

# inTENTions



## OUR VISION:

A community of elders and neighbors supporting one another.

## OUR MISSION:

To connect members to resources needed to maintain comfortable, dignified, vibrant lives in their homes and community by providing appropriate services, activities, and programs that will further this purpose.

## OUR STORIES: KATE HARRIS

A long, winding road led Kate Harris to her role as TENT's Volunteer Coordinator. Still, such a perfect fit seems predestined, as it braids together her knowledge of the community, experience leading Volunteers, and insight that she could have been an excellent concierge!

Kate's story began far from our little village. She was born in Germany, then her family moved to Indonesia and eventually to Paris, following her father's appointments to leadership roles in U.S. assisted war recovery organizations. During these earliest experiences, Kate developed a facility for languages and an interest in other cultures.

After the family returned home to Connecticut in time for Kate to start high school, her mother's piano and father's eclectic LP collection formed a soundtrack for her life. Kate taught herself to play piano, and her engagement with music continues today as she serves as a Section Leader and Board Member with the Taos Community Chorus and as Director of Mountain Home Health's Threshold Choir.

After some years of college and a few different majors, Kate decided to take a break and head southwest to an unfamiliar part of the country. She drove with her two dogs to Madrid, New

Mexico, where she met and married her life partner. Kate and Larry settled a few miles away in the even smaller community of Los Cerillos, where their daughter, Aravis, was born, and Kate became a practitioner of Jin Shin Jyutsu (JSJ), a gentle form of acupressure.



When the lights of Santa Fe, 25 miles north of their rural home, became visible at night, the couple and their five-year-old daughter moved north to a remote off-grid cabin in Guadalupita, Mora County. For 13

years, they raised vegetables and created beaded leather goods to sell at the Santa Fe Farmers' Market, a two-hour drive each way. They home-schooled Aravis and lived a hardy, healthy pioneering life.

In 2001, Kate wanted to expand her JSJ practice, so the couple moved to the comparatively large town of Taos, where they found a home in the hills and trees near historic La Loma Plaza. Their daughter remained in Guadalupita for a time, but now

lives in California with Kate's two teen-aged grandsons.

Kate volunteered with the Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) program here for four years, representing the interests of abused and neglected children. It was an intense introduction into an often-invisible aspect of our community. Meanwhile, she and Larry played pool for recreation, eventually becoming serious league competitors. In 2010, Larry passed away at the age of 57.

Kate continued her decades-long JSJ practice and added the Taos Community Foundation's

Grants Committee to her volunteer work with the choirs. Among her friends in the Taos Community Chorus were two TENT Board Members, and when they needed to fill the Volunteer Coordinator position, they asked Kate if she would consider that essential, demanding job. She accepted, and the role fits her like a glove. As she has said, "My experiences with my mother's Alzheimer's, my husband's illness, hospice work ... leads me to TENT." And we are so fortunate that the winding road brought her here.

– Mya Coursey

## FROM THE BOARD



The Board of Directors is wishing our Volunteers and Members a pleasant spring. The turn of the weather this time of year is most welcome. This change of season also coincides with TENT's desire to begin

hosting more events for our Members and Volunteers. This April, TENT will be hosting a Volunteer Appreciation event that will also serve as a way to allow community members

to learn more about TENT and encourage their involvement with TENT as Volunteers. We are so grateful for all those who show up for our Members and keep the lifeblood of TENT moving forward. We are looking at ways to partner with the wider community and effect positive change. In that line of thought, we anticipate our membership numbers to grow. We are excited for the future and what that means for TENT and Taos. Thank you to all who support us in this endeavor.

-- Jacob Crisp, Vice President

## LIFE MILESTONES: WILLIAM JACKSON, 1931-2022

William Jackson, age 90, resident of Taos and a TENT Member, passed away peacefully on February 19, 2022, at the Taos Living Center, earning his wings to fly higher. We wish this fine gentleman well on his flight to the great beyond. He is preceded in death by his wife, Diana Jackson, and his parents. He is survived by numerous family members, close and cherished friends, and Mamasam, his cat.

William was a lover and caretaker of birds as well as cats and dogs through many years of volunteering at Stray Hearts animal shelter. The

wellbeing of animals and birds was always foremost on his mind. He proudly served his country in the U.S. Navy and was an outspoken man for peace and democracy. He was a teacher of history and the Constitution, a scholar of current events, and an avid reader. He often voiced his concerns for the survival of our democracy, doing his part to foster truth and justice in our country, which he loved. He will be laid to rest next to his beloved wife, Diana.

Editor's note: *inTENTions* featured William Jackson in the February 2022 issue.

## Volunteer Coordinator Update

Greetings to everyone, I hope this finds everyone in good health and good cheer! Spring has sprung (although it is now currently snowing, haha) ...

Please welcome new Volunteers: Carmen, Ann Ellen, and Mary Jo, already up and fulfilling service requests...thank you!

Two of our new board members have kindly accepted leadership positions: Helen Rynaski is our new Publicity leader, and Jennifer Ammann will be leading the Activities group. We still need two more leaders: one for Outreach, connecting with other groups in our community; and one for organizing Events. If anyone is interested in serving on these committees, please let me know. These might

be good positions for Volunteers who are not providing service requests at this time.

By the time this newsletter is published we will hopefully have a better idea about the feasibility of in-person events and meetings, although the new “Deltacron” variant seems to be gaining a foothold in the US. As always, we will remain cautious and follow the best available practices for health and safety, though I am sure everyone is ready to meet in person again—I know I am!

A huge thank you to all the Volunteers who consistently provide services to our Members; you are the engine that makes TENT run, and we are blessed with your determination and kindness. We will be having a Volunteer Appreciation event soon; stay tuned and check your emails! – *Kate Harris*

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## User Forum “Village Talk”

Our software provider, [Helpful Village](#), has recently enhanced its user forum, “Village Talk.” This allows Members and Volunteers to post, get notice of, and respond to general notices for our village.

The forum is located [here](#). If you are authorized to log in to [our website](#) (a requirement for participating in Village Talk) you can also find the forum on the Member or Volunteer menus.

The forum is organized by “Interest” or “Interest Groups.” We have set up some

Interest Groups, but you can ask us to create more.

If you are part of an Interest Group, you will get new “posts” to that group via email once a day. You can respond to an email post by replying to the email, and that reply will become a new post on the forum.

Posts to Village Talk should be information that is of interest to Volunteers or Members of TENT. A [video of this feature is available here](#).

We hope that our Members and Volunteers will find this new feature useful. – *Jim Ludden*

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## REMINDERS OF OUR MEDICAL CHORES

We recently learned of a commercial service to remind us of medical-related events such as medication doses and times, prescription refills, and doctor appointments. But the cost of this service is more than the cost of TENT membership, and we can help our Members with these.

For example, we can set up reminders on a smartphone with the timing and dosage of our medications. If you don’t have a smartphone, we can ask a Volunteer to phone you and remind you. Members can call our phone number, (575) 224-6335, and request a phone call service. My experience tells me that most of the medical establishments in Taos call to

remind us of our medical appointments. Since TENT provides transportation to medical appointments, our Volunteer driver will call to confirm and remind you of your appointments. Most pharmacies, including mail-order pharmacies, will remind us of refills. Pharmacies

make money from filling prescriptions, so it is in their interest to ensure that you get your refills. In summary, if you have trouble remembering medical events, especially when to take your medications, give us a call and we can set up reminders for you. — Jim Ludden

## What is the Allure of Taos?



When I look back at the places I've lived over the past 70 years—California, Oregon, and New Mexico—each place has had its own underlying tone, revealing itself in the form of a lesson, a way of being in the world, that I needed very much to learn.

As Sharon Blackie writes in “Mythic Imagination” (a Facebook group), “There are various instruments that play their part in fashioning the song of each place: geology, flora, fauna, weather, the skyscape, topography, folkloric and mythical beings and motifs, stories told by its human inhabitants ... some bright and upbeat; others, discordant, heavy, but they lodge right in the heart of you anyway.”

I’m still learning the song of this place called Taos. Perhaps it’s the fabled “Taos Hum,” but I think it’s much deeper. The land itself carries a song that drew me to it because it had something to teach me about myself.

In *The Enchanted Life* (book), Blackie writes, “We think that we imagine the land, but perhaps the land imagines us, and in its imaginings, it shapes us. The exterior landscape interacts with our interior landscape, and in the resulting entanglements, we become something

more than we otherwise could ever hope to be.”

Something about Taos drew me and my husband to this land, not to impose my interior landscape on it, but rather to draw me to itself, interacting with my interior landscape, and in that process, changing us both.

My husband told me recently of a conversation he had with a Taos Pueblo friend who said he was hiking in the Weimer foothills and was approached by a sheriff who asked what he was doing there. It occurred to the Native man that someone had been alarmed at his presence and reported him. He commented, “They moved here and they don’t know where they are.”

Where they are, where I am, is on ancient Pueblo Indian land. I am a visitor. Not all immigrants to this land understand where they are. I try to listen to the tones of this place, to be impacted by its mystery, by the mountain, by the land, by the gorge that splits the valley in half.

Long time Hispanic residents speak of “querencia,” the love of the land that nurtures and changes us so that we become more than



we were when we arrived. Many outsiders make no attempt to adapt to this place, but rather try to make it like something they are familiar with. While I also bring my expectations and privileges to my life in Taos, I also wish to allow the land to change me by “lodging in my heart.”

Others who made Taos their home decades ago also feel the pull of the land which has shaped them according to the hum of the mountain, the pulse of the Rio Grande, the

clarity of the sky, and the rich cultural heritage of the indigenous past and the Hispanic presence superimposed over its ancient being. May the song of this place work its magic to impact every newcomer like myself to learn to love this land and allow its nature to change us. I am humbled and honored to begin to know where I am living in this magnificent valley.

– Julian Spalding

## SMALL HOME IMPROVEMENTS THAT CAN KEEP YOU SAFER

A few simple, relatively inexpensive “fixes” can reduce your risk of accidental injury at home and help you deal with emergency situations. TENT Volunteers may be able to help with some of them. (The following is partly based on articles from *Consumer Reports* and *The Washington Post*.)

1. Install SMOKE DETECTORS inside your bedroom and at least one on each floor if your house is more than one level. A TENT Volunteer can install a battery powered unit or replace the dead batteries that cause smoke detectors to make that annoying “chirp,” but you’ll need to hire an electrician to install a hardwired smoke detector.
2. Install CARBON MONOXIDE (CO) DETECTORS on each level of your house, especially if you have heating equipment that burns oil, propane, natural gas, or wood. If you have an attached garage, install your first-floor detector nearby but not inside it. Carbon monoxide gas is colorless, odorless, and deadly. CO detectors can be battery powered or hardwired A/C. A TENT Volunteer can install a battery powered unit or replace batteries, but you need to hire an electrician to install a hardwired CO detector.
3. Keep portable, multipurpose FIRE EXTINGUISHERS in the kitchen, garage, and on each level of a multi-story house. You can purchase fire extinguishers at a hardware store or online.
4. Install sturdy HANDRAILS wherever you have steps, e.g., stairways, entryways, basements, even step-downs into another room. It is best to have railings on both sides. Installation of handrails should be done by a qualified handyman or carpenter. TENT can provide contact information for providers who have been suggested by Members and Volunteers.
5. Install sturdy GRAB BARS in the bathroom to help you safely enter and exit the shower/tub and toilet. TENT Volunteers can help with these installations in most cases.
6. Let there be LIGHT to prevent falls! Use brighter bulbs and consider installing motion sensor lighting inside where you may need to walk at night. Motion sensor lighting is useful outside the house, too, for coming home after dark and for nighttime security. A TENT Volunteer can replace lightbulbs and most hardwired fixtures, but you will need an electrician to install a hardwired fixture initially.
7. Remove FLOOR HAZARDS! Throw rugs are major trip-and-fall culprits; please consider removing them! On stairways, inside and out, it is advisable to attach

nonslip treads to each step to provide traction and help you see the edge. A TENT Volunteer can assist with these measures.

Use stick-on nonslip treads or a mat with rubber suction inside your tub or shower stall. These can be purchased online or from a general merchandise or larger hardware store.

8. Wear a MEDICAL ALERT DEVICE. What if you fall, injure yourself, and can't reach a

## Shingles

During a visit to a local pharmacist in Santa Fe, I overheard an announcement about the shingles vaccine (Shingrex). I paid little attention, unaware of what "shingles" meant. Whatever it was, I was feeling confident that it had little to do with me.

At the time I was experiencing hip pain that I mostly ignored. I was still young -- at 85, I was fit and healthy, immune to aches and pains. The discomfort appeared to worsen daily, yet I continued to keep going. My husband, Vito, was having lower back issues at the time, and I had little to complain about but my hip. I visited an orthopedist who agreed that my hip wasn't a major problem, that it could be treated by an epidural (an injection in my spine.)

Yet, I put it off, not quite sure because X-rays and an MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) did not disclose any hip injury. Then the pain caused me to wobble; I felt unstable crossing the main street. Vito began to hold my hand during the rush of traffic. I refused to give up. I continued my uphill walks until my right leg began to ache and burn. Vito would wait for me to catch up. At this point I began to feel irritable and jealous of him. Never competitive, I began to pick fights.

"Enough already, so your leg hurts, walk more slowly." I tried but it was no use. I marched home, got into bed, and began to sob, confused

phone? Especially if you are often alone, it's a good idea to wear a smartwatch or medical alert device to quickly summon emergency assistance. These can be found at a local medical supply source, where they can answer your questions, or you can research and purchase them online.

-- Wally Cox, with editorial support by Mya Coursey

and sad. "Call your doctor daughter," he suggested. I hesitated because we hadn't talked in a long time. Besides, her specialty is treating children. I finally called and told her my symptoms.

"You don't have a hip problem," she offered casually.

"What do I have, then?"

"You have shingles." So cool and self-assured! I am often intimidated by my daughter's cool self-confidence.

"What's shingles?" I asked.

"It's from the herpes zoster virus; if you had chicken pox as a child it's likely that you had the dormant virus all your life." I listened, somewhat stunned, while she explained that shingles is a one-sided pain, either right or left. "It must be my right side," I replied. I was terrified by what was happening to me and causing so much pain. It was beginning to dominate my life to the extent that I couldn't think of anything else.

"Apply cold compresses to the area of pain; that should help," she suggested. We bought compresses and stored them in our freezer, and it did help when I wrapped one in a towel and applied it to my right leg and beneath my buttocks, wherever the pain was. Eventually I was in so much pain that Vito delivered food to my bedside and lots of compassion. The pain lasted for days, and Vito told me much later

that I didn't make any sense during that period. I was incapable of delivering a cogent sentence. I fell onto the floor at some point as well. I don't remember any of this; a kind of memory blackout was taking over that still affects me during this writing.

My primary doctor prescribed antiviral medicine, as well as hydrocodone and gabapentin for pain relief. "Don't scratch, don't touch the moist areas," he proclaimed. In addition to the pain, I began to feel itchy where a rash had appeared on my lower back. Vito told me later that it was cranberry-red and spread blisters down my back. I still could not get out of bed. The worst of it lasted about three months, during which I existed in a pain-drenched fog.

My son arrived about this time and seemed to know all about it. What I learned from him is that shingles is an acute viral inflammation of the spinal and cranial nerves that causes neuralgic pain. He told me that it occurs in one out of three people. It's also called postherpetic neuralgia. Little by little the pain subsided, but my lack of memory troubled me.

An over-the-counter pain reliever that a dermatologist recommended was capsaicin, a tube with a blue surface, that—when rolled over the painful areas—could diminish the discomfort. At first it burned, but over time the pain began to recede. It had been three months since I was diagnosed and I can still feel the sensation, mildly painful in my right inner thigh. Although shingles is not terminal, it can be excruciating; it's nerve pain that can't be cut out. Every patient has a different experience and for a differing amount of time. I heard that a friend had shingles, so I made the call. He had it on the side of his face, but it only lasted a month.

My suggestion: please get the shingles vaccine. If you do get infected, please see your primary care doctor or a dermatologist when you feel discomfort on one side of your body. The dermatologist actually traced the nerve pattern on my back and inner right thigh. It generally occurs in people over 60 years old, of whom one out of three end up getting infected. I feel extraordinarily lucky that I no longer live with this pain. I am wishing the same for you and the best of health.

— Shalom Victor

## Is Alexa for you? How a Smart Speaker Can Support You

Alexa is a smart speaker device which connects to an Amazon account and your home Wi-Fi. You can get them with or without a screen. The screen would allow you to watch videos on it and interact with the content much like a phone. They cost between \$40 and \$150. They work best with a smartphone, but if you have a family member with a smartphone, this will work too. Alexa devices can be used to listen to a variety of content, use a variety of tools, and look up information. Below is a list of some of the many things Alexa can do.

- Play music, audiobooks, and podcasts
- Play the news from your favorite source
- Tell you the weather, date, day, and time
- Set reminders to take medication
- Set alarms
- Keep track of calendar events/appointments/birthdays
- Make lists
- Help family/friends at a distance be able to check in on you
- Make phone calls to local businesses or programmed contacts
- Set up a 'buddy' to be called if you need help - if set up properly
- Call 911 - if set up properly
- For the visually impaired, Alexa with a screen can identify canned and boxed foods when held up to the camera
- "She" even tells jokes when asked!

To use Alexa devices, you have to say her name to activate and then give commands or ask questions such as “Alexa, play John Coltrane” or “Alexa, what is the weather in London, England?” or “Alexa, when is my next physical therapy appointment?” or “Alexa, add ‘vanilla ice cream’ to my grocery list” or “Alexa, tell me a joke.”

Setting up an Alexa can feel overwhelming; however, if you have a smartphone, know your WI-FI password, and have an Amazon account, it is fairly straightforward. There are several videos and other guides online that walk you through the process, but here is [Amazon’s official guide](#). -- Colleen Shaughnessy

## RESOURCES

You may have heard from Medicare.gov that you can get four free COVID-19 tests shipped to you at no cost. Visit [COVIDtests.gov](#) to order them and learn more about testing. However, if you receive calls, text messages, or emails offering COVID-19 tests in exchange for your Medicare number—do not give it out. If you suspect a scam, call 1-800-Medicare to report it.

AARP offers “Six Pillars of Brain Health” to help us keep our brains working well. They are (1) food and drink, (2) a good night’s sleep, (3) exercise, (4) staying social, (5) managing stress,

and (6) developing new skills and interests to resist mental decline. See details [here](#)

From [socialsecurityworks.org](#)

“According to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), people lost more than \$442 million in 2021 due to government imposter scams. Since 2019, FTC has received more reports for the Social Security Administration (SSA) than any other government agency.”

If you get a call from someone claiming to be a government employee, hang up. Do not give any personal information and report the scam at [oig.ssa.gov](#) -- Linda Thompson

Please click [here](#) to make a charitable contribution so that TENT can help our elder community.

**TENT needs your help to help others.**

**TENT**

**(Taos Elders and Neighbors Together)**

## Memberships Receiving Services

### Individual

\$350/year or \$32/mo.

### Household

\$450/year or \$40/mo.

### 3 Month Trial

\$150 or \$50/mo.

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