



The voice of mid-life and older women

NEWSLETTER

San Francisco



April - June 2024

OWL-SF focuses 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.

OWL-SF Presents
Women Helping Women
In Ways That
Really Make a Difference

When: Saturday, April 27th

11 AM to 12:30 PM

Where: Richmond Branch

San Francisco Public Library

351 9th Ave, San Francisco, CA 94118

Most of us know very little about human trafficking and sexual exploitation. This program sheds some light on the women caught up in its dangerous web, the help available for a way out, and recovery. Learn about important nonprofit resources and services available, founded by women to help women in San Francisco.

Speaker: Toni Eby—CEO of SF SafeHouse for unhoused women experiencing sexual exploitation-will help us understand the complex struggles of women dealing with these issues, and what we can do to support our sisters on the streets.

an in-person meeting!

MUNI lines stop nearby 38 (Geary & 9th Ave.) and 44 (Geary & 6th Ave.)

All branches of SFPL are wheelchair accessible.

Meeting room is on the ground floor.

OWL-SF * PO Box 170622, San Francisco, Ca. 94117

Phone 415-712-1695 * Web site: www.owlsf.org * E-mail: info@owlsf.org

OWL-SF Board Retreat

The OWL Board held a working retreat on March 8, 2024 to discuss OWL-SF's current status and plans for the future. In attendance were Maxine Anderson, Joan Downey, Glenda Hope, Margaret Lew, Betty Traynor, Kathie Piccagli (past president), Susan Pedrick (office manager), and Melanie Grossman.

The main focus of this retreat was to discuss membership and participation in OWL-SF in 2024 and beyond. In general, participation in many volunteer organizations for older people, such as Gray Panthers, has declined. OWL National closed its doors in 2017, and OWL chapters around the country have slowly ceased to exist, leaving OWL-SF the sole remaining OWL chapter. We have held our own and continue to give older women a voice. We want OWL-SF to go on stronger than ever. To do this we must continue to meet the needs of our existing members and attract new ones.



OWL-SF has served its members by offering friendship, interesting programs, advocating for causes important to older women, and creating opportunities for socialization and fun. Still, keeping our membership numbers robust is a challenge. Looking at other volunteer organizations including churches, we see that we are not alone in struggling to recruit new members. Competition from service organizations with public funding, proliferation of the Village Movement, the aftermath of the COVID pandemic, and increased family and work commitments of women have contributed to this challenge, which we intend to overcome.

Several exciting ideas were discussed on how best to not only confront this issue, but how to make OWL-SF stronger and better than ever. One idea is to focus on our original mission by concentrating more on advocating for older women in terms of financial security, health care, housing, and quality of life. Let's face it: ageism is still with us; age and gender discrimination in employment is still very much an issue; dental, hearing and long-term care services are still not guaranteed; older women who are not technically inclined continue to find it difficult to access services such as transportation and some health services without fluency on the internet. Even landlines are being threatened by companies who find they can save money by going totally paperless and wholly online. We still have vital work to do!

Another idea is to have more opportunities for in-person meetings and socialization. Since we are learning that loneliness and isolation are risk factors for poorer health and shorter lifespans, we are planning more in-person meetings and opportunities for social gatherings. Not only do we love being together, thinking together and laughing together, it's good for our health!

We welcome input from our membership as we go about strengthening OWL-SF. If we are to claim our important place in the community, we need to have our voice strong, present, unwavering, and indispensable. Join the board or a committee, but most importantly, get involved and send us your reactions and ideas to help us keep OWL-SF strong and better than ever going forward.

—*Melanie Grossman*

WELCOME NEW MEMBER!

Penny Sullivan



Board Members
Maxine Anderson
Paula Barber VP
Joan Downey, Treasurer
Melanie Grossman, President
Glenda Hope
Margaret Lew
Betty Traynor, Secretary

Newsletter
Margaret Lew, Editor

Political Advocacy Committee
Glenda Hope
Melanie Grossman
Co-Chairwomen

OWL-SF Board meetings: first Monday of the month, 4:00-5:00 pm, Zoom link available on request

Phone: (415) 712-1695
Email: info@owlsf.org
Web: www.owlsf.org
Mail: Post Office Box 170622, San Francisco, CA 94117

OWL-SF Presents Monthly Meetings For Our Members and Friends

Here's a list of monthly membership meetings we have hosted since 2022. You can find more detail about the presenters, the topics and access video recordings of recent meetings on the OWL-SF website. * indicates video available www.owlsf.org/category/events

2024

*January - Ballot Measures: Our ballot measures pro and con meeting is usually in September. We scheduled it in January to help members prepare for the March Primary Election.

*February - Women and Heart Disease, Arete Nicolas, R.N., returned after her important presentation on Surviving a Stroke with information and advice on surviving heart problems.

March - Strengthen & Stretch, Coach Kyra led us with exercises, in chair, standing and moving with music.

2023

* Strategies for Surviving a Stroke

* Navigating the Medicare Maze (including a detailed and informative report by presenter Chris Dillon) Strengthen & Stretch

* Gun Violence in California and the U.S.

* Laguna Honda Hospital: Issues

* Pedestrian Safety

Current State of Medicare and Social Security

2022

Getting our Affairs in Order for 2023 (including a list of priorities by presenter Susan Pollack)

Celebrating Creativity

Get Ready for the November Election

Protecting Social Security and Medicare

Strengthen & Stretch

Your Internet Security

Older Women and Employment

What's New With the Corona Virus

Never Better Elders with Community Living Campaign

May is the anniversary of the signing of the Older Americans Act. This year's theme is Powered by Connection, which recognizes the profound impact that meaningful relationships and social connections have on our health and well-being. It will be an afternoon of educational and social opportunities for almost 200 older adults and people with disabilities.

OWL-SF will celebrate SF Older Americans at the 2024 Never Better Elders with the Community Living Campaign. Meet us at our table, bring a friend. Information and invitations to join OWL-SF will be available, and our poster will display the newly acquired QR code – an additional method to connect to us. See it on Page 2 of this Newsletter.

Saturday, May 4 (1:00pm-4:00pm) at St. Anne's of the Sunset, 850 Judah. Enter on Funston side, free parking.

OWL-SF Shares Experience with Women in Taiwan

OWL was contacted by Womanable, an organization which consisted of just a few college age young women in Taiwan who were worried about their mothers because all of them were suffering from empty nest syndrome. I did an interview with them on Zoom and suggested others they might interview. They went on from there and now appear to be doing well, giving workshops, etc. There is a screen shot of me showing some of the work Sheila is doing through the *Legacy Film Festival on Aging*. So it appears we are becoming internationally known!

—*Melanie Grossman*

Yahan Hsu of Womanable wrote to Melanie and OWL after the interview:

We are Womanable.

Thank you for your previous acceptance of our interview. During the interview, we gained valuable experience and advice, which has solidified the future direction of our team.

Recently, we hosted a photography-themed workshop titled "Her One Hundred Appearances." We aimed to help women see their different facets and hoped they could capture their beauty in the moment through the lens. For this event, we invited renowned photographers from the industry as speakers, and we had 12 participants. What they all had in common is that each of them has experience in raising children. Through this event, our participants not only learned photography skills but also gained more self-confidence.

Last but not least, we want to share an event with you. We held an exhibition showcasing works independently created by our participants. We hope to use this event to enhance everyone's appreciation for mothers and to focus on the roles of women beyond the family.

In the following link, you can find our post where we introduced your organization, as we hope to help more people in Taiwan get to know you and raise awareness about the status of women in society. Thank you once again for your support and assistance to Womanable.

Sincerely,
Yahan Hsu
Womanable

Instagram: [womanable_0308](https://www.instagram.com/womanable_0308)

Editor's note: Instagram is the easiest access to Womanable's site. There is a Facebook page but the address for it has Chinese characters I was not able to include here.

From Walking 32 Miles in a Day to Crawling from Room to Room

On March 25th, 2023, I walked 32 miles around the perimeter of San Francisco just because I love SF, but on March 25th, 2024, I was crawling the few feet from the hall into my study! After having arthritic pain in my right knee for more than ten days, I had an excruciating pain when I put weight on my right foot, and I wasn't sure how I was going to make it to my computer for a 4 pm Zoom! Then it occurred to me to crawl! That worked, and I soon realized that there was no pain when I was seated or on my knees! ("On the knees of your soul? Might as well be useful. Wash the floor.") I also found out that I could pivot my left foot to move around a bit without bearing weight on my right foot. But I was concerned. I was visiting close friends in Arizona the following week, and I didn't want them to have a guest who was home-bound. I also wanted to be sure it was "just" arthritis. My Arizona friends thought it might be a blood clot.



Tina arrives in Arizona.

I gave up going into Oakland for the BART Accessibility Task Force meeting I'd planned to attend in person and made my public comments remotely. I gave up going with Manny's to Market Street to discuss its future; I was kind of wondering about mine. I called the Kaiser advice nurse and made an appointment for a cortisone shot.

My son helped me get down the stairs and into the car and drove me to my cortisone appointment, which I arrived at in a wheelchair but left with a cane. The PA-C (physician assistant-certified) ruled out a blood clot. I'd already had an x-ray of my knees, but I hadn't seen it. When I did, I was convinced that arthritis was the problem. Those bones in my knees were in very close but not very friendly contact, rubbing against each other but not affectionately! The PA-C gave me something to alleviate the pain while waiting for the cortisone to kick in.

The PA-C I spoke to thinks the cortisone shots are the way to go because they're less invasive than knee replacement, and that outweighs considerations like my age and the possibility that the younger I am, the easier recovery from surgery will be. In fact, she thinks that if I have the hip replacement now, "They don't last forever," so I might have to have a second one. I liked the way she was assuming I'd outlive at least one!

I wound up going to Arizona, arriving and departing on a wheelchair that can easily be arranged at no cost beyond the tip given to the pusher, and wheelchair users are really given the royal treatment at the airport, being pushed through barriers to the front of lines. It could become quite a racket since there's no required doctor's sworn oath that a passenger needs this service.

My walking is still not normal, but I'm happy to be on two legs again and feeling more aligned than ever with people who aren't. For the past four years, I've looked into accessibility in parks, on public transit, and in BART and Metro stations. I'm glad so much progress is being made in those areas--with the exception of that long non-functioning elevator at Hallidie Plaza!

—*Tina Martin*

Women helping Women In Ways That Really Make a Difference

Speaker Toni Eby-CEO of SF SafeHouse for unhoused women experiencing sexual exploitation-will help us understand the complex struggles of women dealing with these issues, and what we can do to support our sisters on the streets. Among issues she will cover:

- How sex trafficking, trauma and drugs are intertwined
- Prevention and support for women at risk
- Resources for help and recovery

SF SafeHouse, founded by OWL-SF Past President Glenda Hope, operates a residential transitional housing program, as well as the Hope Center, a non-residential outreach center in the Tenderloin. SafeHouse is currently negotiating to acquire a building for permanent supportive housing, making more lifesaving services available to women.

This will be an in-person meeting!
Saturday, April 27, 2024, 11 AM to 12:30 PM
Richmond Branch San Francisco Public Library
351 9th Ave, San Francisco, CA 94118

The Valuable Time of Maturity

I counted my years and discovered that I have
less time to live going forward than I have lived until now.

I have more past than future.
I feel like the boy who received a bowl of candies.
The first ones, he ate ungraciously,
but when he realized there were only a few left,
he began to taste them deeply.

I do not have time to deal with mediocrity.
I do not want to be in meetings where parade inflamed egos.

I am bothered by the envious, who seek to discredit
the most able, to usurp their places,
coveting their seats, talent, achievements and luck.

I do not have time for endless conversations,
useless to discuss about the lives of others
who are not part of mine.

I do not have time to manage sensitivities of people
who despite their chronological age, are immature.

I cannot stand the result that generates
from those struggling for power.

People do not discuss content, only the labels.
My time has become scarce to discuss labels,
I want the essence, my soul is in a hurry...
Not many candies in the bowl...

I want to live close to human people,
very human, who laugh of their own stumbles,
and away from those turned smug and overconfident
with their triumphs,
away from those filled with self-importance,
Who does not run away from their responsibilities ..
Who defends human dignity.
And who only want to walk on the side of truth
and honesty.
The essential is what makes
life worthwhile.

I want to surround myself with people,
who knows how to touch the hearts of people
People to whom the hard knocks of life,
taught them to grow with softness in their soul.

Yes I am in a hurry ... to live with intensity,
that only maturity can bring.
I intend not to waste any part of the goodies
I have left ...
I'm sure they will be more exquisite,
that most of which so far I've eaten

My goal is to arrive to the end satisfied and in peace
with my loved ones and my conscience.
I hope that your goal is the same,
because either way you will get there too.

—*Mário Raul de Moraes Andrade*

California Caregiver Resource Centers

What are the California Caregiver Resource Centers?
Many of us or our family members may find the need
for a caregiver and the web pages of the California
Caregiver Resource Centers can provide information to
help.

The 11 nonprofit California Caregiver Resource
Centers (CRCs), serve family caregivers of adults
affected by chronic and debilitating health conditions,
degenerative diseases, or traumatic brain injury.
Explore the collection of Caregiver Resources at
<https://www.caregivercalifornia.org/> where you can find
the opportunity to connect with your local CRC.

Features on the web page are:

Stories from Family Caregivers

The California Caregiver Resource Centers are proud
to produce the Caregiver Collective video series
featuring powerful stories shared by family caregivers
here in California.

Am I a Caregiver Quiz Find out if you are a
caregiver. The term caregiver refers to anyone who
provides physical, emotional, financial, or logistical
support to someone with a disabling condition. It is
important for them to know about the free resources
available to support!

Read articles on:

“How does caregiving impact retirement? The real
costs of caregiving.”

“Caring for someone after a stroke: what to expect and
tips to simplify the transition.”

“Navigating a Hospital Stay: What to do before, during
& after Discharge”

CARA Update

CARA's 2024 Senior Vote Program Needs You!

Sign up to be a senior ambassador today. It's not too
late to sign up to be a Senior Ambassador. In order
to make our Senior Vote Program a success, we must
recruit at least 250 Senior Vote Ambassadors. CARA's
goal is to communicate with at least 5000 older voters
in each of our 5 target Congressional districts. Sign up
today at: <https://californiaalliance.org/senior-vote-2024/>

If you cannot be an Ambassador, please consider
making a donation to our Senior Vote Program: Senior
Vote Donations.

CARA's next Fabulous Friday Forums is April 26th Protecting Your Privacy

RSVP: <https://bit.ly/SeniorPrivacyForum>

Contact CARA:

P.O. Box 23754, Oakland, CA 94623
510-663-4086 Tollfree 1-877-223-6107/
contactus.cara@gmail.com
www.californiaalliance.org

Relinquishing Books — A Swedish Death Cleaning

I don't want to destroy the good relationship I've had with my son, now 45 years old, when, after my death, he has to deal with all the stuff I've accumulated over a lifetime. For so many years, I pictured my home turned into a museum, where everything could stay exactly as I left it, but now I realize I need to do the Swedish Death Cleaning a friend alluded to recently.

Between my 77th and 78th birthdays, I had towers of books in the corner of my living room. For a while I shaped them into HI and then at Christmas HO and then, when it was time to remove them from the premises "HI HO" (it's off to work we go). Before hosting the family on Christmas Day, when space would be precious, I decided to box the books with my son's help, which meant not touching them to see which sparked joy before I demolished the towers. I suggested that we put the boxes of books in the basement, out of the way, but my son wisely commented that I'd never go through them if I put them down there. I'd better pile the boxes of books in my study except for the three boxes I managed to get to Community Thrift. That was in early January, and in late February, they're still there, waiting to be carted off to Community Thrift. Waiting, waiting.



Tina's book towers

But let me explain. I'd give you the shirt off my back before I'd relinquish the books that fill my wall-to-wall bookshelves in the dining room, four bookshelves in my study, three in the living room, one in the kitchen nook, another in my bedroom because I associate book shelves with a real home. Because my family moved a lot when I was a kid—we lived in California, Idaho, Iowa, South Carolina, and Kansas my first 18 years—our books often stayed in boxes, and I longed for a home that would have the permanence of books on shelves. To me books have always been the most important furnishings, and I don't mean that in the way Gatsby seemed to, shelving books whose pages had never been cut. I've read most of the books on my shelves, and I go back to them from time to time for a favorite passage or, as happened recently, to join a book club discussion, as I will at Manny's when David Talbot's *Season of the Witch* will be the focus.

I'm not alone in regarding bookshelves as the most important home furnishing. Erika Jong says "Home is where our books are," and Horace Mann said, "A house without books is like a room without windows." Ann Fadiman in *Ex Libris* says that she knew she was really married when she and her husband put the books they had separately accumulated onto the book shelves in the home they shared.

It used to be that anytime I visited anyone's home, I gravitated to their bookshelves to discover their choice of books and learn more about them. Nowadays, even friends who read don't keep their books. They generously give them away, choosing to use their walls for paintings that show good taste. Nothing in my home shows good taste. On my fireplace mantel I have family photographs on top of the books members of my family loved. Under my father are the books he read to us: *The Little Prince*, *Why the Chimes Rang*, *The Littlest Angel*, and *Barnaby*. Under my mother are books in French, because she was a Francophile, and her father's diary from the Civil War era. (Letters from the war are stuck between the pages.) Under too-precious pictures of my sister Dana and me I have *Thundercave*, a book we loved as children. Under pictures of places I've lived abroad, Madrid, Tonga, and Algeria, I have books about these places—books I brought back with me, freight costs be damned. Most of my friends read a book and pass it on. It's easier for me to pass on a book if I've never had a relationship with it, which means that I've never gotten around to reading it. The ones I've read I want to keep.

So now I'm going through the books. I need only one copy of Frida Kahlo's diary, but should I keep the other to give it as a gift to friends who won't accept "Moments, not merchandise" when we celebrate birthdays? One bookcase has only plays. I'm going to keep that as is. Another bookcase has novels arranged by author, but I've added a lot of books since I filled that bookcase, and they're on other shelves. I should merge them, maybe, but how can I give away a copy of Samuel Butler *Erewhon* from my college days? Even though I'm not attached to the book, I'm attached to the era when this Signet Classic cost 50 cents! I have one bookshelf with books in Spanish and French—books I brought back from my summer as a volunteer in Mexico, from a year in Madrid, from two years in Algeria. The books were my souvenirs. I look through that shelf. How can I give away the menu, dated 1968, from Casa Botin in Madrid's Plaza Mayor?

If I don't remember a book, it's easy for me to part with it. I start building more towers—for demolition so all those "bricks" can be put into give-away boxes. Sometimes the mystery is why I have a particular book. Why, for example, do I have a two-volume set of Jean Charlot? I suspect I read about it and sent off for it. I don't even know who Jean Charlot is, so I Google the name. Once I've read about him, I can't part with the books. But there are easier to relinquish. I don't want to keep *Personal Finances for Dummies*! Even though I'm still a dummy, I'd rather lose money than read about how not to, however good my intentions were when I bought it.

I call a friend who's teaching Spanish, and she accepts my offer of a tower of books in Spanish. (She says she makes her young students read books in print because they spend too much time on their digital devices.)

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I see from a January 24th column this year "A better-than-average reader sets bookmark for a milestone" that Kevin Fisher-Paulson, the wise, warm, and witty columnist in the fourth stage of kidney cancer, donates books to Community Thrift too. I contacted him after reading that he wants to read 1000 books before he dies. I sent him pictures of the books (HI HO), and he responded with "I may need to come over to borrow a few books," but alas he never has. He and I are not the only ones racing against death.

On the bookshelves I come across a still-shrink-wrapped deck of cards called "Go Wish." It's a series of cards that provides "an easy entertaining way to think and talk about what's important to you if you become seriously ill." They mean if you know you're going to die. Each card states something that might be important and you, and you put them in the order of importance in case all your wishes can't be granted! "To die at home," "To have my family with me," "To be free of pain." I also notice one that says "To have my financial affairs in order." I don't see anything saying "To have my books in the homes of other people."

—Tina Martin

A Week in the Small World

I love making things in miniature, I can use all my favorite crafts – needlework, painting, clay, wood, paper, graphic art and more. Miniatures take time, but little space which, is an advantage in my home. I have traveled as far as Italy to miniature shows and shared my hobby and friendship with many craftsmen and women. After years at shows collecting and learning skills in workshops now I am making miniatures to sell and learning about the work on the other side of the vendor's table. My roommate of several years has finally convinced me to sell at her table in Chicago.



My miniature armchair

"Chicago International the world's largest & finest show" is a full week of miniatures: for 5 days artisans hold workshops, over 50 different ones, some as long as four days, others a few hours. I spent 7 hours in one this year with 8 other women, including a teen and her grandmother. We shared tweezers, brushes, glue, scissors and occasional sympathy, constructing and upholstering tiny armchairs with the instructor's demonstration of techniques and individual monitoring of us all. At 8 pm my chair remained in several pieces. but I finished it easily at home—without the enjoyable distraction of the conversations around the workshop table.

Other time was spent with my friend and roommate on several good brisk walks to shop at the local supermarket, a must to avoid the delay and disillusion of hotel meals. The exercise was a health benefit during a week spent mostly sitting or standing. The most hectic activity was setting up and later tearing down our sales table, unpacking and putting together the display units and arranging the dozens of little things for sale and adding the essential tiny price signs. I dread being left alone at the table during the show if the prices are not clearly displayed; a prior year's unintended and mistaken discount convinced my friend to prevent a second one and she was diligent this year. I really enjoy being part of the show.

The sales portion of the show opens to the public for three days and visitors spend miles walking to see as many of the 218 exhibitors' tables as possible. During those days I noticed that many of the visitors passed by using mobility aids. Even the show's founder rides his motorized chair around to supervise. This year I saw more wheelchairs, some motorized, a number of sturdy canes and rollators too. Though strollers for children are prohibited, at least older or disabled women and men are able to get around to enjoy the miniatures, to admire them, to buy them, and best to learn to make their own treasures. Good to see that many younger artisans are filling gaps left by retired older miniaturists too.

—Margaret Lew

What Are You Reading? The column will return in the next Newsletter, Let the editor know about books you want to share with us! We are also interested in film reviews, podcasts, theater, concerts, museum and gallery exhibits, and other cultural activities you enjoy.

Calendar

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

April 1 Monday — OWL Board Meeting 4:00-5:00pm (via Zoom)

April 27 Saturday— OWL General Meeting 11:00-12:30pm, *Women helping Women in Ways that Really Make a Difference, Richmond Branch, San Francisco Library (See Cover Page for details)*

May 6 Monday — OWL Board Meeting 4:00-5:00pm (via Zoom)

May 25 Saturday— OWL General Meeting 11:00-Noon (Details to be announced)

June 3 Monday — OWL Board Meeting 4:00-5:00pm (via Zoom)

June 22 Saturday— OWL General Meeting 11:00-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-SF has established a sliding fee scale from \$10 -\$50.) Members receive the quarterly OWL SF Newsletter, advocacy Alerts and invitations to monthly meetings.

Make a check out to and mail to:

OWL-SF
PO Box 170622
San Francisco, CA 94117

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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.

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

Comments or questions? Please contact the OWL-SF Office at (415) 712-1695;
e-mail: info@owlsf.org