

# PacificSun

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Photo provided by Jennifer Golbus

**A PLAN IN MOTION** Years of hard work have paid off—Vivalon’s Healthy Aging Campus in downtown San Rafael will be fully-operational by 2023.

## Healthy Aging

*Vivalon’s eldercare campus* **BY JANE VICK**

**I**N RESEARCHING Covid-19’s impact on the senior community, I was introduced to two things. The first was a sobering introduction to the reality that America, as a country, and California, as a state, seriously struggle with eldercare. The second was that Vivalon, in Marin County, has long been aware

of this issue and is taking measured steps to reverse it.

The current structure in Marin and Sonoma Counties ages people out, in ways that rob them of their dignity, sense of relevance and connection to their fellow humans. We build community to exclude elders, which is a loss to everyone, a disservice to the people who were once us and a frightening proposition many of us too easily ignore as we walk through the various stages of life. As Gov.

Gavin Newsom said in a talk on age demographics in California, “Growing old knows no boundaries. Aging doesn’t care what race you are, your economic status, whether you’re single or have family support.” Age comes for each and every one of us, and it’s time we approach it in a new manner.

Not only does our current model rob young people of the valuable wisdom they might learn from their elders—which only years of experience can offer—elders experience a chronic loneliness that

often proves fatal. As I mentioned in my article on senior care during Covid-19 (“Senior Care During Covid—How Care Homes and Nonprofits Shifted to Support Elders During the Pandemic,” Jan. 19, 2022), loneliness is more closely linked with early mortality than smoking, obesity and alcohol abuse. The vast majority of us are herd animals, and when left alone, we waste away.

The acute and utterly unexpected nature of Covid-19 highlighted myriad flaws in the American system, giving us the opportunity to earnestly and permanently improve it. This issue is being addressed in measures.

Vivalon finds itself at the head of the curve, and its efforts to support and integrate the elder community are, frankly, heroic. Years ago, Vivalon proposed a plan to create a Healthy Aging Campus where seniors could live, relax, exercise, receive medical care and generally enjoy what are supposed to be their Golden Years. On Jan. 21, Vivalon closed escrow on a property exchange with BioMarin and became the official owner of 999 Third Street, the plot of land that will contain the Vivalon Healthy Aging Campus.

Conceived as a response to the issue of isolation and the income challenges many seniors face, the Healthy Aging Campus, by Vivalon’s own definition, is an affordable, vital “modern living hub.” Partnering with Eden Housing, the Campus will offer 66 affordable studio apartments for residents 62 and older, as well as a community center, healthy aging center and medical facility. This building will be open to all Marin County elders and their families.

Likewise, the decision to build this campus in downtown San Rafael was very intentional. “The key focus,” said Jennifer Golbus, director of marketing and communications for Vivalon, “is that we will not build a campus like this on the outskirts. We’re not putting people out to pasture. Older adults need to be embedded in the community and part of the community. It is a very on-purpose decision.”

*The Vivalon Healthy Aging Campus is scheduled to open in 2023. Find out more information at [healthyagingcampus.org](http://healthyagingcampus.org).*