



Recognizing the positive side of change

BY LISA CRAWFORD WATSON

Like most of us, Aspire member Frances Baczuk and her husband John are “hunkering down” at home. But rather than focus on the negatives, the inconveniences, the Baczucs are recognizing the positive opportunities in this situation we call the “new normal.” Taking online exercise classes, even line dancing. They have weekly family video chats, attend virtual church services, concerts, and museums.

In the two months since the shelter-in-place order went into effect in Monterey County, we and the Baczucs have all become keenly

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aware of the vulnerabilities inherent in isolation. We also have discovered the incredible resiliency of the human spirit, our capacity to learn at any age, and our ability to be creative, inventive, and make do. And, we've been reminded of the power of patience, humor, and kindness.

We discovered this resiliency when we reached out to our 4,400 member households. We identified some challenges. We also noticed a widespread optimism among members, as well as your appreciation of our support. We are grateful for the opportunity to be of service.

While the world has been forever changed by the pandemic, and we acknowledge the resulting hardships and challenges, we also recognize the positive changes as we combat the coronavirus.

Here are a few stories about what we discovered when we connected with you, our members.

BEHIND THE MASKS

When you let us know you needed masks, we collected supplies donated by quilting clubs and Joanne's Fabrics and delivered them to 50 Aspire members, who volunteered to sew over 300 masks.

"In making masks for those in need, I felt like I was beginning to bridge the divide that seems to separate us these days," says member Martha Dundon.

READING IN PLACE

For Aspire member Linda, the phone-in book club came at the perfect time.

"I am new to this community, and I am disabled, so this has been particularly challenging time for me. I recently moved here from the Bay Area, where all my friends and former work colleagues are, so the sudden forced isolation has hit me particularly hard. I used to get a lot of visitors and now I have none. The book club has been a wonderful way to have a bit more connection. "

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— Martha Dundon, member



Recognizing the positive side of change *continued...*

ACROSS THE MILES

Once the shelter-in-place order extended Ana Hernandez's Las Vegas getaway, the Salinas resident, who knew she couldn't return home and risk exposing her family to the coronavirus, retreated into the insecurities of sudden isolation. She didn't feel comfortable risking her own exposure by venturing out to find food. She didn't know if her Aspire Health Plan would cover urgent and emergency care when out of the Aspire service area.

In contacting Ana Hernandez, our reassurance was as important as the food we had delivered to her by "Mom's Meals," an organization that provides access to meals. We also confirmed that urgent care would be covered under her Medicare Advantage Plan.

"I was very happy that my insurance company reached out to me at this time to give me the help I needed," Hernandez says. "And I am more at ease and confident, knowing I can

continue my health coverage with Aspire, even in Nevada."

VIRTUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Working with innovative technologies and apps, we have new ways to access care via telehealth and doctors who are using telemedicine. The community is finding ways to acquire healthcare supplies and prescriptions through Instacart, a San Francisco-based pickup and delivery service, plus online or mail-order services.

A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO CARE

When we decided to contact members, Aspire's immediate goal was to find out about and allay fears, says Dr. James Gilbert, chief medical officer of Aspire Health Plan. That looked different than we expected.

"When 80% of our health is related to social determinants, our key question is what can we do to help with issues of loneliness and isolation?" he says. "Is it typical for a health plan

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— Ana Hernandez, member

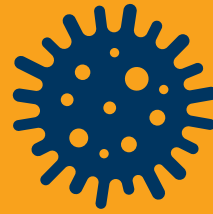


Recognizing the positive side of change *continued...*

to arrange to have food delivered to someone? No. Does it make sense, to keep them healthy? Yes.”

This generosity of spirit extends throughout the community. Families are reaching out more, and neighbors are helping each other — buying groceries, maintaining gardens, paying bills, checking in on each other. People are slowing down, listening to each other, playing with children, and deciding what’s important — and what’s not.

As another neighbor, family member, friend, Aspire is here for our members. Your healthcare partners are positioned to be nimble and respond quickly to change, well prepared to put necessary precautions in place to keep our members safe and secure. We’re positive.



For COVID-19 updates, and to find out how

Aspire is supporting our members on COVID-19, visit our website at www.aspirehealthplan.org

If you have questions or need resources, please call Member Services at (855) 570-1600

A very special thank you to the following Aspire members, who graciously devoted their time and talents to sewing cloth masks for other Aspire members.

Adrienne S., Barbara T., Beryl L., Betty A., Brith M., Catherine K., Cindy P., Clara P., Cyndy D., David H., Donna T., Ellen P., Elly W., Freda Jane M., Gladys D., Ingeburg K., Ingrid L., Jewel M., Joy S., Kathryn M., Kip H., Lester W., Lisa M., Lois S., Lori Rae A., Lydia C., Marisa J., Martha D., Martha F., Marvin S., Mary F., Mary W., Nancy S., Patricia H., Robert B., Rosemarie L., Sandra B., Susan T., Susan Y.

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Thank you



Don't delay your care

MYTH: It's dangerous to go out these days to get healthcare.

REALITY: Our hospitals, emergency rooms, urgent care centers, and doctors' offices are really safe places to be if you need healthcare.

As we all navigate our new life realities, we want you to be very sure to know that the worst possible thing any of us can do — especially those of us with significant medical problems — is to fear seeking medical care. Around the country, health systems are reporting that patients are coming to hospitals and other care locations with illnesses that are markedly worse than necessary because they've delayed seeking help.

We at Aspire Health Plan would like you to remember:

- **Your doctor is only a phone call away** — and that call is easy, and the best place to start if you're having any health issues. And with telehealth, that call will likely have no co-pay
- **We're lucky to have a relatively small burden of COVID-19 in Monterey County**, largely because of the great job our community has done in responding with social distancing
- **Our hospitals, including emergency rooms, are extremely clean, safe places.** Remember, they've been in the business of cleaning and disinfecting themselves forever. The hospital environmental services professionals (among our local heroes, for sure) are well-trained and experienced in keeping all of us safe
- **The very few COVID-19 patients in our emergency rooms and hospital rooms are completely and safely isolated** — and, again, our nurses, doctors, and staff have been doing this job successfully throughout their careers
- **Almost universally, we're all much better addressing medical problems earlier than later**

We at Aspire are completely committed to doing everything we can to assist you in being your best self, both in terms of your health and well-being. Please never hesitate to reach out to us — and your doctor — as soon as you experience something with which we can be helpful. We'll provide you with the very best and safest advice on getting the care you want and need in a safe environment. **You're not alone, and our community hospitals and doctors' offices are here for you when you need them.**



COVID-19 and resilience

BY SUSAN SWICK, MD, MPH
OHANA PHYSICIAN IN CHIEF

The current public health emergency is one without precedent in our national experience in the last 100 years. Disruption always creates stress, and the coronavirus pandemic has brought tremendous disruption. The shelter-in-place orders have isolated people from their friends and family, removed meaningful activities and created financial hardships. The fear of infection and constantly evolving public health responses have brought anxiety, confusion, and even conflict. Merely waiting for the crisis to pass can leave us feeling

powerless and discouraged. If instead we can focus on what is in our control: finding reliable information, preserving meaningful structure and routines, being helpful to others, staying connected to those we care about, and engaging with this historic moment in ways that connect with our talents or values, then we cultivate resilience. That is how individuals emerge stronger from a difficult challenge, and even how we develop a stronger fabric for our communities.



FIND RELIABLE INFORMATION, AND KNOW WHEN TO TURN OFF THE NEWS

Accurate information is the antidote to anxiety or panic in a stressful situation. But in a situation in which so much is unknown (about the virus and its potential treatments) and meaningful developments emerge gradually, news can often be repetitive and upsetting without offering new or helpful information. You may want to read one newspaper, or watch the news for just 30 minutes, or check your preferred news website once daily. **Reading upsetting information repeatedly heightens feelings of powerlessness and distress, so get the news and then save your energy for other activities.**



PRESERVE STRUCTURE AND ROUTINES

Routines and predictability are critical to our sense of stability and well-being.

While many disruptions are unavoidable, preserve what routines you can and establish some new ones. If you are stuck at home, set up a consistent routine, with a similar wake-up time, activities, and bedtime. Be sure to preserve time for physical activity, your preferred hobbies, and social connections within this new framework. Social time does not require physical proximity and can happen by screen or phone. Physical activity should be outside if at all possible. And protect time for activities you find most engaging, whether practicing piano, bird watching, reading, or cooking. **Create a rhythm for the important and satisfying activities to protect against the feeling of drift that could come from an extended lockdown.**



TAKE CARE OF THE VULNERABLE AND EASE OTHERS' HARDSHIPS

Without a doubt, this has been a difficult time for many. One powerful strategy to build resilience is to consider ways to help those who are most at-risk or burdened by this challenge. Sewing masks, raising money for food kitchens, or supporting the work of first responders — even just with appreciation — is a powerful way to pull together in a challenging time. Offer to Zoom tutor a grandchild or nephew who is struggling with school at home, bake for a lonely neighbor, or send cards to someone who may be grieving. **When you give to others, you improve your well-being and theirs.**



STAY CONNECTED

Protect time to connect with the people who charge your battery. Happily, we have phones and computers that enable us to connect with one person or a treasured group of friends. Write letters or emails. You can play card games over video chat, watch movies together, or teach someone how to cook your famous soup. You might learn something new, or something new about your friends or your children. Your grandchildren are digital natives and are very comfortable connecting this way. **You may find you get to spend more time with them than ever before. And you offer a model of finding the opportunity in adversity, creating some wonderful memories from a difficult time.**



USE YOUR TALENTS AND VALUES TO ENGAGE WITH THIS CHALLENGE

Use your special talents in this moment. If you are a teacher, maybe you offer to tutor your grandchildren (or friends' grandchildren). If you are a writer, create poetry about the lockdown. If you are a doctor, investigate the emerging literature about the disease. Consider what you find meaningful, what values have animated your life and bring those values to this moment. **You have gifts that can meaningfully contribute to how your family, community, and even our country may face the health, financial, social, and political dislocations of this pandemic. Bring them even to the small tasks, and trust in their value to you and to others.**

Protect your health at home

We all spent a lot of time indoors as a result of the stay-at-home order — something that can impact the “health” of our homes and, most importantly, how we feel at home. Bill Hayward, a Pebble Beach resident, and his family got sick in their home and set out to help make sure that didn't happen to others. He and his team created Hayward Score, a free online assessment tool that identifies issues in your home that can impact your health and then gives you recommendations to fix them.

HERE ARE A FEW THINGS YOU CAN DO TODAY:

- **Open the windows:** Fresh air dilutes contaminants in indoor spaces
- **Limit chemicals:** You may be cleaning more, so choose fragrance-free, low- or non-toxic products and don't mix products
- **Run the bathroom exhaust fan:** It helps clean the air and reduces moisture that can lead to mold
- **Leave shoes outside:** Avoid tracking in contaminants

You can find more information and get a personalized assessment at www.haywardscore.com/montage

Quarantine boredom busters

Thanks to some of the most famous museums and galleries around the world, we can all enjoy a little culture and education from the comfort and safety of our couches. All you need to spend a (virtual) day at the museum is a computer and internet access. Here are some of our favorites.



VAN GOGH MUSEUM, AMSTERDAM

Virtually visit the home of the largest collection of works by Van Gogh, including paintings, drawings, and personal letters.

artsandculture.google.com/partner/van-gogh-museum



THE J. PAUL GETTY MUSEUM, LOS ANGELES

Eight wide-ranging online exhibits including Japanese-American photographs 1920-1940, 18th-century pastel portraits, and more.

artsandculture.google.com/partner/the-j-paul-getty-museum



GET ARTSY — WALKING MAN STUDIOS

Explore New Orleans, and your creative side, through free downloadable coloring pages. www.walkingmanstudios.com/shop/freecoloringpages



ARMCHAIR TRAVEL

Smithsonian Magazine provides a variety of ways to virtually travel the world. From video tours of Frank Lloyd Wright homes to virtual wine tastings. www.smithsonianmag.com/travel/virtual-travel

What we're reading

Stef, Appeals and Grievances Supervisor
Exultant by Stephen Baster

This is the second of a three-book series called "*Destiny's Children*," about the evolution of the human race. The first book in the series is called *Coalescent*, and tells the story of a woman who survived the fall of the Roman Empire as a British citizen and the hardships she endured to preserve and continue her family line. The first book jumps back and forth in time and always alludes to something going on in another part of the galaxy, which is actually occurring in the distant future. The second book tells what is happening in that distant future, 20,000 years from now, with the expansion of the human race.

Anthony, Director of Compliance
The Starless Sea by Erin Morgenstern

A beautifully written, immersive fantasy about a young man who is searching for an underground alternate universe where all the world's stories are held. It's a cross between *The Lion*, *The Witch*, and *the Wardrobe*, *The DaVinci Code*, and *Romeo & Juliet*. Reading this novel has been a great escape from the oft-upsetting daily COVID-19 news.

Joanna, Executive in Residence
Team of Rivals
by Doris Kearns Goodwin

A biography of Abraham Lincoln that focuses on the 16th president's ability to pull together a cabinet of diverse leaders who could, in turn, bring together the nation during its most difficult time — the Civil War. This is particularly interesting to me at this time in our history when we would benefit from leaders who can represent all points of view and focus on what unites us rather than what divides us. It's a long book, but a good read.

Brooke, Office Manager
Girl on the Train by Paula Hawkins

Loved this book. It is a psychological thriller that gives narratives from three different intertwined women about their relationship troubles, and one of them goes missing.



✉ New message

To **Aspire member**

Subject **DO WE HAVE YOUR EMAIL?**

If not, update us by emailing us
at info@aspirehealthplan.org
or call Member Services at
(855) 570-1600

SEND



Upcoming events



Community Connections Virtual classes are open to the public. Share with a friend.

Please register, and we will send you the call-in information via email prior to the event.

RSVP at: www.aspirehealthplan.org/connections2020 or (877) 663-7651

EATING ON A BUDGET



WEDNESDAY, JULY 22, 10–11 a.m.

We'll help you create a grocery plan that saves you money. Learn meal planning tips including buying whole, nutritious foods, without breaking the bank.



SHORT STORY DISCUSSION



THURSDAY, JULY 30, 10–11 a.m.

Join us for a lively discussion of John Steinbeck's *The Chrysanthemums*, set in our own Salinas Valley. Register to receive online access to the short story.

Hospice Giving Foundation

Free 45-minute online workshops.

ADVANCE HEALTHCARE PLANNING



MONDAY, WEDNESDAY, AND FRIDAY, NOON
TUESDAY AND THURSDAY, 5:30 p.m.

Learn how to access, complete, and formalize your wishes using an advance care directive. **Register at: www.hospicegiving.org/workshops**

www.aspirehealthplan.org/members-newsletters
Share your thoughts: feedback@aspirehealthplan.org



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facebook.com/aspirehealthplan

Aspire Health Plan complies with applicable Federal civil rights laws and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex. For accommodations of persons with special needs at meetings call (855) 570-1600 (TTY users call 711) Other providers are available in our network. We are open 8 a.m.–8 p.m PT Monday through Friday from April 1 through September 30 and 8 a.m.–8 p.m. seven days a week from October 1 through March 31 (except certain holidays). H8764_MBR_Newsletter13_620_C



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Grow
with us

We love referrals. The greatest compliment you can give Aspire is a referral to your friends and family. Thank you for your membership in Aspire Health Plan. Help us grow by sharing Aspire with the people you care about.