

**SPRING 2024** 

## On Lok News

## Join us to celebrate community seniors



























## On Lok presents at On Aging 2024, the American Society on Aging conference

On Lok will share outcomes and insights from its programs at On Aging 2024, the nation's largest multidisciplinary conference on aging and the annual conference for members of the American Society on Aging (ASA), in San Francisco March 25 - 28.

On Aging 2024 will bring together aging experts, gerontologists and thought leaders from diverse disciplines to discuss solutions to the growing needs of older adults, connecting thousands of professionals working in the field. On Lok's focus will be on PACE palliative care, the Openhouse + On Lok Community Day Services program for LGBTQ+ seniors, and how On Lok 30th Street Senior Center has been leveraging technology to promote healthy living and combat isolation. Attendees will also have the opportunity to tour our senior center and LGBTQ+ day center, where they will be able to see our programs in action and interact with staff and participants.

On Lok's presentations include the following:

March 25 - "A systematic approach to addressing primary palliative care needs for aging in place in PACE (Program for All-Inclusive Care of the **Elderly)."** At this roundtable session, On Lok PACE Geriatrician Alice Mao, Lead Physician Jennifer Yang, and Associate Medical Director Teresa Pham will discuss palliative care from a multidisciplinary perspective for individuals who want to pursue a quality-of-life approach at the end of life.



On Lok Always Active raised the bar in virtual exercise classes with the creation of backgrounds from destinations around the world, developed in On Lok 30th Street Senior Center's very own green room in collaboration with On Lok's I.T. team. In the photos, L-R, On Lok Always Active Specialists Luz Ibarra and Diana Lara Rodgers lead the online classes with virtual backgrounds, one of the age-inclusive technologies discussed at the American Society on Aging Conference.

## Honor, Love, Respect Our Seniors campaign celebrates contributions of older adults

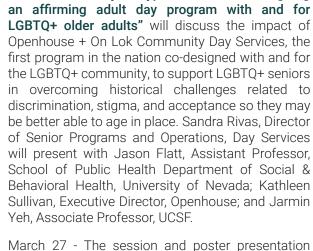
On Lok, Self-Helpforthe Elderly, All American Medical Group, Chinatown Community Development Center, and San Francisco Marin Medical Society have launched a multi-month, grassroots campaign to recognize the continuous contributions of Asian American and Pacific Islanders older adults to society, while fostering intergenerational connections.

The Honor, Love, Respect Our Seniors Community Campaign kicked off in February with an in-person media roundtable at the Chinatown Media & Arts Collaborative in San Francisco, where community leaders discussed how to reframe ageist beliefs and honor and respect the role of

seniors in both the private and public spheres.

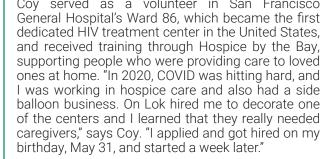
Speakers included Supervisor Connie Chan, San Francisco Board of Supervisors, District 1, along with leaders of each of the community partners: Grace Li, CEO, On Lok; Anni Chung, President and CEO, Self-Help for the Elderly; Dr. Joseph Woo, President, All American Medical Group; Malcolm Yeung, Executive Director, Chinatown Community Development Center; and Dr. Michael Schrader, San Francisco Medical Director, Dignity Health Medical Group.

The campaign also features a Senior Love Letter contest, inviting San Francisco Bay Area students



March 27 - "Not vour typical center: co-designing

"Journey to health: connecting seniors and breaking isolation through virtual exercise and preventive health programs" will explore the use of age-inclusive technology to support On Lok 30th Street Senior Center's workshops and classes in English, Spanish, and Chinese, serving 1500 seniors and adults with disabilities annually, 60 percent inperson and 40 percent virtually. Members of the On Lok 30th Street Senior Center and Health Promotion Team Diana Lara Rodgers, Genny Pinzon, Luz Ibarra, and Miguel Martinez Jimenez will present. The project's data and outcomes will be featured at the poster session On Tech @ On Aging: Tech for a Better Brain & Body. Learn more at asaging.org.



do the same thing to hide their condition."

What really spoke to Coy about On Lok was its participant-focused care and emphasis on quality of life. "It gives participants a chance to do the things that bring them joy – tai chi, karaoke, bingo. People are interacting, actually living life. The Prayer of a Clown says, never let me grow so big that I will fail to see the wonder in the eyes of a child or the twinkle in the eyes of the aged. I love to see that sparkle in their eyes." ■

## Living a clown's prayer



Firebreather, unicyclist, sword swallower, balloon artist - as a graduate of the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Clown College, Coy Meza can list all these skills on his resume. But if you ask about his life's vocation, it's always been caregiving.

"I made a promise a long time ago that if I stayed healthy, I would take care of people," says Coy, a professional caregiver with On Lok PACE, when we meet at one of our centers in San Francisco. He began working in healthcare in the early 80s, during the AIDS epidemic. "Nobody knew what HIV was back then. My friends were getting sick, and I wanted to help take care of them. I kept thinking about all those people alone in their rooms, confined to a bed, waiting for a caregiver to show up, because they would be the only person they might see all day."

Coy served as a volunteer in San Francisco

He immediately connected with participants. "I come from generations of clowns, and I am a happy, social butterfly-type clown, which comes in handy when you are caregiver. I might take my rubber gloves, blow them up to create fun balloon characters. It makes people laugh, even during Covid, which was a really scary time for all of us," he says. To demonstrate, he pulls some long red balloons out of his pockets and proceeds to quickly inflate and twist them into a poodle, a flower, a hat.

In addition to his native English, Coy is fluent in Spanish and sign language. As a clown, he also uses physical humor to convey emotions and actions without words. "Being a clown, I understand pantomime, so I pay attention to the body language of participants. They embrace me as someone who makes them laugh. My specialty is working with seniors with dementia. I am very flamboyant, which makes it easy for them to remember me. I have always been a little bit awkward in the way I walk, and I have learned that people with disabilities might

Participants will often ask for Coy. "I love to entertain them as I help them. If I am assisting with personal care, I play the music they enjoy and make it their personal shower experience, so bathing becomes a favorite thing to do. I don't rush, so the participant can relax and take control as much as possible. Seniors should do what they are able to do, we want to support their sense of dignity," he says. For his work, in 2023 Coy received On Lok's Front Line Staff Member of the Year Above and Beyond Award. His skills also earned him a special recognition from UCSF for his service escorting participants to their healthcare appointments.

Over the years, Coy has seen people of all different incomes get sick and lose everything they have to their medical bills. "I am glad there are organizations like On Lok that can provide healthcare and services to people on a low-income, and support family members who may be experiencing burnout with access to a day center for their loved one," he says.

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in grades 6-12 to express their gratitude toward an

elder who has inspired them to become a better

person, enriched their life, or helped them overcome

challenges. Selected essays will be printed in a

The last segment of the campaign will give voice

to the senior themselves, who will be invited to a

Chinese radio talk show to share their personal

Through these three initiatives, the campaign

aims to uphold the role and value of older adults

in both our personal lives and society at large,

while empowering them to age safely and with

dignity in the community where they feel a sense of

major Chinese newspaper.

belonging.

stories, life experiences, and wisdom.

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## FRIDAY, MAY 17, 2024 Doors open at 5:30 PM | Pier 27, San Francisco

tickets for purchase and sponsorship opportunities available: www.onlok.org/celebrates24

On Lok Celebrates 2024 will bring together over 600 friends, partners, participants, staff, and volunteers to celebrate our community and fundraise for On Lok services and programs benefiting seniors. This is an event you will not want to miss! With gorgeous waterfront views of the Bay Bridge and two floors of contemporary space for networking, dancing, and entertainment, Pier 27 in San Francisco will make an amazing home for our annual gala.

OPENING RECEPTION: 5:30 PM TO 8:00 PM

FUNDRAISING PROGRAM: 8:00 PM TO 9:00 PM

DESSERT AND DANCE AFTER-PARTY: 9:00 PM TO 11:30 PM

Get ready for a magical evening featuring delicious local and interactive cuisine, live entertainment, and dancing into the night. Our line-up includes:

- Special guest Chef Martin Yan –James Beard Lifetime Achievement Award winner, author, and host of Yan Can Cook with On Lok, a live, virtual cooking series celebrating Chinese recipes and traditions.
- Celebrated mixologist Christian "Suzu" Suzuki-Orellana, from the hit Netflix show Drink Masters
- Dance grooves by Mellanique "DJ Black" Robicheaux, Community "Grand Marsha" for the San Francisco Pride Parade and recipient of the LGBTQ+ Champion Recognition Award from the Urban League of Greater San Francisco Bay Area
- Live entertainment by Big Blue Soul Revue, who will bring their passion for 60s and 70s soul, funk and R&B

Be inspired by our auction and fund-a-need, led by Warriors Hype Man Franco Finn, one of the Bay Area's most sought-after emcees and auctioneers, with 20+ seasons as the in-arena emcee and TV personality for the Golden State Warriors.

## We look forward to celebrating with you!

## Vitality Arts exhibit at De Young Museum showcases seniors' life stories and creativity



For budding and experienced artists alike, the Vitality Arts show was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to display their work in a fine arts museum setting. The open art exhibition, which ran at the De Young

Museum in San Francisco through March, was the culmination of a community program designed to foster creativity and social connections among older adults.

Our community became involved with Vitality Arts in 2023, when the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco offered adults over the age of 55 seven art classes, each eight-weeks long, taught by professional artists in a variety of media.

Members of On Lok 30th Street Senior Center and Openhouse + On Lok Community Day Services, affectionately called Club 75 by its participants, joined peers from other centers and community-based organizations to learn or develop new skills, focusing on experimentation and practice in painting and collaging. Together, they also took trips to city

museums to view art that was relevant to what they were learning in class. Whether seniors were mature artists or taking their first art lesson, everybody had a story to share. "When I draw something, it opens a

little window of what's in my mind," said Irving Rivera, who attended the program with his wife, Ana. "There is so much to learn, I feel I will never catch up."

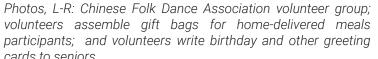
The Vitality Arts Project For Art Museums, a national cohort of 25 museums, was made possible by a generous grant from E. A. Michelson Philanthropy. To learn more about the project and watch a video about how the program inspired our community, visit https://www.famsf.org/exhibitions/vitality-arts

Photos, L-R: On Lok 30th Street Senior Center art teacher and community member Esperanza Villanueva with one of her paintings. Vicky Palacios, Assistant Director of Programs and Operations, Day Services, with participant Ana Rivera and John Blazek, Executive Director, Day Services. Group and museum photo credit: Andria Lo.

## During troubled times, we can find tranquility and purpose in volunteering.

A message from Manuel Raneda, Volunteers Program Manager, On Lok 30th Street Senior Center





In times of turmoil and uncertainty, volunteering provides a unique sanctuary where individuals can discover tranquility and purpose amidst chaos.

Engaging in selfless acts of service allows us to shift our focus from personal concerns to the needs of others, creating a sense of purpose that transcends the immediate challenges at hand. The act of volunteering often brings a deep sense of fulfillment as individuals witness the positive impact we can have on the lives of others. This fulfillment, rooted in the act of giving, can be a source of tranquility, providing a reprieve from the overwhelming nature that we often see during troubled times.

Volunteering also offers a structured and meaningful way to channel the energy that we may experience from feelings of helplessness or anxiety during uncertain periods. Instead of being passive observers or recipients of circumstances, we become active contributors to positive change. This active engagement fosters a sense of control and efficacy, providing a counterbalance to the unpredictability of troubled times. By dedicating time and effort

to causes larger than us, we can find a renewed sense of agency, which can be a powerful antidote to the disempowerment that often accompanies uncertainty.

In addition, volunteering creates a supportive community that can be a source of solace during troubled times. Working alongside like-minded individuals who share a commitment to making a difference builds connections and relationships that go beyond the immediate challenges we may face. This sense of community becomes a refuge, offering emotional support and a shared sense of purpose that can have a grounding effect in the midst of uncertainty.

Ultimately, volunteering not only contributes to the well-being of those we serve, but also becomes a source of personal tranquility and purpose for the volunteer, allowing us to navigate troubled times with resilience and a sense of optimism.

To learn more about volunteering at On Lok, visit onlok.org/support-us/volunteer/

# Behind the scenes with On Lok Mission Nutrition



For families who don't have to worry about their next meal, spending a day with the On Lok Mission Nutrition meal program is a great way to understand the challenges faced by members of our community who are not food secure, even in a city with a high per capita personal income like San Francisco.

Liz Loh thought it would be a valuable experience and at last year's On Lok Celebrates Gala she bid for the opportunity to get a behind-the-scenes, full-immersion look at our meal preparation and delivery program. As the winner of the On Lok Mission Nutrition Ride-along, Liz, her husband Barron Lee, and their two children took a tour of the kitchen at On Lok 30th Street Senior Center, where they helped staff fill trays with freshly prepared food and packed insulated bags of meals for delivery. Once the delivery vans were loaded, the family took off with Mario Rivera, their On Lok driver for the day, to serve the homebound seniors on his route.

"I raised my paddle to do the ride-along because I was excited about the opportunity to have my family (including my two sons) learn more about On Lok's mission, and to meet the community that On Lok supports," said Liz. "We learned a lot from our visit at On Lok. We were so impressed with On Lok's facilities and its goal of empowering individuals to age with dignity and independence. We also really enjoyed doing the ride along. We loved how our driver was greeted at each home with such joy and warmth. Thank you for giving us this opportunity to learn more about On Lok."

This past year, On Lok Mission Nutrition prepared and served over 287,000 nutritious meals, including hot meals and wellness checks to over 550 homebound seniors. ■





L-R: Driver Mario Rivera, Barron Lee and Liz Loh with their two children, and Nutrition Services Manager Will Goodness. Top photos capture moments of Liz and her family's day with On Lok Mission Nutrition.



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Address service requested

## On Lok receives grant funding for programs supporting the underserved

These grants recognize the

value and innovation of our

programs to address critical

needs and support healthy

and equitable aging.

On Lok is thrilled to have won grant funding to support its programs for vulnerable older adults.

A \$350,000 grant from the San Francisco Human Rights Commission will help to build the staffing and infrastructure capacity of Openhouse + On Lok Community Day Services, the nation's first certified adult day program created with and for the LGBTQ+ community. Affectionately called Club 75 by its participants, the program brings together

the experience and expertise of Openhouse, a leading provider of services for LGBTQ+ seniors, and On Lok to provide programming that embraces LGBTQ+ identity and individuality. In Club 75's safe and life-affirming space, LGBTQ+ seniors can engage with their community and benefit from

meals, services to support wellness and personal care, transportation, and social activities. The program is offered with a sliding scale discount to make it affordable to all.

Club 75 will also benefit from an \$85,000 HIV and Aging Challenge award from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to continue to provide trauma-informed caregiver training for providers working with long-term HIV survivors. The program will offer scholarships to participants living with HIV

who do not qualify for other assistance programs, such as PACE. Openhouse + On Lok Community Day Services is one of ten organizations nationwide to receive this grant focused on HIV and aging and long-term survivors.

We were awarded \$400,000 from San Francisco Health Plan (SFHP) to help launch and provide Enhanced Care Management and Medically Tailored Meals, two new Medi-Cal benefits offered through

CalAIM (California Advancing and Innovating Medi-Cal), a multi-year, statewide effort to transform the Medi-Cal program through improved integration of social services and increased support for vulnerable populations with complex needs. These programs offer

intensive coordination of health and health-related services and medically tailored meals to enrollees living with high-risk health conditions. SFHP is a public and nonprofit health plan that provides health insurance to over 190,000 San Francisco residents through Medi-Cal. In partnership with SFHP, On Lok will help California achieve its goals of reaching atrisk Medi-Cal members by leveraging its 50+ years of experience providing integrated, high-touch services for better aging.  $\blacksquare$ 



## More seniors can now qualify for Medi-Cal

On Lok was proud to stand with stakeholders and advocates from across California to support Assembly Bill 133 for the elimination of the Medi-Cal asset limit.

The Medi-Cal asset limit was previously part of the criteria used to determine eligibility for Medi-Cal, and included property, bank accounts and vehicles. This important change, many years in the making, was signed into law by the Governor on July 27, 2021, and went into effect on January 1, 2024.

Personal assets are no longer counted to determine Medi-Cal eligibility, an important change that allows more older adults in need to access assistance.



## THINK GREEN AND GO PAPERLESS.

Subscribe today to the digital version of On Lok News, available to readers who have requested email communications. To subscribe to the digital version of On Lok News or manage your current newsletter subscription, please email Jessica Chang-Greenman at jchang-greenman@onlok.org.

### ON LOK MISSION STATEMENT

To relentlessly pursue quality of life and quality of care for older adults and their families

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## In this issue:

- On Lok presents at American Society on Aging conference
- Honor, Love, Respect Our Seniors celebrates contributions of older adults
- Caregiver Coy Meza lives a clown's prayer
- Donors behind the scenes at On Lok Mission Nutrition Ride-along
- Older adults exhibit their art at De Young Museum
- The value of volunteering during uncertain times

**ON LOK NEWS** is a publication of **ON LOK, INC.** 1333 Bush Street. San Francisco. CA 94109

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