsletter for the attention of any member who  
has not yet received their vaccination:

**If you are 65 or older and live in Santa  
Clara County, you are eligible to get a  
COVID-19 vaccine right now.** The County of  
Santa Clara continues to vaccinate residents  
who are age 65 and older at sites throughout the  
County. Under the County's No Wrong Door  
system, launched in February, eligible residents  
can receive a COVID-19 vaccine at any  
participating site, no matter what health  
insurance you have or who is your regular  
doctor. The system increases access for older  
adults, who are most vulnerable to severe illness  
and death from the virus. The vaccine is free,  
safe, and effective. If you are eligible, you  
should get vaccinated right away.

Residents with internet access can  
visit [sccfreevax.org](https://sccfreevax.org) to find a vaccine site or  
make an appointment for a vaccination. You  
can also call 408-970-2000. The Call Center is  
open from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m., Monday through  
Friday, and 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. on Saturday and  
Sunday. Assistance is available in English,  
Spanish, Vietnamese, and other languages.  
\*\* Vaccine eligibility is expanding. This information is  
current as of February 17, 2021.

Britt Ehrhardt, MHS

Public Health Communications Officer, Public Health  
Department

Vaccine Branch, Emergency Operations Center, County of  
Santa Clara

## THE HISTORY CORNER

Marianne Damon, RPEA Chapter 031 Historian

### A RECAP ON AIR QUALITY



BAY AREA AIR QUALITY  
MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

We were fortunate to have Erin DeMerritt from the Bay Area Air Quality Management District speak at our January membership meeting. In addition to speaking and answering our questions, she also had a slide presentation and showed some video clips. She spoke about the difference between summer and winter air pollution, what we can do to improve air quality, wildfire preparedness, and the Spare the Air program.

The Bay Area Air Quality Management District was established in 1955, and predates the Environmental Protection Agency which had its start in 1970. The District has 24 locally elected board members who represent 9 counties, 101 cities and 8 million residents. Their Spare the Air program of notifying the public on days of unhealthy air began in 1991. The program educates the public and encourages actions that can decrease pollution. It determines days on which the public may not use fireplaces (“no burn days”). Thanks to their monitoring, all of our smartphones show the Air Quality Index number under local weather. I checked this number several times a day during our bad wildfire experience.

In summer the main cause of air pollution is ozone (smog) from on-road vehicles. It builds during the day and is at its worst in the afternoon. Smog is an irritant that aggravates asthma and can inflame and damage the lining of the lungs. Tips to reduce smog are to reduce driving, don’t idle if stopped longer than 30 seconds, and link trips. If you do online shopping, try to ship orders together. Recycle and compost.

In winter wood smoke particulate matter accounts for 39% of the air pollution, and

13% comes from geological dust. We can reduce the use of fireplaces and observe the mandatory no-burn days. We can replace open wood-burning fireplaces with gas, or with electric inserts. This type of pollution is especially harmful to children, the elderly and people with heart and lung conditions. Ms. DeMerritt explained that particulate matter (PM) comes in two types, PM-10 and PM-2.5 (the main particle in wood fire). These particulate particles are too small to see, and are too small for bandanas, cloth masks and surgical masks to stop them. This surprised me. I had been very careful to wear such masks when I had to go out during our wildfire bad smoke days. I now know that only N-95’s and N-100’s, which are very difficult to fit and wear correctly, can be of benefit. I was thinking of harmful particles as being the visible ash, like what built up on our cars. But, actually, the harmful particles are the invisible ones!

What should we do if confronted by wildfire smoke? Stay indoors with windows and doors closed and properly weatherproofed. Curtail your activities. Set air conditioning units and car vents to recirculate rather than intake. And, if severe, leave the affected area.

How has the pandemic affected air quality? Ms. DeMerritt said that with traffic decreased by 50 to 85%, there was a decrease in carbon dioxide by 30%, a decrease of PM-2.5 by 25% and a decrease in nitrogen oxides by 45%.

For those of you who receive the e-version of the newsletter, here is the link to the video where four people describe what they do to promote air quality in the Bay Area and how important good air quality is in their lives: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gGp7MFpjOeQ17> Ms. DeMerritt’s handouts can be found at our website, posted with the January 2021 newsletter. We felt very fortunate to have such a well-prepared speaker give us such valuable information.

## BAY AREA OLDER ADULT ACTIVITIES

BAO continues to hold virtual programs. Membership is free.

- Coming up on March 18 from 11-12:15 is Searching for Sustainable Water in Silicon Valley, a real-time tour of San Jose's Advanced Water Purification Center. I've been wanting to take this tour and write about it, but had to postpone this past year. Now I can take the tour without driving to the site!
- April 8, 11-12:30, All You Need to Know to Prepare for Emergencies.
- April 15, 11-12:30, Virtual Exploration of Almaden Quicksilver History & Geology, with a local geologist as our guide.
- Any Time: Advance Health Care Directive, for creating a first one, or for updating an existing directive. Includes the necessary handouts.
- Any Time: BAO recorded tours and classes; origami, exercise & nature tours.

[www.bayareaolderadults.org](http://www.bayareaolderadults.org)

## SILICON VALLEY READS 2021

**D**on't forget to check the calendar of events for Silicon Valley Reads. You can take a tour, any time, of the Euphrat Museum special art exhibit. Authors will be hosting virtual sessions to discuss their books. There are some interesting sessions, including such diverse interests as quilt-making, San Jose Taiko, and films from the United Nations Association Film Festival. Here is the link: [2021 Events \(siliconvalleyreads.org\)](http://2021Events.siliconvalleyreads.org) The last day of events is March 31st.

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Emily Dickinson when she was around 17.

### A Light exists in Spring

A Light exists in Spring  
Not present on the Year  
At any other period —  
When March is scarcely here

A Color stands abroad  
On Solitary Fields  
That Science cannot overtake  
But Human Nature feels.

It waits upon the Lawn,  
It shows the furthest Tree  
Upon the furthest Slope you know  
It almost speaks to you.

Then as Horizons step  
Or Noons report away  
Without the Formula of sound  
It passes and we stay —

A quality of loss  
Affecting our Content  
As Trade had suddenly encroached  
Upon a Sacrament.



**Emily Dickinson**

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