

## Senior Living

### One of the perks of aging

## Benefits of senior discounts can add up

By Judith M. Wilson  
Special to the Marin IJ

Discounts are one of the perks of aging. They're a much-needed break for seniors on a fixed income who are struggling to make ends meet, but they go beyond lowering prices to acknowledging seniors and showing them that they're valued members of the community.

Members of Mill Valley Village, which is one of several Marin Villages and part of a nationwide movement that helps elders to remain independent and stay in their own homes, receive a wide variety of discounts from local businesses. Steering-committee chair Connie Dubin explains that she and another member approached local businesses in the village's early days and asked them to give members a discount. They loved the idea, and members have been getting discounts on purchases ranging from eyeglasses at Wink Optics to workouts at Body Kinetics ever since. They simply show a special membership card, and the business gives them a discount.

"They're happy to do it," Dubin says, and in return, they get promotion on the village's website and appreciation from villagers. Members like supporting local business, and shopping in town is easy if they no longer drive, but, "That's just the tip of the iceberg," she says.

People get to know each other and create connections, and they often develop relationships with members of the business community and make new friends.

"It's the wonderful feeling that you're part of a community," she says.

Discounts are available from stores, services and entertainment venues, and the Rotary Club of Mill Valley gives grants to provide discounted membership for people who are income-eligible.

Vivalon (formerly Whistlestop), a nonprofit organization in San Rafael that serves seniors, gives discounts on its own programs, which include classes and workshops. It also offers low-cost meals at its Jackson Café.



Some local grocery stores and other local businesses offer senior discounts on set days. — Photo courtesy of Getty Images

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## DISCOUNTS: Ask for accommodations

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"One activity we're going to bring back is outings. There's a discount if you're a member," says Stephanie McNally, director of Healthy Aging Services. "We see a lot of individuals who are in need in the community. A segment of the population could absolutely use discounts," she adds, but she suspects that some businesses think they don't need to provide them because Marin is a predominately affluent community.

Members of AARP, a nationally-recognized organization for seniors, get discounts at a wide range of businesses, including hotels, airlines and car-rental companies if they like to travel. UPS also gives members a range of discounts on different services, starting with 5% off domestic and international shipping services.

Not all discounts require member-

ships, however. United Markets has a senior discount day on the first Thursday of every month and gives shoppers 60 and over 10% off their entire grocery bill, with alcoholic beverages and dairy products excluded.

Seniors also get a special rate on transportation and can ride on Marin Transit, SMART, the Golden Gate Ferry, Golden Gate Transit and more at a special rate with a Senior Clipper Card.

The YMCA offers a special membership rate for seniors as well.

In addition, the Mountain Play offers discounts to seniors, as does the Marin County Fair, which goes one step further with a designated day for seniors, when fairgoers 65 and over can enter for free.

If seniors aren't sure, they should feel free to ask if a business or service



Many pharmacies give special accommodations to seniors. — Photo courtesy of Getty Images

offers a discount. They might be pleasantly surprised, or they could give someone a great idea that will pay off the next time they visit.

When businesses do give a dis-

count, "It's a win, win, win," says Dubin. Businesses get customers, elders get a lower price, and discounts foster the sense of a community that's caring. ■

# A resource guide for seniors

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**A**lmost a quarter of Marin County's residents are seniors, and a wealth of resources and activities are designed just for them. Many organizations and agencies are currently offering both in-person and virtual options for people 60 and over, with some facilities requiring proof of full vaccination against COVID-19 for in-person participation. Check regularly to see the status of the programs that meet your needs

## CONNECTIONS

### Telephone Reassurance Program

The San Rafael Police Department offers a free telephone check-in for elders. Trained volunteers call registered users three times a week with a friendly greeting and a check to see how they're doing. Police will follow up with a welfare check if they don't answer. Episcopal Senior Communities offers the program in partnership with Vivalon and Novato Independent elders. Check other Marin communities for similar programs. 415-485-3000, [srpd.org/telephone-reassurance-program](http://srpd.org/telephone-reassurance-program)

## SUPPORT

### Vivalon

Vivalon, formerly Whistlestop, offers a wide range of services for Marin's elders, including a grocery distribution program, home-delivered meals, a food pantry and CarePool rides for vital medical appointments and trips to the grocery store. It also offers resource referrals and classes for exercise and enrichment. In-person activities have resumed, and members and guests must be vaccinated and boosted. 415-456-9062, [vivalon.org](http://vivalon.org)



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# Vivalon

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Formerly known as Whistlestop.