

inTENTions



TAOS ELDERS & NEIGHBORS TOGETHER

February 2022

Issue #26

OUR VISION:

A community of elders and neighbors supporting one another.

OUR MISSION:

To connect members to resources needed to maintain comfortable, dignified, vibrant lives in their homes and community by providing appropriate services, activities, and programs that will further this purpose.

OUR STORIES: WILLIAM JACKSON

The sign reads "Airplane rides 50 cents, Landings \$50." I pull onto the gravel landing strip driveway to William Jackson's house next to Unity Church on Blueberry Hill Road. As a TENT Volunteer, I've had the privilege of getting to know William from Mississippi. Until the last several months, we've made the rounds to shop for cornmeal for his mama's cornbread recipe,



cat food, and a quart of goat milk. Scattering crackers for his winged friends outside of Smith's grocery, we also pick up a dozen suet cakes for birds back home. Then on to the coffee shop Elevation to pick up "his papers": the *New York Times*, *Taos*

News and *Santa Fe News*. An avid reader and scholar of history, politics, and law, regarding the latest in politics, he warns me he's going on a "Rant"!

A Navy veteran of the Korean and Vietnam wars, William piloted an A-1 Skyraider on countless missions from aircraft carriers. He turned in his wings for an honorable discharge when he could stomach no more war in

Vietnam. On every occasion, William wore his military medals and a U.S. flag patch upside down on his left breast pocket, an international sign of distress. He loved our country and was horrified at abuses of the democratic system and the political turmoil of late. When questioned further, if folks didn't understand why our country was in distress, he'd kindly say "then we have nothing to discuss."



We've often talked about our common Scottish heritage. William proudly flew the bright yellow Scottish flag with rearing red lion in his front yard, near the table where he'd feed the birds; Mamasam, the cat; and a neighbor's dog, Mr. Brown. Although challenged by the high desert climate, he grew okra and pumpkins. On occasion, he'd play classical guitar, though he was shy about performing for others. As a teacher, he taught history, including the Constitution, and built stage sets for theater productions by his beloved deceased wife, Diana. A loyal and honorable husband, he never changed the message on his answering machine: "This is the William and Diana Jackson residence."

My hat is off to William, with hand over my heart in honor of this fine gentleman. Ironically, both of us share a similar heart condition and have pacemakers. The younger “old” hippy peace lover—me—salutes the honorable and wise veteran, scholar, and peace lover—William Jackson. In closing, I'll quote an old southern hymn “Down by the Riverside”: “Gonna lay down my sword and shield, ain't gonna study

war no more.” On leaving his home after dropping him off, I recall the rest of William's sign: “Pilots never die, they just fly higher!”

William, now 90 years old, is currently in care at the Taos Living Center, hoping to return to Blueberry Hill, and welcomes visitors. We send our prayers and good thoughts his way.

– David Vaughn

JEWEL BIANCAMANO, OUR LOCAL GEM

“When I ask for guidance in meditation, “What do I do now?” I get a very loud and clear message: Do nothing. Whenever I speak to someone on a spiritual path who lives here, they smile and say, “Right, do nothing, just trust and receive! Pain, bliss, peace, all of it . . . that's just Taos!”

In 1932, during the depression, Jewel Biancamano was born in a theatrical hotel to a vaudeville family. Her father was in the service during the war years, and she attended nine schools in five states.



Always good at math, she found creative ways to adapt to her constantly changing circumstances.

Post-World War II, the family returned to New York City and Jewel graduated from high school at age 16. She realized that she loved the magic of theater culture and was able to put herself through drama school. The dramatist Euripides revealed to her the comic tragedy of life, and it made sense. In the early 1960s, she worked with a theater owner and became manager/producer for 16 years.

Jewel visited a friend in Taos five times in three years. She gave up a rent-controlled apartment in Greenwich Village when her visiting friend retrieved her and her dog, driving them to Taos. Initially she thought she wanted to live in Santa Fe, but within six months she found a job here through a friend in a meditation group. Unexpectedly, someone had left candies in her mailbox, confirming for her that Taos “was a sweet place to be!”

While in the meditation group, Jewel met Pam Parker, owner of Taos Gems and Minerals. Offered a job there as an accountant, she was able to use her amazing mathematical acumen. She recalled the advice of “trusting and receiving” and ended up working in the rock shop for 27 enjoyable years. Here she encountered shamans, medicine men, aboriginal healers, and curanderos.

Simultaneously she pursued the spiritual path, studying Buddhism, Christianity, Judaism, and the Kahuna religion of Hawaii. Eventually she became a minister and a wedding celebrant in the Brigade of Light Church. She catered to those wishing the spiritual adventure of a marriage ceremony in the shadow of Taos Mountain.

Over the past two years I've had the privilege of weekly shopping trips with this rare gem, Jewel. I find her to be a person of intelligence, compassion, gratitude, and spiritual wisdom.

I am certain that I have benefited more from this relationship (from my perspective as her driver) than she has from my services. During this hard time of COVID isolation (as if old age is not isolating and difficult itself), Jewel has given me a weekly connection with another human (besides my beloved husband David, of

course). I hope I have exposed some light on this multifaceted lady who has contributed to our amazing Taos culture of unusual characters. I am one of the many grateful recipients of her generous wisdom. Thank you, Jewel!

-- Meredee Vaughn



FROM THE BOARD

TENT would first like to wish all our Members and Volunteers a very happy New Year. May 2022 bring us hope, kindness, and positive change as we move through

it. The Board members are hoping that all those involved with TENT had a very safe and warm holiday season. It is not lost on us that many probably had power issues during that time and we are hoping that all is restored. As everyone is aware the Omicron variant of COVID-19 is here and is causing upsets to normal operations. The Board has decided to continue service requests, such as for local and long-distance transport, while continually messaging about the need to be vigilant against the variant, which apparently can often show up as symptoms that, in the beginning, look very much like seasonal allergies or the common cold. We must impress upon our Volunteers and Members that if you are experiencing even mild symptoms, you should cancel your service request or response and get tested. We must protect the health of all.

On another note, we have three new Board members to help execute TENT's Mission and Vision: Jennifer Amman, Helen Rynaski, and Colleen Shaughnessy. We look forward to their involvement and energy in the coming month and years.

-- Jacob Crisp, Vice President

VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR UPDATE

I am delighted to report that we have three new Volunteers; please welcome Nancy, Stephanie, and Meredith! We are grateful and more than happy that you have decided to volunteer for our community! I would like to explain to both Members and Volunteers the importance of recording volunteer hours. This is an important statistic to give to potential funders and grantors, so they may see for themselves the many hours of service given to keep this community thriving. TENT is one of the only New Mexico Villages to have safely continued services throughout the pandemic. If some of you Volunteers are unwilling to fulfill in-person service requests now, there are other ways for you to contribute. We need Leaders for the following positions: Activities, Outreach, Publicity, and Facebook Administration.

Please contact me if you are interested in one of these positions. One last thing: the Omicron COVID variant can present as just a runny nose. Please do not fulfill or request in-person services if you have these symptoms: runny nose (thinking it's "just a cold" or "allergies"), sore throat, headache ... Get tested! When you get a negative test and are willing, you can go back to whatever presents as normal for you. Four free rapid antigen at-home tests are available from <https://special.usps.com/testkits> courtesy of the USPS and the federal government. Delivery can be expected in a few weeks. It is so easy even I could do it and I did—it took two minutes.

-- Kate Harris

TECH REPORT - TEENIORS

An organization from Albuquerque called Teeniors asked TENT if any of our Members or Volunteers would like tutoring in their technology. Since I know that a number of us struggle with telephones, computers, televisions, printers, and many of the software programs, I thought our readers might be interested.



Trish Lopez, founder of Teeniors, trains young adults (aged 15-29) to be helpful to older adults. The coaches are paid, and the sessions are priced, but the organization has a nonprofit arm to help pay coaches when the seniors cannot afford it.

Human connection is important to learning. With COVID, face-to-face instruction became difficult, but video sessions are almost as helpful. Coaches receive training and are supervised. Training sessions with seniors last one to two hours and can be scheduled most any time.

Teeniors also offers free video classes in subjects ranging from Apple to Zoom, shopping for groceries to using Instagram. [Click here to watch any Teeniors' class on YouTube!](#)

For questions, or if you wish to schedule a training session, email teeniors@gmail.com or phone (505) 600-1297. *-- Jim Ludden*

LAUGHING UNDER THE TENT: Aging with Humor

An elderly woman decided to prepare her will and told her preacher she had two final requests. First, she wanted to be cremated, and second, she wanted her ashes scattered over Wal-Mart. "Wal-Mart?" the preacher

exclaimed. "Why Wal-Mart?" "Then I'll be sure my daughters visit me twice a week," she replied.

My memory's not as sharp as it used to be. Also, my memory's not as sharp as it used to be.

Know how to prevent sagging? Just eat till the wrinkles fill out.

I've sure gotten old! I've had two bypass surgeries, a hip replacement, new knees, fought prostate cancer and diabetes. I'm half blind, can't hear anything quieter than a jet engine, take 40 different medications that make me dizzy, winded, and subject to blackouts. Have bouts with dementia. Have poor circulation; hardly feel my hands and feet anymore. Can't remember if I'm 85 or 92. Have lost all my friends. But, thank God, I still have my driver's license.

I feel like my body has gotten totally out of shape, so I got my doctor's permission to join a fitness club and start exercising. I decided to take an aerobics class for seniors. I bent, twisted, gyrated, jumped up and down, and perspired for an hour. But, by the time I got my leotards on, the class was over.

It's scary when you start making the same noises as your coffee maker.

These days about half the stuff in my shopping cart says, "For fast relief."

Remember: You don't stop laughing because you grow old. You grow old because you stop laughing.

YOUR HEALTH

The Alzheimer's Association says that it's never too late or too early to incorporate healthy habits. The following key lifestyle practices can help you achieve a lower risk of cognitive decline.

BREAK A SWEAT: Physical activity reduces the risk of cognitive slowdown. Walking. Exercise classes. Cross-country skiing. Pickleball. Hiking. Biking. Swimming. All these activities elevate your heart rate and increase blood flow.

PROTECT YOUR NOGGIN: Wear a seat belt in vehicles and wear a helmet when riding a bike, skiing, or playing contact sports. Brain injuries can raise the risk of cognitive decline and dementia.

BUDDY UP: People who commit to walking or going to exercise class with a friend are more likely to stick with it than those who don't buddy up.

MENTAL HEALTH: Cognitive decline and depression often go hand-in-hand. If you're depressed, anxious, or unusually stressed, try some form of exercise to elevate your endorphins.

FUEL UP: A balanced diet heavy on fruits and veggies may reduce the risk of cognitive decline.

SMOKING: You know the risks by now. Please, just quit.

ALCOHOL: Like smoking, excessive alcohol consumption has a direct link to cognition and dementia. Mild Cognitive Impairment, MCI, is a real diagnosis often given to folks who imbibe too much.

HEART HEALTH: Obesity, high blood pressure, and diabetes all negatively impact cognitive health.

LEARNING: Learning a new subject or skill will help reduce the risk of cognitive decline and dementia. The University of New Mexico offers many online classes. See <https://taos.unm.edu/>

SLEEP: Everyone has experienced brain fog from not getting enough sleep. Lack of sleep may result in memory problems and fuzzy thinking. A warm bath or shower before bedtime and gentle, relaxing music may ease you to a restful night.

RELAX: Meditation of any sort, walking, sitting quietly, gazing at Taos Mountain, or watching birds in your yard. Find time every day to quiet your mind. Focus on your breathing. Enjoy life.
-- Bonnie Golden

RESOURCES

Caryle Zorumski reminds us that the New Mexico Crisis Line is open 24 hours a day, so keep the phone number handy: 1-855-662-7474. Also, the New Mexico Aging & Long-Term Services Dept. (<https://nmaging.state.nm.us/services>) has many resources for seniors: 1-800-432-2080.

Over the holidays, I saw several quotes about the pros and cons of aging that brought a smile

to my face. From Seniorplanet.org, here are a few from famous authors:

- "The longer I live the more beautiful life becomes." ~ Frank Lloyd Wright
- "Count your age by friends, not years. Count your life by smiles, not tears." ~John Lennon
- "You don't stop laughing when you grow old, you grow old when you stop laughing." ~George Bernard Shaw

- “Oh, the worst of all tragedies is not to die young, but to live until I am seventy-five and yet not ever truly to have lived.” ~ Martin Luther King Jr.
- “Anyone who keeps the ability to see beauty never grows old.” ~Franz Kafka
- “Getting old is like climbing a mountain; you get a little out of breath, but the view is much better!” ~Ingrid Bergman

AARP has a “fraud watch network” and a “fraud resource center” to help us avoid fraud calls and scams. See <https://www.aarp.org/money/scams-fraud/about-fraud-watch-network/>

AARP also warns that a new fraud technique called “smishing” (for “short message service”) are on the rise for those of us who text. Because we tend to respond so quickly to texts, we are a click or a phone call away from having our money or sensitive data stolen. Avoid responding with “STOP” because that proves your number is active and can be sold to other scammers. Look how to block unwanted texts on your device or contact your service provider.

A TENT participant contributes the following information about the National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled, part of the National Library of Congress: “Reading is such a Pleasure. Yet, the ability to access this wonderful world can be restricted as we age. There is a ‘Talking Book’ service offered by the NATIONAL LIBRARY SERVICE FOR THE BLIND AND PRINT DISABLED LIBRARY OF CONGRESS. This program is assisted by a very helpful team in Santa Fe. There is no charge. <https://www.loc.gov/nls/> It is important to realize that you do not have to be blind to access this service. Please check out the websites for more information.”

<https://www.loc.gov/nls/about/eligibility-for-nls-services/>

<https://nmstatelibrary.org/direct-and-rural-services/lbph/eligibility-requirements>

<https://nmstatelibrary.org/images/LBPH/NM%20LBPD%20Application.pdf>

AARP offers a free “HomeFit Guide” in several languages, aimed at helping us make our homes more comfortable and safe. Click on the link to order one or to watch the videos showing <https://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/housing/info-2020/homefit-guide.html>

The AARP Magazine, Dec. 2021/Jan. 2022 issue, has an interesting article about retirement villages (about 55-plus in the U.S. so far) that began with a 1960 Del Webb project in Sun City, AZ. Some of these (in other states) require members to participate in activities such as gardening, yoga, classes, community activities, cultural programs, etc., that keep them physically active, mentally involved, and socially engaged. Could TENT progress to include a retirement village where Members actually live? Something worth discussing!

-- Linda Thompson

Coronavirus: from the TENT website.

With Omicron's prevalence and the testing shortage, anyone with symptoms should assume they're positive. Patients are contagious *one day before* they test positive! Symptoms (if you have them) are easy to confuse with seasonal flu, allergies, and the common cold.

All of our COVID Volunteers are vaccinated but due to the current increase of COVID - 19 cases we are again asking Members to request only essential services. Our aim is to reduce person to person contact.

- Transport: Wear masks and the passenger rides in the rear seat opposite of the driver with diagonally opposite

windows open to create an air curtain between driver and passenger.

- Home visits: Member and Volunteer must wear masks, regardless of vaccination status.
- Public meetings: We will not resume public meetings until further notice.
- Shopping: If you can please use the services of the grocery stores to pre-

pack your order then TENT will deliver your order.

Testing: Here is a link to the USPS free at home test kits: <https://special.usps.com/testkits>

- One order per residential address
- includes 4 rapid antigen tests
- shipping is free, starting in late January.



Please click [here](#) to make a charitable contribution so that TENT can help our elder community.

TENT needs your help to help others.

TENT

(Taos Elders and Neighbors Together)

Memberships Receiving Services

Individual

\$350/year or \$32/mo.

Household

\$450/year or \$40/mo.

3 Month Trial

\$150 or \$50/mo.

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