

**EVERYBODY HAS A STORY**

**A love that could not be forgotten**

By **JAY HERNANDEZ**  
La Center

I met Helen after I graduated from college in 1976 when I was living in California. It was all due to a practical joke my friends played on me at a nightclub. They tricked me into believing a drink on an unoccupied table was one they had purchased for me. I picked up the drink only to find out that it belonged to Helen.

I apologized and bought her a new drink. We chatted, got to know each other and danced the night away. We began dating and were soon inseparable. We took her two young boys with us on picnics and to amusement parks. It was a blissful family life.

But after almost two years dating, Helen expected more. She wanted a commitment. As much as I loved her, I felt I wasn't ready for marriage. We amicably ended our relationship.

Yet, as much as I tried, it was a love I couldn't forget. Her cards and letters kept coming frequently. I didn't respond until one day a short "Dear John" letter arrived. She wrote that a co-worker, who had been interested in her for several years, had proposed to her! She had been dating him after our break-up. It had been three months and I thought that was very fast.

"Loved ones can be stolen." I read that in an essay. And this guy was the one just about to do it.

I called Helen. "We need to talk. I made reservations for dinner at a restaurant in Malibu. It's dressy dress," I added.

"I'll be ready," she replied. I arrived at her house in the late afternoon. When she opened the door, I was completely stunned. She wore a revealing black dress. She looked lovely.

We drove to Malibu chatting as if we'd never been apart. I didn't bring up her co-worker's proposal. But I knew we were going to discuss it.

We were pleasantly surprised to find the restaurant situated next to a pier with sweeping ocean views. We stepped inside. The hostess walked us to our table. The restaurant was completely surrounded by floor-to-ceiling bay windows.

"Oh my," she exclaimed as she stared at waves hitting a nearby reef.

I ordered a bottle of wine. The tuxedoed waiter arrived, showed me the label and pronounced the name. I nodded, not knowing what to say as this was all new to me. He uncorked the wine, and poured a half-glass, and handed it to me. I downed it in one swift movement like a shot of whiskey.



Photos by **AMANDA COWAN**/The Columbian

Volunteer Bruce Eavey of Villages Clark County opens the door for Frankie Shetterly while dropping her off at a medical appointment on a recent morning. Villages Clark County helps older people stay in their homes by providing volunteers for small household tasks and errands.

# Volunteer network Villages Lends a hand

Older adults in Clark County can get help with tasks around their home as they age in place

By **ERIN MIDDLEWOOD**  
The Columbian



Volunteer Bruce Eavey of Villages Clark County walks to the front door of Hazel Dell resident Frankie Shetterly as he picks her up for an appointment on a recent morning.

While new assisted living centers are planned for Clark County's aging population, most older adults say they want to "age in place" — that is, live out their last years in their own home.

The Village Movement seeks to help them fulfill that wish by deploying volunteers to do small tasks that become difficult with age but are necessary to maintain independence.

The movement originated in 2002 with the first "village" in Boston and has since spawned similar neighborhood-based membership organizations across the country. In 2019, Villages Clark County formed. It's one of 10 such nonprofit groups in the greater Portland area that operate under the umbrella of Villages NW.

"Our population is aging out of their relationships," said John Chapman, Villages Clark County organizer.

Maybe these older adults' children moved away. Maybe they outlived spouses and friends. Now they don't have someone to drive them to a doctor's appointment or lift a heavy box in the garage.

**IF YOU GO**

**What:** Introduction to Villages Clark County and aging in place  
**When:** 10:30-11:30 a.m. Saturday  
**Where:** First Methodist Church, 706 N.E. 14th Ave., Camas  
**Information:** 360-553-1520; villagesclarkcounty.org

Villages Clark County gives them someone to call. Volunteers can't provide medical care or undertake big home projects, but they can assist older and disabled adults with chores and errands.

"It's the kind of assistance you would expect from a friend or a neighbor," Chapman said. "We can trim a bush or rake some leaves — but not provide weekly lawn care."

Frankie Shetterly describes the help she receives from Villages Clark County as "lifesaving." She has lived alone since her husband, Bob, died in 2012 at age 82. Her 3,000-square-foot Hazel Dell house is a lot for her to maintain.

Although she hires out housecleaning and yard maintenance, "Villages really fills

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**CLARK COUNTY'S AGING POPULATION**

	2011	2021
Clark County population age 65+	11.2%	15.5%
Washington population age 65+	12.2%	15.5%
Clark County median age	36.5	38.7
Washington median age	37.1	37.9

Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey five-year estimates



not unlike a modern-day roast. Sometimes, cards involved writing in a

of changing courtship patterns, says Elizabeth White Nelson, associate professor of history at University of

ERIN MIDDLEWOOD: THE IDEA It would have been out of character for Fred to buy a commercial card as opposed to, say, presenting her with a bouquet of pussy willows he had picked.

"That period would have been the beginning of an organized practice of exchanging Valentines in school," says Nelson. In some classrooms, everyone was required, or at least encouraged, to give a Valentine.

"The giving and receiving of Valentines was always partly about performing love, for an audience," says Nelson, "and once that Valentine's Day card got saved, it would have become a talisman of all that love is supposed to be."

are important since the dramatic rise in remote and hybrid employment, Harter said.

"We're seeing in the data that younger people

WEEKS INTO THE PANDEMIC lockdowns of 2020. She did all of her interviewing for the post online and works remotely full time. "It's the first time in my

SHE: Most of her staff live about 45 minutes away from the office and were commuting in before the pandemic.



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## ATTENTION TEACHERS!

The Columbian's Newspaper in Education program is teaming up with People's Community CU to bring you the 2023 serial story...

# S.O.R. Losers

Written by Avi - Illustrated by Timothy Bush



a breakfast serials story

Every kid is expected to play one sport a year at South Orange River Middle School. That's why the school creates a soccer team for a bunch of boys who would rather work on computers, history and English. Not only are they not athletic, they don't want to be on the team. School rules prevail however, so they must play. As the season begins, they lose games in hilariously amazing ways. As the losing continues, pressure mounts from schoolmates, faculty and family, to win. The boys struggle to be themselves both on and off the field, and by so doing, involve themselves in a sports story that is as wonderfully funny as it is unique, giving new meaning to the term, *losers*.

Breakfast Serials

## Villages

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in the blanks," she said. "It's the kind of things my husband did — smaller things — that they've done for me."

She has two children living in the Portland area, and they helped her after the initial shock of her husband's death.

"I was just totally thrown," she said. "In that time when I wasn't doing well, they were over here a lot. They had jobs, which made it difficult. Now they know that I have trustworthy help."

For example, she used to take a taxi to medical appointments, but it was tricky to secure a ride home. Now she gets rides from Villages Clark County.

"The Villages people are friends. It's a totally different effect. They're right there. I know them. They make sure everything goes OK," she said.

On a recent morning, volunteer Bruce Eavey drove her for a doctor appointment. "You can't help but build a relationship that's pretty strong," said Eavey, a retiree who underwent special training and screening to help as a Villages driver. He also lends his handyman skills.

Eavey said when he tells people he volunteers for Villages Clark County, the response is, "Villages? Where is it? How do I get there?"

He explains that it's not a place but a network of people. Volunteers offer a hand. Members pay \$50 a month to access that help, while associate members



Photos by AMANDA COWAN/The Columbian

Volunteer Bruce Eavey hops back in the car after dropping off a Villages Clark County member at a medical appointment.



Villages Clark County volunteers are screened and carry identification.

pay \$25 a month. The money offsets the organization's operating expenses; volunteers receive no compensation.

"Associate members join to sustain the organization so that when we really need it, it is still there," said Chapman, who is both an associate member and a volunteer. "Associate members don't get volunteer assistance except three or five times a year."

Chapman, who is retired, became intrigued by the Village Movement after moving to Vancouver from Florida in 2015. He was part of the steering committee that spent three years getting the local group up and running. It now has 40 members and 40 volunteers.

Volunteers undergo vetting and training. They might help a few hours

a week with yard and garden care, minor home repairs, running errands or figuring out computers or other home electronics — wherever their abilities and interests lie.

Volunteers visit the homes of prospective members to make sure the required assistance is within the scope of what Villages Clark County can offer.

Chapman said the eventual goal is to spawn more groups focusing on smaller sections of Clark County, like Ridgely and Camas/Washougal.

"We like to say we're 'neighbors helping neighbors stay neighbors,'" he said.

So far, it's worked for Shetterly.

"At the starting of COVID, I thought I should go into a retirement home. I'm getting to this age and that's what everyone does," Shetterly, 90, said. "I've been here in my home almost three years that I might not have been. It's been thanks to Villages."

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