



Tuolumne Talk

Harmony Wheeler

With only one living grandparent (and a great one at that) to learn from and be with through my formative years, I've come to have a great respect for my elders, their independence and their knowledge. During a Christmas service at my old church in Modesto I sat alone next to an older woman, probably in her 70s or 80s. Somehow, I connected with her; we ended up laughing and waving our hands to the music together. I felt good – like I'd helped bring a little bit of joy into her life for one day.

Meanwhile, back at home in 2012, my dad makes fun of his "senior" status as a member of AARP and mom worries that she talks too loud and too much, on top of often forgetting small details. And, like any other young woman, I'm left wondering how much I will one day (or

Railtown ride gives seniors more meals

already) resemble my parents – strange quirks and all.

OK, so my parents aren't that old. I don't think of them as seniors, though I have no problem teasing them for it. But I've met many independent seniors in the Mother Lode who are still moving through life with plenty of spirit and energy. My neighbor is an active volunteer in addition to helping with family things every so often, though she still lives and gets around on her own.

But there are many who could not be as independent as my loving neighbor if it were not for community nonprofit programs like Sierra Senior Providers' Meals on Wheels program. Meals on Wheels helps deliver nutritious meals directly to the homes of seniors ages 60 or older throughout Tuolumne County. The program operates through donations and events like the upcoming "Viva Las Vegas"-themed sixth annual Meals on Wheels fundraiser.

Mike Ruggles, CEO for Sierra Senior Providers, said organizers

Viva Las Vegas

WHEN: 5 to 9 p.m.
Saturday

WHERE: Railtown
1897 State Historic
Park, 5th Avenue and
Reservoir Road,
Jamestown

TICKETS: \$75 at sierraseniorproviders.org
or 533-2622

expect 400 supporters or more at this year's event, which will include a gourmet dinner catered by Seven Sisters Restaurant. The event also includes a Las Vegas-style show featuring The Ely Brothers, a "Best of Vegas" costume contest and a ride on the "Vegas Express" at Railtown 1897 State Historic Park in Jamestown.

"Unfortunately, the Meals on Wheels program does not pay for itself and this is why the Railtown fundraising event is so important," Ruggles said. "Without our sponsors and community supporters, we would not be able to meet the demand for the Meals on Wheels program in Tuolumne County. Last year, Meals on Wheels in Tuolumne County delivered 54,500 meals to 420 clients."

Ruggles said Sierra Senior Providers exists to make sure no senior in Tuolumne County goes hungry.

"Our event sponsors and our community supporters who attend this event believe in our mission of keeping our lower-income, homebound, frail and often isolated elderly well-nourished, independent and living in their homes," Ruggles said. "For the past six years, Ron Patel, general manager of Black Oak Casino, and Julie von Savoye, controller for Cutler-Seegerstrom Insurance, have been the event co-chairs. Each year, under their leadership and encouragement, this event has gotten better and bigger. And

now it is our major Meals on Wheels fundraising event of the year and a 'must attend' event for many in our community. Kim Baker, the (Railtown) park superintendent, her staff and park volunteers have truly gone out of their way to support this event."

There won't be any actual gambling at the fundraiser, but Sierra Senior Providers will hold auctions and drawings for prizes, including a ride in a helicopter, dinner for eight with wine tasting at Gianelli Vineyards and a trip to the 2013 NASCAR race in Las Vegas. The event starts at 5 p.m., with the train leaving at 6 p.m. Saturday, Aug. 25. The price of a ticket is \$75, including a train ride, the dinner and the entertainment. Reservations for tickets can be made by calling 533-2622 or at sierraseniorproviders.org. Tickets can be purchased at the door for the same price of \$75, but there's no guarantee you'll get a seat on the train.

Send your Tuolumne County events to Harmony Wheeler at hwheeler@sierralodestar.com and mtaylor@sierralodestar.com.



Thunder Mountain is a perfect pinnacle

At nearly 9,500-feet above sea level, Thunder Mountain is Amador County's highest point. For day hikers, the entire Thunder Mountain area is highly versatile, offering hiking options to users of all skill and ability levels. For a shorter day, one can hike about 3.2-miles of easy terrain to the top of the Two Sentinels, a great little group of summits along the Thunder Mountain Ridge.

Another option for a slightly

longer day is to park a shuttle car and hike a loop from the Thunder Mountain Trailhead back to the Horse Canyon Trailhead on Highway 88. The trail is accessible from June through October, but the best time to head up is in late July or August, when the snowpack is significantly reduced. The summer season also provides great after-hike options, such as a swim in nearby Silver Lake.

While the intimidating western



Light on the path

Dean Fleming

face of Thunder Mountain is a near-vertical cliff face rising steeply from the eastern shore of Silver Lake, several trails to the

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