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.

Join OWL-SF for the

2018 PLANNING MEETING

Make older women’s voices heard in these challenging times

Help make plans for:

• Political Advocacy Agenda
• Ongoing OWL concerns: Social Security and Medicare, the environment, ageism, housing, women’s health, long term care
• Thought-provoking membership meetings, newsletter & website
• Social activities for new and old friends

Bring a Brown Bag Lunch!

When: Saturday, January 27th — 10 am to 1 pm

Where: Northern Police Station Community Room
1125 Fillmore Street at Turk Street
(No parking in police parking lot)
MUNI # 5, 22, 31 & 38 (4 block walk)
Wheelchair Accessible

OWL SF * 870 Market Street, #905, San Francisco, Ca. 94102
Phone 415-712-1695 * Web site: www.owlsf.org
Is there No Place for Seriously Ill and Disabled Older People in Our City?

With so much of great concern to older women happening on the national scene, the Political Advocacy Committee has nonetheless kept an eye on one local issue which continues to remain an important focus in 2018. As part of a coalition holding California Pacific Medical Center (CPMC) accountable to the development agreement it signed with the City in order to build the new hospital on Van Ness, we find that many related issues regarding continuing care for older adults have come to light.

It is becoming clear that not only skilled nursing and subacute beds are disappearing, but those in local residential care facilities are shrinking as well. Although the SF Health Department has historically hoped to solve the problem of continuing care by investing in home care, many patients cannot be maintained at home, even with wrap-around services, which are in short supply, expensive and inadequate at best for many very ill people.

This issue was on the agenda for the San Francisco Board of Supervisors Public Safety and Neighborhood Services committee meeting held on December 7, 2017. “In the past two years, nine of these (small residential care) facilities have already closed, and unless we find ways to help retain and incentive these facilities to operate, the shortage will continue to get worse,” said Supervisor Norman Yee, who called the hearing. “Too many seniors are being sent out of the county,” he continued. He postulated that some facilities are closing because the high cost of housing makes these properties more valuable to their owners as real estate than the businesses they are running.

Not only are CPMC’s St. Luke’s Campus subacute unit and the Irene Swindells Alzheimer’s Residential Care Program threatened with closure as of this summer, but the number of beds in residential care facilities continues to fall as well. More and more San Francisco residents must look outside the county for the services they need. The Political Advocacy Committee continues to advocate for a comprehensive city-wide solution to this problem so that older citizens can remain in the city where they have worked and paid taxes for decades.

—Melanie Grossman

Thank you to Two Special OWLs

OWL SF recognized two dedicated members at the December Holiday Meeting. Esther Wong for her long-time, behind the scenes weekly work in our office – opening the mail, banking, book keeping; and Sy Russell for her super administrative skills, keeping the website and the membership list up to date, handling correspondence, maintaining the office, interfacing with sub-tenants and coordinating with Esther. Thanks Esther and Sy! We are not sure where the organization would be without your contributions of time and skill.
CARA Update

In the last three months CARA, while spending some time evaluating the year that was, has been focused on planning for the year ahead. We have our work cut out for us. Preserving and strengthening Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security are always priorities for CARA. As Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security are acknowledged targets of the Congressional majority, CARA is getting ready to swing into action.

Project: Seniors Vote

The Public Policy Institute of California estimates people over 55 years will make up over 45% of voters in this midterm election. Therefore we need to reach these voters to be sure they are informed on issues that are important to us seniors, especially Medicare, Medicaid, and Social Security. CARA is setting up a program of informational mailings and town halls, supplemented with a program of seniors making phone contact with seniors, in areas where legislators might vote against senior interests. (The OWL board members will participate in this vital project and if you are interested in participating, too, please contact me at kpiccagli@gmail.com.)

Other CARA priority areas:

Housing – This was another priority area determined by members at the convention in September. CARA will fight for more funding for affordable housing options for senior renters, homeowners and manufactured homeowners. CARA will also work to strengthen protections for seniors already in housing.

Other legislation – The California Legislature goes back into session after New Years. CARA will be reviewing legislation impacting seniors – and actively supporting and/or proposing priorities for seniors.

Health Care – CARA continues to support single payer health care for all and is actively supporting SB 562 – the Healthy California Act. It passed the Senate last year but stalled in the House. Let’s get it passed this year!

Remember: The CARA San Francisco CAT (Community Action Team) meets the third Thursday of each month, 1:00-3:00, 1187 Franklin and you’re invited!

— Kathie Piccagli

Make it Fair
Reform Proposition 13

On December 15th a statewide coalition of community groups took a momentous step by filing an initiative to put Prop. 13 reform on the ballot in 2018. The measure, called the “The California Schools and Local Communities Funding Act of 2018”, will restore over $11 billion a year to our schools and public services while maintaining Prop. 13’s protections for homeowners, renters, and small businesses.

For nearly 40 years, California homeowners have benefitted from Proposition 13. What many people don’t know, however, is that large corporations have actually benefitted the most. In fact, Chevron alone is saving over a hundred million dollars every year through a corporate loophole in the law.

Because of Prop. 13’s corporate tax loophole California’s schools have sunk to 44th in the nation in per-pupil funding and our public services have been starved of essential local revenue. Our libraries, parks, roads, and even firefighters have suffered from decades of drastic funding cuts. It’s clearly time to make corporations pay their fair share by reforming Prop. 13.

As the campaign prepares to gather signatures early next year, it is essential that voters know that this reform will not impact homeowners, residential renters, or small businesses. California voters passed Prop. 13 to protect people, not large corporations. It’s time to make corporations, that just got a huge federal tax break, to pay their fair share here in California. This is the best way to restore billions of dollars a year of desperately needed funding to our schools and public services.

The information supporting the initiative was presented at the OWL SF meeting on November 18th, by Daniel Hagan, campaign coordinator from Evolve-CA, part of a coalition organized to reform property tax inequities in our state. If you missed the meeting you can find more at their web site:

https://www.evolve-ca.org/prop-13-facts/

Women’s March Calls Us All To Take to the Streets

The Community Living Campaign will once again participate in this year’s Women’s March on January 20. The rally at Civic Center Plaza starts at 12:00 pm, with the march at 2:00 pm. Sign-up and receive more details.

Community Living Campaign
phone: 415-821-1003
marie@sffamilycommunityliving.org
www.sfcommunityliving.org
How you Get Around –
And Climate Change

If you think most greenhouse gas air pollution comes from smokestacks, industry, and power plants, you would be wrong. Today, the largest source of greenhouse gas pollution in the US is transport – cars, trucks, planes, and shipping.

If we want to cut down on this pollution – and we do for the environment and us – this has major implications for how we think and act.

While this national administration is encouraging more burning of fossil fuels, California is taking steps to reduce gas use and emissions in cars and trucks. Use of electric cars is taking off, encouraged by rebates, regulation, and education. As important as all this is, not using a car is even better. Mass transit, especially electrified mass transit, reduces emissions most significantly. Trains and busses are increasing electrification, too, and there is encouragement for use of electric trucks, although the latter is often an interstate issue.

Two less obvious areas for my “carbon footprint” are online shopping and airplane travel. Online shopping usually involves shipping and delivery. Easier for you, but harder on the air. And air travel – Oh, that adventurous and interesting long distance travel. Take one round-trip flight between New York and California, and you’ve generated about 20 percent of the greenhouse gases that your gas burning car emits over an entire year.  

https://www.epa.gov/greenvehicles/greenhouse-gas-emissions-typical-passenger-vehicle

Think about how you travel. Use public transportation where you can, shop locally when possible, and consider those long airplane flights.

—Kathie Piccagli

Check Out Bookbinding

I recently took an interesting and informative hour-long tour at the American Bookbinders Museum. They collect and exhibit equipment and books related to bookbinders and the art of bookbinding. The only museum of its kind and worth a visit. ABM is dedicated to preserving and sharing the history, stories, and tools and craft of this remarkable art. Their mission is to expand knowledge and understanding about the processes involved in bookbinding, the evolution of the book through time, and the people who were and are masters of this unique craft. This goal is achieved, not in small part, through access to the museum’s extensive collection of equipment, books and ephemera. The museum is open 10am-4pm, Tuesday-Saturday. Check it out! American Bookbinders Museum, 355 Clementina Street, San Francisco (415) 824-9754 info@bookbindersmuseum.org

—Joan Downey
What Are You Reading?

OWLs Share Favorite Books At December Meeting
The December Holiday Party featured the expected delicious lunch buffet, plenty of visiting among OWLs and a book exchange. Many of us brought a book (or two) we had read and told the group why and how much we liked it. The books ran the gamut from fiction to politics. We left our books on the table for others to take home to read. I brought Coventry by Helen Humphrey, a novel about the experience of the fatal 1942 bombing raid there, and took home The Submission by Amy Waldman.

Many good books went home with new readers. Perhaps some free Holiday hours were spent reading them. If you have a book to share with OWL sisters, save it for the next book sharing at a future OWL SF monthly meeting.

—Margaret Lew

So Many Books; So Little Time
I don’t remember who said that, but it came back to me as we enjoyed the book exchange during the OWL holiday party. This was a highlight of the party with many OWL members holding up the book(s) they had brought and saying a little about why they liked and recommended those particular books.

I have always loved reading books. My brother liked to say that I was the only person he ever knew who “if she had a book could make a Hershey bar last all day while she read.” I no longer eat Hershey bars, but I still enjoy books. I am no longer a child either so having some guidance from OWL members about books worth the time was very welcome.

I brought home a couple of them myself, while someone else took home My Sunshine Away by M. O. Walsh, the book I had brought to exchange. One of those I chose is When Breath Becomes Air by Paul Kalanithi, the book chronicles the author’s battle with cancer and was completed by his wife after his death. His writing is filled with wisdom about life and death. I will not give away any of the details – I was surprised by some of them – but I found this well worth time and attention.

I just completed one of the two mystery books by John Lescroat and Vivi Wyatt took the other one. This author weaves an intriguing tale always, he is one of my favorites, enhanced by setting them all in San Francisco. If you like this genre, you will enjoy this author. Vivi and I will swap our finds — soon I hope. Speaking of Vivi, she brought Plainsong by Kent Haruf and passed it along to me but I have not gotten to it as yet. There were many others which were taken by other women. The book exchange will probably happen again in some of our monthly meetings. Don’t miss this new feature.

The independent bookstore where I like to browse (Bird and Beckett in Glen Park), usually has a cart of marked-down books outside. This is one of the advantages of shopping in an actual store in your neighborhood. I have found some treasures there, most recently Two Old Women by Velma Wallis, for which I paid a dollar. It is a thoughtful and powerful tale of an Alaskan legend featuring two old women abandoned by their tribe at a time when the tribes struggled for food in a harsh environment and it was not uncommon to leave behind those deemed unable to keep up with the moving required by the search for food. This legend has many messages for us today and I highly recommend it.

—Glenda Hope
So, What Do We Call Old People?

An excerpt from “In search of a word that won’t offend ‘old’ people, our language makes it impossible to embrace age. Let’s change that.” Laura Carstensen, Opinion, The Washington Post, December 29, 2017.

We hear a lot about aging societies these days. At the same time, we hear relatively little about being old from older people themselves. In part, this is because most people in their 60s, 70s and older still don’t think of themselves as “old.” We often refer to old people in the third person.

As long as we are healthy and engaged in life - as most people in their 60s, 70s and older are - we don’t view ourselves as old. But by using “they” rather than “we” in our minds and our conversations, we keep an entire stage of life at arm’s length. By failing to identify with “old,” the story about old people remains a dreary one about loss and decline.

Language matters: We need a term that aging people can embrace. For years, I’ve thought that we should just start calling ourselves old and be proud of the fact that we’ve reached advanced ages. Maggie Kuhn, who co-founded the anti-ageism group Gray Panthers, also took this position.

Alternative terms range from distant but respectful to outright patronizing. None of them are appealing to old people. The most widely used are “senior citizens,” “retirees,” “the elderly” and “elders.” Then there are the derogatory terms, such as “geezers” and “coots,” mostly whispered behind closed doors. And there are terms such as “sages,” which frankly go too far in the opposite direction, as plenty of old people are a far cry from wise. Some people prefer the comfortably familiar term “boomers.” But then what do we call Gen Xers and millennials when they grow old?

So, what do we call old people?

The Stanford Center on Longevity, which I direct, strives to develop a culture that supports long life, and we recognized early that language matters. Most people say that they don’t want to grow old, but they also want to live a long time. Yet, we’ve never settled on a good term for old people.

Last spring, I met Maureen Conners, a fascinating woman who works in fashion technology, an emerging longevity industry (that is, a business providing the needs of older people, including education, travel and entertainment). She uses the word “perennials” to refer to older customers.

Upon first hearing this term, I was startled. The symbolism it connotes is perfect. For one, “perennials” makes clear that we’re still here, blossoming again and again. It also suggests a new model of life in which people engage and take breaks, making new starts repeatedly. Perennials aren’t guaranteed to blossom year after year, but given proper conditions, good soil and nutrients, they can go on for decades. It’s aspirational.

Perhaps we are reaching a tipping point - a shift away from the fear of growing old and toward embracing living long. “Perennials” may just move the conversation along.

Laura L. Carstensen is professor of psychology and the Fairleigh S. Dickinson Jr. professor in public policy at Stanford University.

OWL SF has a new telephone number:
(415) 712 - 1695

Calendar

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

January 8 Monday — OWL Board Meeting, 4:00-6:00pm (Flood Bldg. Room 665)
January 20 Saturday — Women’s March, 12:00 (rally) 2:00pm (march) (Civic Center Plaza)
January 27 Saturday — OWL Annual Planning Meeting 10:00-1:00 (Northern Police Station, Community Room, 1125 Fillmore at Turk Streets) see cover for details.
February 5 Monday — OWL Board Meeting, 4:00-6:00pm (Flood Bldg. Room 665)
February 24 Saturday — OWL General Meeting 10:00-Noon (Details to be announced.)
March 5 Monday — OWL Board Meeting, 4:00-6:00pm (Flood Bldg. Room 665)
March 24 Saturday — OWL General Meeting 10:00-Noon (Details to be announced.)
Old/Schmold
A Rose by Any Other Name Smells as Sweet!  Let’s Discuss

With great amusement, I recently read an article published in the Washington Post Opinions by Laura L. Carstensen, PhD., titled “In search of a word that won’t offend ‘old’ people, Our language makes it impossible to embrace age. Let’s change that.”

Carstensen, Professor of Psychology and the Fairleigh S. Dickinson Jr. Professor in Public Policy at Stanford University, states: “For years, I thought we should start calling ourselves old and be proud of the fact that we’re reached advanced ages. Over the past 40 years or so, I’ve tried to persuade people to use the word old proudly, but I have so far failed to get a single person to do so.” She now avoids old for fear that the term might offend. Even the Stanford Center on Longevity, that she directs, has “never settled on a good term for old people.”

She has found a new word she likes, penned by someone in the commercial field of aging: perennial, because (It)“makes clear that we’re still here, blossoming again and again.”

So, why am I amused by the article? Because old and elderly seem to have been unacceptable to individuals in our society since forever! Perhaps the distaste for the terms come from our fear of becoming enfeebled, or invisible, or alone, and yes, that we are going to die! Back in 2002, gerontologists were seeking politically correct terminology for older adults.1 Now there are other, preferable terms, such as mature, seniors, and senior citizens and (my favorite) elders, that imply respect for and inclusion of elders in mainstream society. But older people also have a responsibility to polish the image of old: i.e., to speak up fearlessly when there is wrongdoing, to be present in society, to listen and respect people of all ages, and to be kind and open-minded. Then words like old and elderly will not be feared by old people, but worn proudly. Just like the Older Women’s League of San Francisco.

In an (old) article 84-year-old Danish female physician, Esther Møller, wrote: “I really don’t understand the fear of old age or the shame of being old… The Danish word for old, gammel, is a term of honor, deriving from a word meaning ‘winter.’ It signifies one who has lived through many winters – someone with a desire for life, a wise and experienced person: going through the hard winters was a difficult thing in the distant past when the word originated.” (“Being Old. A subjective description of becoming and being Old,” Danish Medical Bulletin, 1992; 39:201)

—Sheila Malkind, 79, MA, MPH
OWL SF Board Member
Director, Legacy Film Festival on Aging
www.legacyfilmfestivalonaging.org
Director, Legacy Film Series
www.legacyfilmseries.com

Safer Walking in SF with Automated Speed Enforcement

Speed is a primary factor in many fatal and severe injury collisions in both San Francisco and San Jose, and it is a fundamental predictor of crash survival. A person hit by a car traveling at 20 mph has a 9 in 10 chance of surviving; at 40 mph, that person has only a 1 in 10 chance of surviving. The relationship between speed and injury severity is consistent and direct.

AB 342, sponsored by San Francisco Representative David Chiu is a common-sense bill that would allow the cities of San Francisco and San Jose to use Automated Speed Enforcement (ASE), or speed safety cameras, to help reduce speeds and save lives on our streets. The bill was introduced last year but was stalled in the process. It is again active in the California legislature this year.

Endorsing the Vision Zero goal – human safety should be a top priority of our transportation system, and human fatalities and serious injuries should be eliminated – OWL SF has signed a letter, organized by Walk SF and a Vision Zero coalition of many concerned organizations, which has been sent to legislators in Sacramento urging passage of this important bill.

Speed safety cameras have been proven repeatedly to reduce speeding and save lives. Currently, 142 American cities use speed cameras with dramatic results. Let’s hope we can add San Francisco and San Jose.

—Kathie Piccagli

AB 342 information:
https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billTextClient.xhtml?bill_id=201720180AB342
Vision Zero http://visionzerosf.org/
Walk SF http://walksf.org/

Cleaning Out Closets, Redecorating or Downsizing?

Take your items to the Community Thrift store
623 Valencia Street
(on the corner of Valencia and Sycamore, near 17th street.)
(415)861-4910

Access the loading dock from Mission onto Sycamore between 17th and 18th. Tell them: These are for the Older Women’s League of San Francisco. OWL SF receives 40% of anything that sells!
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

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

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.