

inTENTions

TENT

TAOS ELDERS & NEIGHBORS TOGETHER
DECEMBER 2023 Issue #37

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.

A MOTHER'S JOURNEY FROM ACADEMIA TO ADVOCACY

Carmen Acosta Johnson's life has been full of joy, pain, and adventure. In her ninth decade, she needs a little help to run errands, but her thoughts and words are as clear and courageous as ever.

Carmen and her brothers grew up in Grand Forks, North Dakota. Their mother was a nurse and their father a professor of romance languages at the university, where the siblings enjoyed free run of the campus. At 16 she joined an American Friends Service Committee project in central Mexico and then attended the University of Puebla for a semester before returning home. At 19 she married Dale Johnson and moved to Kansas as Dale started graduate school.

While Dale earned a PhD in clinical psychology, Carmen finished undergraduate work in sociology, and their first child was born. Carmen says, "Those years in graduate school at the University of Kansas opened a whole world of knowledge and friends to me." Upon graduation the couple moved to Houston, where Dale joined a ground-breaking psychiatric team at the giant Veterans Administration Hospital. Later he held the chairmanship of the psychology department at the University of Houston.

The Johnsons raised three children while Carmen earned a master's degree in anthropology and a PhD in demography and epidemiology at the



University of Texas School of Public Health. Dale and his students created a prize-winning educational program for infants and their families. Carmen describes that period as a positive, joyful time. Dale's Fullbright scholarships took the family to Norway and Turkey. Seven summers were devoted to a research project on serious mental illness in nonwestern cultures, taking the family to Indian country, visiting Makah, Navajo, Zuni, Lakota, Sioux, and other indigenous communities.

The three children grew up to be bright and talented. The oldest, Jay, took every honor in high school and went on to Harvard, where he experienced his first serious episode of schizophrenia. Facilities for the mentally ill

were “awful,” so Carmen committed to caring for Jay at home with their two other teenagers.

Both parents became engaged with the politics of caring for a seriously mentally ill family member. Medications were “worse than the illness” and facilities were ineffective at best. The Johnsons joined with others to form the Texas Alliance for the Mentally Ill and embarked on the huge effort to improve services, first in Houston, then in Texas, then in the nation. Eventually, Dale became president of the World Schizophrenia Association. In one of many victories, Dale and U.S. House Representative Bill Richardson passed legislation to require the treatment of mental illness in all insurance policies. Finally, with the help of European families, the Johnsons were able to obtain a medication that calmed Jay’s wild symptoms.

Meanwhile, their daughter Heidi completed a degree in ancient Greek, a master’s in computer science, and a PhD in linguistics at the University of Texas. She became a pioneer in the emerging field of digital archiving for languages. Heidi also authored popular mystery books. The youngest Johnson, Paul, earned a master’s in landscape architecture and designed gardens and highway borders in Texas and New York.

In addition to her advocacy work, Carmen taught demography in public health. When Jay’s schizophrenia eased with the new medication,

she stopped teaching to focus on his recovery. The Johnsons became Taos residents, hikers, and active members of the Taos Archaeological Society. One day she spotted a weather-beaten For Sale sign beside a 240-year-old adobe compound here, and wondered if Jay might feel more at peace in the gated quiet of “a little ranchito.” The Johnsons bought the property from the family whose ancestors had built the buildings, and the beautifully maintained compound is still her home.

During long visits with his parents in Taos, Jay was finally able to experience a more normal life. After his stay in 2005, they helped him board a flight back to his supportive residence in San Diego. He called that evening to say he had arrived safely but had a stomach ache. The next morning, he died of a burst appendix at age 52. In his memory, the family sponsored a bench at the end of Vista Verde Trail overlooking the Taos Box in the Rio Grande Gorge.

Dale passed away in 2016 at age 87, and Heidi died last year in her beloved Austin. Paul now designs gardens in France but returns to Taos periodically to check on his mom.

NOTE: Carmen co-authored the above article with Mya Coursey. She says her experiences as a TENT Member, though relatively recent, have had the unexpected benefit of giving more definition to her weekly schedule and providing social interaction in addition to transportation.

FROM THE BOARD



Here we are at the beginning of winter and the holidays. How did that happen so fast? I hope this finds you well.

Things are going well at TENT, as you’ll see elsewhere in this issue of *inTENTions*. We are now having large events monthly. Darrel

Baumgardner presented a talk about cloud-seeding on Saturday, November 18, see page 7.

In December, we will have a holiday White Elephant Exchange. Every other month, a board member takes charge of organizing a new event on a different topic. Stay tuned!

We will also be organizing a Holiday Goody Bag for our Members. Volunteers bake cookies

and we deliver them to Members. If you want to participate, contact Kate for dates, times, and places (jsjtaoskate@gmail.com).

Many smaller classes and gatherings happen at our office on Gusdorf Road. Did you know we're collecting quite a library of books there? Contact Kate at 575-741-6230 to set a time to come by. Speaking of our beloved Kate Harris, she has been given a new Title: "Director of Operations," which better represents the HUGE role she plays in everything at TENT. Without Kate, there would be no TENT.

KATE'S CORNER

'Tis the season of Thanksgiving, and here is my list of things I am grateful for: all of our VOLUNTEERS, without whom TENT would not exist; our MEMBERS and SUPPORTERS/DONORS; the Taos Ski Valley and the Shared Table for providing and delivering Thanksgiving meals to those of our Members who wanted them; our intern, Cyndee Gustafson, who has helped so much this semester; our Board of Directors with their steady support and commitment; the food on my table; the roof over my head; and my cat Orion (whose gentle pats on my face wake me up every day).

Please welcome our newest Volunteers, Al and Calvin! And thanks to all who came to the very interesting event about cloud seeding presented by Board Member Darrel Baumgardner on November 18; perhaps we might look forward to another chapter in the future. . . . Also, thanks to Volunteer Cheryl Kaladas for offering a Christmas ornament painting class (all materials provided) on December 12, and the teachers of other activities: Yolanda Rommel, Paul Duboff, Jan Haller. . .

And don't forget to check out our events list; the Activities Committee has worked hard on

We continue to sign up new Members and Volunteers, and we're always looking for Volunteers. If you have friends who could spend a few hours helping our Members, please have them call Kate to sign up.

Big thanks to the Taos Ski Valley and the Shared Table for providing Thanksgiving dinners to many of our Members (and lots more people in the community, I'm sure). A beautiful gift. Happy holidays and all best wishes. -- Bette Myerson Co-President

this! Please sign up for the White Elephant Exchange party on December 15; it should be a great deal of fun.

We are asking all our Volunteers if they would consider volunteering for the Non-Metro Area Agency on Aging (NMAAA) for their medical transport service., free for riders. The requirements are a background check and a training in their system. Drivers will be compensated at a rate of \$.65/mile and will receive meal reimbursement. If interested, please contact seniorhelp@ncnmedd.com, (866) 699-4927 or (505) 395-2668. Also, Secure Transportation will provide free medical transport rides if your insurance covers it: please call (800) 856-9994 to find out.

One more thing: Are you an immigrant? A first-generation immigrant? *inTENTions* is considering devoting an issue to this topic, and if you are interested in telling your story or having it told by one of our wonderful writers, please contact editor Linda Thompson at lindat@taosnet.com. Thank you!

I hope that everyone reading this has peace in their hearts, full bellies, and laughter galore!

-- Kate Harris

ACTIVITIES UPDATE

Members and Volunteers are invited to a holiday party and White Elephant* exchange game on Friday, December 15, from 3:00-4:30 PM at the Taos Public Library. Guests are asked to bring a gift-wrapped, unmarked white elephant, or something unique, funny, or nice that they want to part with (nothing offensive or too expensive). See the events list on the website, www.taoselders.org to register and for details of the game. Also, guests are invited to bring a sweet treat to share. Beverages will be provided.

On Tuesday, December 12, from 1:00-2:30 PM, Volunteer Cheryl Kaladas will offer a Christmas ornament painting class at the TENT office. She will provide all the materials. Sign up on the website for this timely and fun opportunity to make unique ornaments. Class size is limited to eight. Snacks and beverages will be provided.

The weaving class with Yolanda Rommel has extended its hours on each Thursday from

12:00-3:00 PM. Participants can now come and go during these hours, as their schedules permit.

The final sketching class by Paul Duboff will be held on December 13. A very big THANK YOU goes out to Paul for offering these two eight-session classes! They were fun and educational for all who attended.

The book club and Mexican train dominoes have been discontinued. We are, however, always looking for new activities. One new idea is to inquire if there is interest among Members and Volunteers to pair up to attend movies at the TCA or Storyteller Cinema. This could be for individuals or small groups. Let us know what you think.

* For more information about the "White Elephant" tradition, see <https://www.whiteelephantrules.com/> You can contact me at 575-776-8087 jmaloney@taosnet.com -- *Honore Maloney*

MEDICAL ORDER FOR SCOPE OF TREATMENT (MOST)

We are all getting older, and as we age, we need more medical treatment. We may also need help with ordering (or refusing) medical treatment. If, for example, we fall and are not conscious, who will determine the level of care we receive? There are several ways to handle this. It is important to discuss your desires with your family. It does no good to have your children arguing about how to treat you when you are in the hospital. Get it done now.

The New Mexico Medical Order for Scope of Treatment (MOST) form is often printed on brightly colored green cardstock paper. It is available at <https://www.nmmost.org/nmmost-form-download>. Your doctor may have it, and must sign. Once complete, place it on the

refrigerator, the back of the front door, or another prominent location so it can be easily found during an emergency.

Part of advance healthcare planning and prepared by a medical professional, the form encourages frank discussions between patients and their healthcare providers, and it identifies the specific kind of emergency care the patient wants (or doesn't want), based upon the patient's medical condition. This form will be scanned into your medical record at the hospital. It also needs to be visible for emergency medical (ambulance) staff. They will look for it on or in the refrigerator.

Medical Power of Attorney

This legal document, governed by New Mexico state statute, gives a person or entity the authority to make healthcare decisions on your

behalf, such as accepting or refusing a specific medical treatment, if you cannot do so. It must be signed by you and notarized. Types of Health Care Directives. This site has descriptions of the various documents:

<https://www.nolo.com/legal-encyclopedia/living-will-power-attorney-advance-directive-30023.html>. They have different names in different states, also on this site.

– Jim Ludden

OUR TENT IS FULL OF ARTISTS ...



GERALDINE LIERMANN

was born in Chicago, Illinois. Her interest in art, which began at an early age, was accelerated when she attended the

Chicago Art Institute summer classes while in high school. She attended the University of Illinois and San Diego State University, where she received her Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in Graphic Design. Out of college she did some freelance art, but for 35 years she was employed by various companies doing graphic design, using her creativity to put into designs the ideas that were presented to her for purchasing and marketing departments.

After visiting Taos many times during the 1980s, she decided to move here permanently in 2010. Since then, she has specialized in painting with acrylics on canvas with emphasis on miniatures (12" by 12"), although she also paints larger pieces.



In addition, she paints ornamental gourds. Her work can be found at Wilder Nightingale Fine Art and Taos Blue.

Geraldine's art has been influenced by many artists, but she still considers Picasso to be the most inspiring. When asked what she would say to those who would like to do art but don't know how to start, she says "Do it all the time, start with pencil on newspaper, keep a notebook with your sketches and thoughts, and observe, observe, observe."

SHIRLEY A. BELZ-BIVENS

was born in Oak Park, Illinois. Prior to moving to Taos in 2001, with her husband Bill, Shirley worked many jobs, but the one that eventually led her to a career in art was as a house painter. This job left her with sore fingers at the end of the day,



so a friend introduced her to needlepoint to loosen her fingers. Throughout her childhood, she had displayed her creative talents through drawings, but her creativity

blossomed as she began investing it in her needlepoint as she went on to display it and win prizes at exhibitions. When she came to Taos, she began selling her needlework at the Open Space Gallery (which closed in 2016). There she met Judy Van Heyst, a well-known local artist who encouraged her to try working with oil pastels. It was magic because Shirley didn't like working with brushes—but working with the spatula, the pallet knife, was, in her own words, “like I had died and gone to heaven.” In addition to working with oil pastels, she has worked with clay, not for pottery but by using the pallet knife to sculpt plaques as if they were paintings, as if she was working with oil. When asked about her style, she says that she considers herself a “sculptor in oil” and a realist who doesn't like following the rules. She gets her inspiration from the natural environment, which Taos and its surroundings provide year-round.

Shirley's art was inspired by her friendship with Judy Van Heyst; however, she also attributes her love of art to the several years that she lived in Japan and fell in love with the people and the complex variety of art that she observed there.

Her advice to those who aspire to do art, but don't know how to start, is to “just do it and you will discover your own talent.”

MARGARET TANGE

TENT Member Margaret Tange was highlighted in the [December 2022 Issue of inTENTions](#) article. We are including her in this article as one of TENT's Members who is an artist. Because the previous writeup on Margaret was quite detailed, we only hit the highlights here that are related to her as an artist.



As a child living on a ranch in northern Montana, with her own horse and wide-open plains, she was inspired to draw nature in action, as you can see from this photo of wild horses and sunset. Her mother was an accomplished amateur painter, and Margaret began to draw at an early age. Her visits to France and



infatuation with Gauguin led her to a career as literally a “colorful” artist. While pursuing a degree in art at the University of Montana and then the University of Southern California, she began developing her skills as a sculptor. She went on to earn her master's degree from the University of the Americas in Mexico City, where she lived for eight years studying and soaking up the culture. Her advice to fledgling artists? “Just do it!!” artist articles by Darryl Baumgardner

WHAT IS CLOUD SEEDING?



TENT Volunteer and atmospheric scientist, Darrel Baumgardner, gave a talk to the

public on November 18 that described how clouds naturally form and grow and how the introduction of artificial “seeds” can produce precipitation. The talk was well attended with many good questions from the participants. The motivation of the talk was to educate the public about the advantages and disadvantages of cloud seeding, to introduce them to the science behind weather modification, and to recommend questions that should be asked of commercial cloud seeders before they are allowed to conduct seeding operations over New Mexico.

LAUGHTER YOGA

On October 20, David and Meredith Vaughn led TENT in Laughter Yoga at Kit Carson Park. They have taught Laughter Yoga in Denver, CO, since 2006 and led sessions in Taos for several years.



RESOURCES

In the October/November issue of *AARP The Magazine*, Tom Vanderbilt describes how elders can drive more safely at night. The best headlights use LED bulbs, and you can have older headlights replaced. And have your auto shop check the alignment of your headlights.

Over 90% of people in the U.S. have health insurance, but medical debt remains a problem. And the cost of health insurance keeps rising. The Medicare Rights Center advocates for older adults and people with disabilities. <https://www.medicarerights.org/>

The November issue of the “AARP Bulletin” focuses on “Super Agers,” people in their 80s and 90s who retain their memories and brain power. How do they do it? (1) They control blood sugar and blood pressure through medication and a high-nutrient diet; (2) They are socially active; (3) They avoid stress and depression; (4) They manage to sleep well without drugs; (5) They protect their vision (including undergoing cataract surgery) and their hearing; (6) They walk, garden, climb stairs—ways to stay active; and (7) They read, play games, travel, do crossword puzzles, attend lectures and concerts. Let’s keep on keepin’ on! -- 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

\$300/year or \$20-25/mo.

Household

\$400/year or \$30-35/mo.

3 Month Trial

\$150 or \$50/mo.

Directors

Bette Myerson Co-President/Fundraising Bette@taosnet.com
 Jim Ludden support@TaosElders.org
 Reggie Mosser Treasurer@TaosElders.org
 Honore Maloney jmaloney@taosnet.com
 Robyn Chavez robyndchavez@hotmail.com

Jim Schultz Co-President James.schultz43@aol.com
 Caryle Zorumski Dr.Zorumski@yahoo.com
 Colleen Shaughnessy colleenas@gmail.com
 Helen Rynaski Publicity Publicity@TaosElders.org
 Darrel Baumgardner darrel.baumgardner@gmail.com

Leads

Kate Harris, Dir. of Operations Volunteers@TaosElders.org
 Gary Shapiro, Membership Members@TaosElders.org
 Kathy Forrest, Social Media thegirldifferent@aol.com

Ron Furedi, Marketing ronfuredi@gmail.com
 Linda Thompson Editor@TaosElders.org
 Terry Thompson Publisher@TaosElders.org

Call Managers

Lana Green, Nancy Herrick, Marianne Furedi, Charlene Shapiro.

PO Box 3561 Taos, NM 87571 (575) 224-6335

www.TaosElders.org

TaosElders@gmail.com