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Lamorinda Village prepares for fire season with help from community

By Pippa Fisher



Volunteers work hard Aug. 1 to fill emergency go-bags which will be delivered to seniors in the Lamorinda Village community. Photo Pippa Fisher

Lamorinda Village has partnered with the National Charity League to put together 350 emergency go-bags for seniors. It is just one of the ways in which the Village is rallying to help the most vulnerable, with the support of the community.

With fire season rapidly approaching, the folks at Lamorinda Village are keenly aware that seniors, many of whom have limited mobility, have been disproportionately affected during devastating wildfires in recent years. Combine that with the current pandemic and, says Lamorinda Village Operations Manager Kathryn Ishizu, "seniors are much more vulnerable than anyone during these catastrophes."

Lamorinda Village is a community-based network of older people living in the area with the purpose of providing the support needed to allow seniors to remain living in their own homes as long as it is safe for them to do so.

Ishizu says that they were recently given a generous grant from a family foundation that had heard about Lamorinda Village's work. "This wonderful grant has allowed us to create and fill 350 emergency go-bags," she says. "Using the Lamorinda Residents Evacuation handout as a guide, we have filled the bags with N95 masks, flashlights, new batteries, cotton gloves, first aid kits, toiletry kits, sunglasses, water bottles and protein bars. These are all packed into a large duffel bag with room to add the personal essentials of extra clothing, shoes and socks."

In partnership with mothers and daughters in the Acalanes Chapter of the NCL, 350 bags were loaded up on Aug. 1 ready for delivery to seniors - social distancing and face mask protocol followed, of course.

Mother/daughter pairs, limited to five per one-hour shift in order to maintain social distancing, arrived and worked outside and in the opened garage, stuffing the bags with necessities throughout the day.

Ishizu says she is excited to see the community coming together to help support this project.

And the community certainly is coming together for them. Starting in March, when shelter-in-place began, Lamorinda Village has been offering free grocery shopping and prescription pickup and delivery, adding over 250 new SIP members and over 200 community volunteers.

"We've done almost 800 shopping trips and over 1,000 check-in phone calls," says Ishizu. These friendly phone calls allow them to make sure seniors have everything they need.

Noting that isolation has been shown to have serious health consequences, Ishizu says they are hoping the phone calls alleviate some of the loneliness that is being caused by this isolating pandemic. "We also have numerous interactive Zoom presentations, activities and discussions throughout the week to engage seniors," she says.

Both the Acalanes and the Lamorinda Chapters of the NCL have been a tremendous help in the shopping delivery program, says Ishizu.

Also with wildfire preparedness in mind, Lamorinda Village has been working with a local company to get a group senior discount for installing backup batteries to counter the likely imminent electricity public safety power shutoffs.

Ishizu says she has received numerous emails and phone calls from seniors and their families expressing their gratitude. One such caller said how appreciative she was for all that Lamorinda Village does - not just the shopping but also for the friendship, the personal warmth and caring that is shown, and sense of community and pride in community she feels from what is being done

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through Lamorinda Village. She has had shoppers who have left special notes or flowers or small surprises and says how heartwarming and how much the personal touches have meant.

"Personally, I am so grateful to be part of an organization that was able to adjust and adapt to all the challenges that this pandemic threw at us," says Ishizu. "I'm also blown away by the tremendous response from the community who came together to help those who were most vulnerable. I feel very lucky to live in Lamorinda."

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