



## Focus: COVID-19 Virus

Our focus this month is on the COVID-19 Virus and its impact on villages. The information we present here is up-to-date as of press time. As we are learning, the situation changes rapidly so do check in with the reliable services listed in Charlotte's letter below to stay current. Meanwhile, March is Women's History Month and we salute all women for the contributions they make every day to their families and communities. And a happy St. Patrick's Day to all.

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## From the Executive Director



*Charlotte*

I know that the ongoing, ever-changing news about the novel coronavirus, COVID-19, has seized our time and attention. Every day is a new journey. I've been in touch with many of you, and I am inspired by the creativity and commitment that fuels your responses to the pandemic.

We held a Zoom call with 37 village leaders on March 12 to facilitate information sharing and dialog among our members. We quickly came to agreement about the threats COVID-19 poses to members' and volunteers'

health, and to village operations. We then moved forward to claim this moment as an opportunity to do what we do best: connect people with one another and support them through challenging times. COVID-19 is forcing villages to develop new methods of building caring community, and strengthening our resolve to be a force for good in the

lives of older adults and their families. I invite you to join with Village Movement California to help evolve our model of care.

We will hold weekly COVID-19 Zoom calls for our members so that we can share best practices and explore the issues that are coming up. Our first call will include instructions for using Zoom. Schedule and details are shared below.

By now you may be familiar with the concept of “flattening the curve”, the strategy guiding public health’s recommendations for responding to COVID-19. Put simply, we cannot prevent or contain the virus, but we can *delay its spread* so that cases don’t spike all at once and overwhelm our medical resources. Slowing the incidence of infection is better for our healthcare system and society. It preserves critical assets like hospital beds, healthy physicians and nurses, medicines, and equipment for the months to come.

One means of flattening the curve is social distancing and it is forcing California villages to cancel group programs and events until the end of March, perhaps longer. There are plenty of articles about how social distancing will lead to social isolation. Our movement will not let this happen! And our village leaders are working extra hard to make sure that it doesn’t.

How are villages connecting with members and volunteers when they have to remain apart? It appears that Zoom is a go-to technology villages are learning to use. Phone trees, buddy systems, neighborhood circles, Facetime, and Skype are other vehicles for building and maintaining relationships.

I know that villages can harness technology for connection and community resiliency – the opposite of isolation and loneliness. We can lead resiliency efforts in our neighborhoods and cities. Let’s use this moment in history to assert the expertise we have to bring people together for mutual support, growth, and love.

As your village develops resources, please send them our way through [info@villagemovementcalifornia.org](mailto:info@villagemovementcalifornia.org), so we can share them. We will make resources available on the website through a public page, **Community Resilience**. The page will go live later this week. Please stay posted for video calls and articles we generate to support our movement as we navigate these challenging times.

Local public health departments:

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Pages/LocalHealthServicesAndOffices.aspx>

CA Department of Public Health:

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Immunization/ncov2019.aspx>

Centers for Disease Control:

CDC <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/index.html>

World Health Organization:

<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/advice-for-public>

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# Villages Step Up to COVID -19 Virus Challenges and Opportunities

By Carol Haig



Villages exist to foster connections and build community. We have members who lead active and involved lives and have joined a village to expand their friendships and activities. Others regularly depend on the services of volunteers. Some are fragile and limited in their energy while still valuing their village friends. All have joined for a reason and now we must physically distance ourselves from our village connections for the sake of our personal health and that of everyone with whom we come in contact. At the same time, we are challenged to maintain and enhance these relationships in new and creative ways.

## Programs & Meetings

The California Department of Health guidelines for gatherings have caused villages to cancel small group programs often held in members' homes and optimistically defer larger ones such as annual fundraisers. With the village population largely at higher risk for contracting the COVID-19 virus, it is in everyone's best interest to find other ways to stay connected and ensure village members feel included and cared for. Villages are moving events and meetings online, exploring Zoom as a delivery vehicle.

On March 15 Governor Newsom requested that those 65 and older self-quarantine. As we go to press, he has ordered everyone in the six Bay Area (Northern California) counties to shelter in place. Stay connected to your local health information resources for continuing virus updates.

## Member Communication

Villages are concerned about members who do not have online access and ensuring these people are contacted by phone and responded to promptly. Board members are actively reaching out to be certain all members are informed as events unfold.

Many villages have buddy systems and telephone trees in place and are using them to be sure they reach all their members. Where small group activities have been cancelled, these communication methods can do much to keep members virtually close and informed. If your village is using a telephone tree, it is helpful to develop a script for calling members to update them on COVID-19 and how the village is responding.

Communication is considered successful when the intended recipient receives the information. However, the words used to deliver that information greatly affect how it is interpreted. In our Zoom call on March 12, the term “light touch” was mentioned several times. Some specific wording suggestions for a light touch include:

- *We are not cancelling, we are providing events and services in alternative ways*
- *We are finding new and creative ways to carry out the village mission*
- *For your health, we are postponing...*

The virus has presented us with an opportunity to remind people about their village community and what it offers. Frame communications in resilience mode and they will be received in that spirit. Make every effort to communicate in kind, reassuring ways.

## **Services & Volunteers**

Providing services to members remains a vital component of village membership. At the same time, minimizing the risk of COVID-19 to volunteers is key. From what participants shared on our March 12 call, service requests are falling off as members limit themselves to only essential needs.

At the same time, villages are prioritizing which services to provide and re-directing volunteers. For example, rather than rides to the grocery store, volunteers are picking up the groceries and delivering them to members. To be safe, they are wearing disposable gloves and leaving the groceries at the member’s door rather than risk direct person-to-person contact. Some volunteers are providing prepared meals to members in the same way.

Some villages are referring members to web-based services like Lyft and Uber for transportation and to food delivery services like Instacart.

Volunteers and members are being asked to work jointly to contact each other so that no one feels isolated. In addition, some villages are reaching out to non-village neighbors to help them out during this time.

## **Additional Suggestions**

**Identify a Virus Czar or Czarina** - In a recent email, Charlotte suggested that each village identify a person or persons to serve as the resource for information about COVID-19. This way, the quantities of information coming at us can be filtered so that members and volunteers receive reliable, actionable guidance. The named person should report to the village Board or decision-making body.

**Emergency Contact Information** – It is a good idea to be sure your village has current emergency contact numbers for every member.

**Testing Information** – Everyone should find out how and where to get tested should it become necessary. Personal physicians cannot administer the COVID-19 virus test. Villagers should check with their healthcare provider or their local health department.

**Local Public Health Department** – And remember, your village should regularly check in with your local public health department for COVID-19 updates and directives: <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Pages/LocalHealthServicesAndOffices.aspx>

**Collect Stories** – Collect stories about how the village is responding, how members and volunteers are showing resilience, and reaping the benefits of connection. These stories will lift your spirits and power your future fund development efforts.

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## Update: Healthcare Partnership Plan

Village Movement California is actively developing a strategy to enter the healthcare payment and delivery system to secure new revenue and build sustainability for our movement. Last month, we partnered with our consultants, ATI Advisory, to complete a village survey. We are pleased that 95% of our member villages participated! Thank you!



ATI Advisory is analyzing the survey findings along with results from interviews with five village leaders and a scan of California’s health insurers and providers. They are looking to see how villages’ current and future capabilities align and will formulate several strategies for our consideration. By the summer, the Board and staff will work with ATI and you to select one strategy for implementation. We will keep you posted on our progress.

Future newsletters will contain information about progress and benchmarks. Please reach out to Charlotte if you have questions: 510-900-6380 or [charlotte@villagemovementcalifornia.org](mailto:charlotte@villagemovementcalifornia.org).

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## Update: California Master Plan for Aging



Village Movement California has continued to advocate for villages’ inclusion in the Master Plan for Aging. The Plan’s lead agency, the California Department of Aging, and Stakeholder Advisory Committee will spend the next three months wrapping up recommendations for meeting the plan’s 4 goals: 1) Long Term Services and Supports, 2) Age Friendly Communities, Civic and Social Engagement, 3) Health and Wellness, and 4) Economic Security.

You can make the case for villages by participating in the **CDA’s Wednesday Webinars** and promoting villages through comments and questions. To learn more, use [this link](#).

Log into [www.EngageCA.org](http://www.EngageCA.org), and then use [this link](#) to sign up for updates.

- **Share your ideas** about the plan. Follow [this link](#) to complete the official Master Plan for Aging survey. Write about villages and rank your priorities. We want dozens of villagers to weigh in.

Stay in touch! Contact Charlotte Dickson with your own updates and questions: 510-900-6380 and [charlotte@villagemovementcalifornia.org](mailto:charlotte@villagemovementcalifornia.org)

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## AARP Foundation Tax-Aide Service

**SUSPENDED**



Many older adults take advantage of AARP's free Tax-Aide Service to get their taxes done. To help flatten the curve of transmission and protect those most at risk, this program is suspended nationwide until further notice. They will assess whether they can open again in some or all sites for the rest of the tax season. To date there have been no adjustments to filing and payment requirements but this may be under consideration by the IRS and the Franchise Tax Board. Tax-Aide Service hopes to resume operations when the virus has subsided. Contact your local provider for more information.

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## Weekly Zoom Calls: Villages Respond to COVID-19

Village Movement California will hold weekly Zoom calls to facilitate information sharing and skills development to help our members navigate these tricky times.



Date	Time	Topic
Wednesday March 18	1:00 – 2:00 pm	Using Zoom
Wednesday March 25	1:00 – 2:00 pm	Operations – What's Working
Wednesday April 1	1:00 – 2:00 pm	Fund Development Concerns and Strategies
Wednesday April 8	1:00 – 2:00 pm	TBD
Wednesday April 15	1:00 – 2:00 pm	TBD

Register [here](#). What topics do you want to cover? Please let us know. We will adapt the schedule of topics to meet demand!

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## Upcoming Events – Conferences

Some events have been cancelled or postponed:



### Weekly Master Plan for Aging Wednesday Webinars

Sponsored by California Department of Aging  
Wednesdays, 9:30am – 11:00am

See schedule [here](#).



### BRAVO Meeting

BRAVO Meeting, Oakland, CA  
March 26, 2020  
9:45am – 1:30pm

**CANCELLED**



### Aging Into the Future Conference

Saturday, April 4  
Los Angeles Convention Center  
8:00am – 3:30pm

**POSTPONED**

## Webinars



### Findings and Discussion of 2019 Annual Member Survey

Featuring the Village Movement California Data and Evaluation Team.  
March 18, 2020  
10:00am – 11:00 am

**POSTPONED**

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All newsletters are archived [here](#)

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