

COMMUNITY FOCUS

20 Years of Building Bridges to Better Health

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Pleasant Hill City Council Members, Sue Noack and Matt Rinn delivering meals.

Among the many things I treasure about public service is my role as a board member for the John Muir/Mt. Diablo Community Health Fund (CHF). I have seen how many of my friends, neighbors and constituents have benefited from CHF funding and expertise. Over two decades, the CHF – a community benefit arm of John Muir Health – has distributed more than \$26 million to community-based, nonprofit organizations and partnered with them to expand and enhance health care services for central and east Contra Costa County's neediest individuals and families.

Consider the role of Meals on Wheels/Senior Outreach Services (MOWSOS) in the Pleasant Hill-Martinez area. Every day, MOWSOS delivers more than 100 meals to needy seniors in these two cities. That's important enough, but in 2013, the CHF began providing funding and expertise to support MOWSOS as it ramped up its care coordination role, an increasingly important piece of modern health care.

MOWSOS care managers connect older adults to free or affordable health providers, legal and financial assistance, elder abuse counselors, and many other services. MOWSOS recently received a grant from the county to create its first dedicated case manager for elder abuse. Chief Executive Officer Elaine Clark believes MOWSOS received the grant because of the reputation it earned with CHF support.

Those delivering meals inform clients about free MOWSOS workshops that help family members care more effectively for a loved one. The next workshop is March 28, in Brentwood.

MOWSOS hosts an annual breakfast and resource fair at the Pleasant Hill Senior Center to familiarize and connect older adults with essential community health services.

And MOWSOS is but one example of the CHF's impact. This small but powerful community asset has also brought sustainable primary care, mental health care, specialty care, dental care, and an array of supportive services to tens of thousands of Contra Costans who otherwise would have gone without. The twentieth anniversary of the CHF is truly a reason to celebrate.

Pleasant Hill City Councilmember Ken Carlson is part of the ten-member CHF board of directors, with half the appointees from the Concord/Pleasant Hill Health Care District and the other half from the John Muir Association.