



*Web Site:* <http://www.owlsf.org>

*January - March 2016*

*Email:* [owlsf@owlsf.org](mailto:owlsf@owlsf.org)

OWL is the ONLY national membership organization to focus exclusively on critical issues facing women as they age. We work together to improve the status and quality of life for midlife and older women through national, state and local networks.

**You are Invited to the**

**OWL SF Annual Planning Meeting**

**January 23, 2016**

**Program Time: 10:00 a.m. — Noon**

**Lunch and Social Hour: Noon — 1:00 p.m.**

**Ellis Street Family Apartments**

**555 Ellis Street**

Located between Hyde & Leavenworth

Van Ness Muni 47 — 3 block walk

Geary Muni 38 — 1 block walk

Civic Center Bart — 5 block walk

Your ideas and suggestions are essential as we plan for OWL SF's new year! After planning for our programs, stay to enjoy lunch with other OWL SF members. All members and guests interested in OWL are welcome.

**Bring your brown bag lunch**

**Beverages provided**

**RSVP: Call the OWL office to leave a message**

**OWL SF \* 870 Market Street, #905, San Francisco, Ca. 94102**

**Phone 415-989-4422 \* Web site: [www.owlsf.org](http://www.owlsf.org)**

# New Year's News and Updates From Your OWL Board President



Here is some news about our long occupied spaces at 870 Market Street. The rent on the OWL office space was raised again and the Board has concluded that we must either find someone to share the space with us or we must find another space. An announcement has been placed on Craig's List, as well as other lists, saying that we are open to sharing space with another non-profit or perhaps with an individual. If you know of a possible "roommate" for OWL, please ask them to contact Glenda Hope, 415-585-4636.

The building has also withdrawn the offer for us to use the conference room at 870 Market for our monthly programs. We are utilizing other places such as the annual visit to the Main Library in September and the conference room at 555 Ellis Street Family Apartments (we have a connection there).

Meanwhile, some OWLs have been busily sorting and clearing out the accumulation of decades in the office. There are some fascinating files, pictures, memorabilia from OWL's early years, etc, including a box of large pin-on buttons with a spotted owl in the center and the caption: "Another Endangered Species, Older Women's League."

A 1986 letter to OWL-SF members speaks of older women as the hidden face of poverty and loneliness – still a reality 30 years later. The letter describes the goals of our chapter for Strengthening Social Security, improving health of body and mind for our members, providing end of life planning, working in cooperating with other organizations and the Board of Supervisors to make life better for midlife and older women, especially the poor, in our City, and having fun together.

We are following in the footsteps of our foremothers and we are creating new paths for justice and healing as well.

The Board decided not to send a second fund appeal this year, as previously done. But there is a budget shortfall and your contributions toward continuing the good work, the history and the powerful presence of the Older Women's League-SF are very much needed.

Start the New Year with a gift to OWL-SF of your purse and your presence. Our voice as the Advocate for Midlife and Older Women is needed now more than ever.

—*Glenda Hope*

## WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

**Linda Silver**  
**Marcia Peterzell**  
**Diana Taylor**

**Maxine Anderson**  
**Robin Brasso**  
**Joan Downey, Treasurer**  
**Melanie Grossman**  
**Amy Hittner**  
**Glenda Hope**  
**Margaret Lew**  
**Sheila Malkind**  
**Nan McGuire**  
**Sy Russell**  
**Ruth Strassner**  
**Betty Traynor**

**Newsletter**  
Margaret Lew, Editor

**Membership**  
Nan McGuire

**Political Advocacy Committee**  
Glenda Hope  
Melanie Grossman  
Co-Chairwomen

**OWL SF Board meetings:** first  
Monday of the month, 4:00-6:00 pm,  
870 Market St.  
**Phone:** (415) 989-4422  
**Email:** [owlsf@owlsf.org](mailto:owlsf@owlsf.org)  
**Web:** [www.owlsf.org](http://www.owlsf.org)  
**Mail:** 870 Market St., Room 905,  
San Francisco, CA 94102

## A Look at CARA, Past and Future

Reading over notes from the statewide convention held in October, the planning meeting for 2016, and the list of accomplishments by the California Alliance for Retired Americans (CARA) in the last year, I was overwhelmed. I can only begin to communicate all the important information in one short newsletter article. Hopefully, some of its extraordinary work can be clarified by some history and an explanation of how CARA is organized:

**National:** Barely twelve years old, the CARA is an affiliate of the national ARA. Some of its efforts have always been directed toward national issues pertaining to older Americans, particularly protecting and expanding Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid, as well as protecting rights, for example, by opposing the TPP or legislation cutting benefits. CARA members have demonstrated and lobbied locally, highly visible on these national issues.

**State:** CARA is essentially an umbrella organization for over 275 organizations, primarily community groups serving seniors and union retirees. Their extended network reaches almost a million older adults and is continually expanding. Most importantly, CARA educates and advocates on relevant state issues and how they affect its population – legislation, state budget, state policy. CARA has addressed many issues, from increasing revenue for senior services to increasing regulations for pedestrian or drug prescription safety. CARA is increasingly seen as a resource by state legislators, working individually, and as part of like-minded coalitions.

**Local:** The CARA Community Action Teams (CATS) are the local action centers. A growing number of cities and regions have active CATS, addressing state, national and local issues. It is at monthly CAT meetings that individuals representing local groups have the biggest role to play. In the San Francisco CAT, we've worked on national issues (Social Security and Medicare), state issues (budget, housing, fair taxes, safety regulations, to name a few), as well as local issues (housing, short-term rental, CPMC, pedestrian safety, drug take-back, etc.) The local level addresses individual issues like end-of-life documents or medical/hospital information.

Priorities for 2016, established by CARA's members, are 1. Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid; 2. Single payer healthcare; 3. Reforming Prop 13 so that big business pays its fair share of property taxes. CARA will also continue working on legislation for minimum wage increase, housing, domestic worker rights, climate change. OWL-SF is highly dependent on CARA for many aspects of our work, particularly state issues and legislation. A much larger organization, CARA provides us with a great deal of information, as well as a framework for action. We offer community support on many issues they identify.

—*Kathie Piccagli*

## Political Advocacy Committee Update

### Holding CPMC Accountable to the Community

OWL members Nan McGuire and Melanie Grossman attended the Joint Planning and Health Commission Hearing on December 4, 2015. The purpose of the hearing was to review CPMC's compliance on the development agreement with the City and County of San Francisco regarding the building of a new hospital on Van Ness Ave. and the rebuilding of St. Luke's Hospital on Cesar Chavez St.

As part of the original Community Coalition working for a strong development agreement, OWL-SF shared the Coalition's concerns regarding CPMC's compliance with the agreement. Particular concerns include: current and future provision of charity care, CPMC's failure to address issues of cultural competency (especially lack of multi-lingual and multi-cultural staff), lack of an adequate number of psych. beds, access to treatment sites for older citizens and the disabled who live in the South-East San Francisco, location of St. Luke's doctors away from the Mission and closer to Van Ness, and lack of community outreach and engagement with the Coalition and other community Groups.

After CPMC officials enumerated their achievements in complying with the developmental agreement and community groups and Coalition speakers voiced concerns, the meeting wrapped up, though not before Barbara Garcia, Director of Health for the SF Department of Public Health, chastised Sutter-CPMC representatives for failing to take steps to insure a culturally competency staff and lack of effort in engaging with the Coalition and community groups.

The next step is for heads of DPH and Planning Dept. to draft a report which will be sent to the Commissioners, and then passed along to the Board of Supervisors. Outreach by the Coalition to CPMC continues in an effort to work with CPMC on the issues noted above as we move forward in 2016.

—*Melanie Grossman*

## Changes in the Winter Winds

Some years ago, we renewed OWL memberships on January 1<sup>st</sup>. But members join on other dates throughout the year, so the OWL SF Board decided it would be fairer to have membership dates align with date of joining. Though some of us question the wisdom of that move, we do not plan to go back to the old way. The change in renewal date policy did result in about 50% of our members renewing in January of each year.

We have made two annual appeals for donations, one in January and one in June. For those who renewed memberships in January this funding appeal became a double whammy. The Board has decided to do away with the appeal in January and have one annual appeal in June.

On your annual dues renewal there will also be the option of making an additional donation if you so desire. Having one annual appeal for donations may reduce the financial support we receive for OWL SF but we hope that fewer appeals in the mail will be pleasing.

To rein in operating expenses, we hope to share the office space in the Flood Building where we have been for over ten years. The arrival of Twitter and other tech companies have sent rents sky high. Though ours is somewhat lower due of our longevity there, it rises every year. We are currently interviewing possible non-profit candidates and hopefully by the time of the Spring newsletter we will have some financial relief in the form of a co-renter. If you know of someone who may be interested in sharing on a part time basis, please contact Glenda Hope, 415 585-4636 or call the OWL SF office at 415 989-4422.

—*Nan McGuire*

### Poetry from Arlene Silverman

OWL SF member, Arlene Silverman published her first poetry book, *Windows*, in 2015. In the Introduction, she writes, “In the opening poem, ‘Windows,’ I ask poets to help me see the world more clearly and, yes, more poetically. This collection reveals that I am still, at age 81, trying to see — but what a wonderful time I’ve had.”

—*Sheila Malkind*

Here’s one of her short poems.

#### Forgiveness

Remembering:  
Like that stone in the shoe,  
the loan that’s unpaid,  
The bone in the craw.

Forgiving:  
Kick the stone to the curb,  
Let the loan be absolved.  
Chew the bone till it’s gone.

## Sy Russell Elected To OWL SF Board

Welcome to Sy Russell, OWL SF Office Manager, who has recently agreed to join the OWL SF Board. She has a long history of community and political involvement in San Francisco. In 1992 she served as Recruiter and Coordinator for Literature Drop for Supervisor Sue Bierman. She was the Visibility Chair for NORCAL State Political Committee in 1998. And she successfully ran the No on Proposition J campaign, Build the Blvd. in 1999.

As a young parent she was an active board member of the San Francisco School. While raising two young (now grown) children she had a long career as Production and Product Development Manager at Esprit Corp. After retiring, she held several other short term positions including at Red Herring, NE WEAR and The California Historical Society. She has three grandchildren.

As OWL Office Manager Sy has done a wonderful job of consolidating files, keeping membership data up to date, sending out renewal notices and thank you notes, handling phone messages, and gently reminding us of tasks that must be completed. Glenda put it perfectly saying: “I cannot possibly imagine what a mess we would be in without Sy. She is phenomenal – and easy to be with too”.

—*Velma Parness*

## Solving Puzzles for Brain Fitness

Dr. Chris Thompson, University of San Francisco professor and nationally recognized leader in older adult fitness and wellness, spoke on Brain Fitness at the OWL SF monthly membership meeting on November 21<sup>st</sup>. Dr. Chris engaged OWL members in a “Brain Boot Camp” where he presented strategies for memory and learning that challenged participants to think “outside the box” and to try new puzzles, games, and brain teasers. According to Dr. Chris, sticking with one kind of brain exercise such as Sudoku or crossword puzzles eventually does not encourage the growth of new neuron connections in our brains. Trying new and engaging puzzles that challenge different parts of the brain, requiring us to think in new and nimble ways, will keep our brains sharp. Two of the interesting brain teasers that Dr. Chris brought with him were Rebus puzzles and Shinro. The OWL group worked on these together and had lots of laughter and groans as we coaxed our brains to move in new directions. See examples below:

#### Rebus Puzzles

Picture puzzles with hidden meanings to solve from a pictogram.



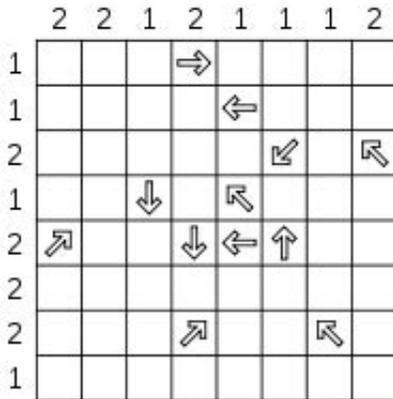
Answer: *Growing economy*



Answer: **Try to understand**

**Shinro Puzzles:**

Your job is to locate 12 hidden dots in an 8X8 grid using clues in the puzzle. Numbers and arrows provide the clues. A number on the top tells how many dots are in the column underneath the number. Numbers on the side tell how many dots are in the row. Each arrow points to at least one hidden dot. Not every dot has an arrow pointing to it. The puzzle can be solved entirely by logic and reason.



It is important to remember that puzzles and games, such as Jeopardy, bridge, or many of the brain games one can find on-line are just as good as the ones presented above. The point is to try something new!

Staying physically active and socially engaged is also very important to cognitive health. As OWL-SF member and political advocate for older and midlife women, Kathy Piccagli says, “Why is any of this (puzzles and games) better for your brain than community activism where you incorporate many brain skills, including people skills?” Spoken like a true OWL. Let’s take Kathy’s advice. Besides sitting in our homes doing puzzles, let’s remember to stay engaged, active, and advocating for our community of older and midlife women!

—*Melanie Grossman*

**Our Challenge Passing on a Healthy and Habitable Earth**

Did you know that California ranks third among the states in oil production and comes close to equaling the oil reserves of Alaska and North Dakota? Maybe this is why the oil and gas industry put so much money into defeating any legislation or policy to limit or regulate the industry here in California. Maybe this is why so many politicians cave.

In this time of increasing concern about climate and environmental change, the Paris International Climate Accord, and increasing feeling that we should do our part, we need to be aware of national and international

issues, but “all politics is local”. OWL SF can have the greatest impact close to home in the Bay Area and California.

California has been a leader in some areas of climate change, but lags in others. The tide must turn. We must do more to reduce emissions and the burning of fossil fuel, for the environment and for our health. We don’t have to dig up and use all the fossil fuel we have.

Our first priority should be to oppose fracking, the hydraulic fracturing process of injecting liquid, water, chemicals, and sand, at high pressure into subterranean rocks to extract oil or gas. Fracking not only extracts dirty fossil fuel from the ground and burns it to create pollutants; it uses a lot of precious water and it pollutes ground water by introducing chemical laden water into the ground to harm the environment in multiple ways.

Last year, the goal of 50% less petroleum use in CA by 2030 was stricken from SB350 at the 11th hour after shameless lobbying and deceptive advertising by Big Oil. We need to keep pushing for significant, enforceable goals, not only by “keeping it in the ground”, but also by becoming less fossil fuel dependent.

Cutting off supply ports, from which to ship fossil fuels, is another battle going on now and it will increase. Oakland is currently embroiled in an effort to prevent shipping coal from a new port facility or transporting this dangerous fuel through the city. As the effort to export oil heats up, there will be increasing pressure for other coastal cities to establish export ports. We can’t let this happen.

We face many other important environmental issues; the greatest may be the issue of water. I expect this problem issue to be major in the coming year – we need to be aware of policy and legislation. Let’s get it right. Overwhelming? Future generations depend on us. To quote Bernie Sanders, “There is nothing more important than passing on an earth that is healthy and habitable for our kids and grandkids.”

—*Kathie Piccagli*

**A Summit of Older Adult Choirs**

Two hundred voices from seven Older Adult Choirs come together for a spectacular afternoon of music!

When: January 27, 2016 @ 2:30 pm

Where: Herbst Theatre

401 Van Ness Ave, San Francisco

The program is free and open to the public, however, registration required at:

<http://www.eventbrite.com/e/a-summit-of-older-adult-choirs-at-herbst-theatre-tickets-18743774133>

## Golden Gate Village Helps Seniors Stay at Home

Almost one in five San Franciscans is 60 or older, and is planning to remain at home as they age. But there are problems with aging at home, particularly for the oldest and most frail elderly: managing stairs and hills, getting to doctors' appointments and shopping, visiting friends and handling everyday tasks. City services and private providers address some of these concerns. About 15 years ago, seniors around the country began creating "villages" to help themselves and their friends respond to the challenges of aging in place. San Francisco is one of the leaders in this movement. In February, the newly-organized Golden Gate Village in the Richmond District became the third village in the City.

The Golden Gate Village is being developed by the staff and friends of the Richmond Senior Center. "We're unique," explained Linda Murley, director of the RSC. "The Senior Center already has a diverse community, economically and ethnically. We have a language capacity in Mandarin, Cantonese and Russian. We're experienced with making referrals to services for seniors. Creating the village in the Richmond Senior Center lets members take advantage of our language capability and expertise, and gives the village space in which to hold meetings and events. It's a win-win for everyone."

While some members of the Golden Gate Village also participate in programs at the senior center, the village is a separate entity. Many village members are young seniors, generally able to care for themselves. But, like most seniors, they are acutely aware that a fall, illness of the fragility of increasing age can quickly change all this.

While other SF villages charge a membership fee, a grant from the SF Department of Aging and Adult

Services enables the Golden Gate Village to offer free services. "Although we're free, we expect members to volunteer a minimum of four hours a month," Murley said. "Everybody has something they can contribute, something they can do, from calling or visiting people who are shut in, to giving rides, to organizing and facilitating programs. Our village was created by older adults, for older adults, we rely on our members." With assistance from Murley and Kaleda Walling, the part-time director of the Golden Gate Village, members have organized several ongoing social events: a Tuesday walking group, a monthly cooking cooperative, lectures and educational presentations, a monthly café for seniors, a biweekly sing along and Wednesday jazz performances. Murley, Walling and the board of directors welcome people with ideas for new programs.

Yasmine Scallan, a retired real estate broker, was an early member of the Golden Gate Village and is now on the board of directors. "Professionally, I was involved in so many situations where elders hoped to stay at home and they just needed a little help to do that. Our village fills a need we all have. If we don't have it now, we will eventually," Scallan said.

Last July, after feasting at one of the village's monthly community dinners, SF Supervisor Eric Mar enthusiastically expressed his support for villages. "It's important for seniors to be able to age in place, to be helped by the community and to contribute to it. I love the village model because it's a model which sees everyone as a valuable resource. Ageing is a family concern; we all need to be involved," Mar said.

For more information about the Golden Gate Village or to volunteer, call Linda Murley or Kaleda Walling at (415) 752-6444; or send an e-mail to [lmurley@ggsenior.org](mailto:lmurley@ggsenior.org) or [Kaleda@ggsenior.org](mailto:Kaleda@ggsenior.org).

—*Judy Goddess*



## A Piano In The Park

There was music in the air at Boeddeker Park in the Tenderloin during the fall of 2015 when a small upright piano was placed in its gardens for all to play by Dean Mermell and Mauro ffortissimo of the Sunset Piano project, who brought many pianos to the Botanical Garden of Golden Gate Park in the summer.

I knew about the project in the Botanical Garden and thought why not see if we can bring a piano to Boeddeker too. Dean Mermell said yes, and after getting the ok from the Recreation and Park Department, the piano was delivered on September 25<sup>th</sup>. It was an instant success, if not a surprise, to see a piano outside (covered at night) and ready to play. Many people took advantage of this chance from accomplished musicians to first-timers, young and old. Kasey Asberry, coordinator of the celebration community garden at Boeddeker Park, told of an elder

gentleman who walked slowly to the piano and when she told him he should feel free to play, it was for him, he asked, "Really, just for me?" and then sat down and without sheet music played a beautiful Bach piano concerto. Other times children came and plinked away or listened while adult teachers gave them a few tips. Nearby workers bringing along their sheet music checked it out during their lunch breaks. I really didn't know what to expect, but the piano was treated with respect and appreciated by all. When telling people about it in the neighborhood, I always got big smiles, some people were puzzled: Outside, not inside? But then they got it, there would be music in the air at Boeddeker Park. And you may hear it again this coming Spring.

—*Betty Traynor*

OWL Board Member, Betty, is Coordinator of the Friends of Boeddeker Park

## Community Of Voices

Last April, an enthusiastic audience greeted the performance of the Community of Voices choir at the OMI Senior Center. The 35 choir members are part of a multi-year study funded under a grant from the National Institute on Health to evaluate whether something as accessible and relatively low cost as singing in a community choir can improve the health of older people.

Community of Voices, a collaboration between UCSF School of Nursing's Institute for Health & Aging, the San Francisco Department of Aging and Adult Services, and the Community Music Center, Dr. Julene Johnson, the leader researcher in the study explained, "expands on a 2006 study by the late geriatric psychiatrist, Gene Cohen, that found that older people who participate in weekly community arts programs, including choirs, made fewer trips to the doctor, used fewer medicines, fell less, expressed less loneliness and were more active than control groups. Gene Cohen's study produced important findings on the health benefits of a chorale program for elders, but it was less rigorous and involved fewer participants than this study. We hope what we're doing will demonstrate that community arts programs work by keeping seniors healthy."

Community of Voices choirs are open to seniors 60 and older with an interest in singing, a willingness to complete three short study interviews and tests of balance and memory with UCSF staffers, and the commitment to attend one year of weekly rehearsals and perform in three public concerts. Singing experience and the ability to sing on key or read notes are not required. But what will happen to the choirs after their participation in the one-year study?

Recipients of a December 2014 grant from the Google Bay Area Impact Challenge, the Community Music Center is committed to continuing the choirs at least through December 2016. "We may combine some choirs and we've opened the existing ones to new (non-study) members," explained Sylvia Sherman, program director at CMC. "While the continuation choirs won't be part of the study any longer, we're pledged to keep them going."

Patty Clement-Cihak, Division Director for Aging Support Services for Catholic Charities, brought the choir to the OMI site. "Seniors want to age at home and they want to remain healthy, cognitively and physically. As a senior service, it's our responsibility to meet their drive to remain healthy. The Community of Voices program is engaging, challenging, and meaningful for the seniors. What's particularly good about this program is that it's evidence-based; seniors see and are part of the testing. There's that initial interview, and then they go in for testing every six months. It's all about healthy aging. As long as seniors come, we want them here."

Recruitment is currently under way for another Community of Voices choir at the IT Bookman Center, as well as three choirs in other sections of the City: Bernal, south of Market, and the Castro. Dr. Helen Dilworth, a member of the music faculty at CCSF, will direct the Bookman choir; Judy Lee will be the accompanist. Dilworth outlined her plans for the choir, "I believe everyone has a right to sing. I'm looking for a repertoire with a broad appeal. I think I'll start with two-part harmony, and go on from there." If you are interested in participating in the study and joining the new OMI choir or any of the three choirs currently recruiting members, contact UCSF staff member Rachel Freyre at 415-475-5903.

—*Judy Goddess*

All Women's Issues Were Not Resolved In 1920

All Women Activists Are Not Wild-Eyed Radicals

Women's Health Care Is Not Adequately Covered

Women's Economic Security Is Not Based On The Charity Of Men

Everything You Need To Know About "The System" Was Not Taught In School

## Calendar

For a complete and up to date listing see the OWL website: <http://www.owlsf.org/calendar.php>

**January 11 Monday** — OWL Board Meeting, 4:00-6:00pm (Flood Bldg. Room 665)

**January 23 Saturday** — OWL General Meeting, Annual Planning Meeting, 10:00am-Noon, (555 Ellis Street) (see details on cover)

**February 1 Monday** — OWL Board Meeting, 4:00-6:00pm (Flood Bldg. Room 665)

**February 20 Saturday** — OWL General Meeting, 10:00am-Noon, (details to be announced)

**March 7 Monday** — OWL Board Meeting, 4:00-6:00pm (Flood Bldg. Room 665)

**March 26 Saturday** — OWL General Meeting, 10:00am-Noon, (details to be announced)

YES! I WANT TO JOIN OWL SF!

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY STATE ZIP

TELEPHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

E-MAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

Annual dues of \$50 are recommended. (If you are unable to pay the recommended amount, OWL has established a sliding fee scale from \$50 –\$5.) Members receive the quarterly OWL SF Newsletter.

OWL SF will not share or sell any information about our members.

Make a check out to and mail to:

OWL SF  
870 Market Street, Room 905  
San Francisco, CA 94102

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San Francisco, CA 94102

### **The Founding of OWL**

OWL was born in 1980 in Des Moines, Iowa, during one of the pre-conferences held around the county in preparation for the third White House Conference on Aging, which was held in 1981 in Washington, DC. At the pre-conference in Des Moines, TISH SOMMERS noted that little attention was being paid to the ways in which aging was different for women. She called for a special “ad hoc” meeting to discuss this concern. OWL has been a voice for the special concerns of midlife and older women ever since.

Comments or questions? Please contact the SF OWL Office at (415) 989-4422; FAX: (415) 989-4050; e-mail: [owlsanfran@juno.com](mailto:owlsanfran@juno.com)

The date on your mailing label is the date your membership expires.