



Social Connections

As we expand our knowledge and understanding of what threatens peoples' health, we have to add the lack of social connections. When we are isolated and lonely our health is at risk. A key reason people join villages is for the wonderful social connections they offer to members and volunteers.

Contents

- The Lack of Social Connections Epidemic (aka loneliness and isolation)
- **Tales From the Village** – AgingNext Village Director Retires
- Advocacy Campaign 2023
- Upcoming Events

From the Executive Director



I continue to receive lots of positive feedback about our annual conference, and the staff and I are working hard to keep the energy we created flowing through the village movement. The conference evaluations told us that the number one value was making connections with each other in person after years apart. The conversation between Donna Benton and Kate Hoepke about Villages and Care was highly rated.

Charlotte

Speaking of connections, I recently listened to a powerful

presentation that Dr. Carla Perissonotto offered to members and staff of San Francisco Village about social connection. I wrote up some highlights for you and urge you to read them below in *The Lack of Social Connections Epidemic*.

Another takeaway from the conference evaluations was the importance of advocacy. The time is ripe for villages to meet with local and state policymakers and stakeholders

to urge them to fund the village model. Village Movement California is planning an Advocacy Campaign for the remaining months of 2023 to equip you to hold these meetings. Please read the *Advocacy Campaign 2023* article below.

During the conference I asked all our villages to invite a representative of Village Movement California to attend an upcoming Board meeting. Our staff and Board want to connect with you to learn more about your village, share our plans and resources with you, and discover how we can work better together. I have already attended Board meetings of the Village Network of Petaluma and Ashby Village. Please reach out to Carolyn Ross (Carolyn@villagemovementcalifornia.org) or to me (Charlotte@villagemovementcalifornia.org) to get a date on our calendars.

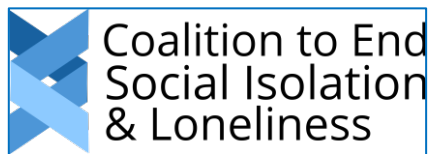
I am enjoying my summer. I am fortunate to live near the San Francisco Bay so that I'm staying cool. I know many of you are dealing with extraordinary heat. I trust you are taking advantage of the [local and state resources](#) being offered to keep older adults safe and healthy.

This newsletter covers July and August. We will be back in September.

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion will return

The Lack of Social Connections Epidemic (aka Loneliness and Isolation)

By Charlotte Dickson



Dr. Carla Perissonotto is a well-known Geriatrician, Professor of Medicine, and Researcher at UC San Francisco, and the founder of the [Coalition to End Social Isolation and Loneliness](#). She works closely with Dr. Vivek Murthy, the US Surgeon General and author of the recent report, [Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation: The U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory on the Healing Effects of Social Connection and Community](#).

Dr. Perissonotto recently made a presentation at San Francisco Village on the harmful effects of social isolation and loneliness and of COVID. Her teaching was enlightening and inspirational, and it underscored the value of villages as social connectors.

She started with the truth that connection is a basic human need. She clarified the difference between isolation and loneliness: isolation refers to the quantity of social connections, and loneliness the quality of social connections. In the US today, 24 million

people are lonely, and 14 million are isolated. She reframed the epidemic of social isolation and loneliness to one caused by the lack of social connections.

This widespread absence of social connections has profound health impacts, including early death. It calls for intentional efforts to build connections.

Dr. Perissonotto shared the three components of social connection, *Structure*, *Function*, and *Quality*. Structure describes the number, type, and frequency of connections. Function describes the various needs that the connections fulfill. Quality encompasses the positive and negative aspects of the interactions and relationships the connections offer.



L to R: Nidhi Patel, Susan Kahn, Charlotte Dickson, Mike Borkovi, Mrs. Perissonatto, Dr. Carla Perissonatto, Kate Hoepke at San Francisco Village

She asserted that building social connections is a health intervention, and one that should be funded by the healthcare sector. She called for more research to learn about the structure, function, and quality of social connections as a way to highlight successful projects and make the case for healthcare investment.

At their core, villages exist to forge social connections. These connections find structure in social, creative, and educational programming, and in interactions among members, volunteers, and staff. Villages build connections every day. These connections meet many needs; for example, social needs for friendship and community, educational needs to support the transitions of aging, and material needs for rides, technology support, grocery shopping, errands, etc.

Villages are highly attuned to the quality of the connections they offer. They constantly work to build positive experiences. Examples are volunteer training to equip volunteers to navigate relationships with members, and guidelines for interest groups, classes, and even Board meetings.

Dr. Perissonotto's research offers Village Movement California a framework for sharing the work of its members, and the resulting impact on the health and well-being of their members and volunteers. Village Movement California staff and Board will be exploring how we might collect and analyze the data that could bring healthcare dollars into villages. One of Village Movement California's primary goals is to elevate the village model to the healthcare sector for the purposes of funding.

The videorecording of Dr. Perissonotto's presentation is [here](#). The presentation slides are [here](#).

Tales From the Village

Aging Next Village Director Retires

By Carolyn Ross, Director of Strategic Initiatives



Bea Kirkman, Director at AgingNext Village in Claremont, retired from her position after over eight years there. The village is a program of AgingNext, a larger nonprofit. After retiring from her career as a school administrator, Bea, like many village leaders, began as a volunteer. She served on the Village Movement California Leadership Team from 2016-2019, and on the Board of Directors from 2020-2022.



Bea Kirkman

The Director of Volunteer services and the AgingNext CEO will be taking over the day-to-day operations of the village.

Advocacy Campaign 2023

By Charlotte Dickson



One theme of our 2023 annual conference, *Fulfilling Our Potential*, was the importance of advocacy for the village model at both the local and state levels. The report, *It Takes a Village to Age Well: Expanding the Village Model of Care for California's Older Adults*, was shared with conference attendees and is available on Village Movement California's website. It is a foundational document for advocacy efforts.

Over the next six months, the Advocacy Team and I will be leading an Advocacy Campaign., a respected and successful advocate for older adults, is advising us. The Campaign will equip villages to build relationships with their regional Area Agencies on Aging (AAA), local policymakers like City Councilors and Supervisors, and with their State legislators.

The timing coincides with rising concern about the large population of middle and moderate income older Californians who will not be able to afford housing and

healthcare after reaching 75 years of age. Village Movement California and our members are in a position to advocate for the village model of care as a solution to the dilemma facing the Missing Middle.

The first step in the Advocacy Campaign is to learn about the regional AAAs. Meet with their senior leadership to educate them about the village model and the specifics of your village and suggest partnering together to meet the needs of the Missing Middle. We will offer concrete support to help you set up and hold these meetings.

To kick off the Campaign, on August 10 we are hosting a workshop, *Area Agencies on Aging 101* with Joseph Cobery, the Executive Director of [Passages AAA](#) serving Butte and surrounding counties. Joe will talk about the structure and function of the AAAs and share specific information to support your reaching out to your AAA leaders. Details are below in *Upcoming Events*. Please sign up for the workshop!

In the Fall, we will turn to our State Assemblymembers and Senators. They will be on recess from November through January and will be looking to attend events and meetings with constituents. The State legislators are on recess now through August 15. If you are planning to meet with them, please let us know! Make sure you offer them the new report, *It Takes a Village to Age Well: Expanding the Village Model of Care for California's Older Adults*.

The Advocacy Team meets on the second Friday of each month from 11:00a.m. – 12:15p.m. You are welcome to join. Please email me and I will put you on our list charlotte@villagemovementcalifornia.org.

Upcoming Events

The Beginning of the End of Plastics: The Plastics Labeling Project



July 27, 2023

10:00a.m. – 11:15a.m on Zoom

More than 90% of all plastic products wind up in landfills or shipped off to vulnerable countries. The *Plastics Labeling Project* (PLP) started in the San Francisco Village Climate Action Group. The initial goal of the PLP is to get warning labels on all plastic products made from petrochemicals, informing consumers about how long these products will remain in the environment and their negative impact on all forms of life. Please join San Francisco Village members Frances Payne, Michele Sterling and Bill Haskell, and volunteer Robert Weiner, to learn about the PLP and what you can do to stop the damage to our environment caused by plastics! Register [here](#).

Area Agencies on Aging (AAA) 101



August 10, 2023

10:30a.m. – 11:30a.m. – “

Joe Cobery, Executive Director of the Passages Area Agency on Aging will lead this workshop. Charlotte and Joe are working together to pave the way for local

meetings between villages and their AAA leadership. Register [here](#).

Notices

Have an upcoming event you'd like to open to other villages? Send the information to the newsletter editor: carolhaig@earthlink.net

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