

Healthcare Heroes at CEI

We are living in challenging times. Our staff is tasked with supporting frail participants who need to shelter in place at home in the midst of a pandemic, excessive heat and poor air quality due to the California fires. At the same time, they have children who need to be schooled at home, face long lines at the grocery store and other tasks that make everyday life harder than ever.

Yet every day, CEI's staff shows up at work and cares for the 900+ participants we serve.

The term "healthcare heroes" has emerged to honor how hard our staff has worked during these stressful times, keeping everyone safe and delivering our stellar support and services in a different way.

From March 23 through the end of July, our healthcare heroes did an amazing job delivering what seniors needed most: support, love, and the continuation of their beloved services.

CEI Healthcare Heroes were able to:

- ★ Deliver **22,174** meals to participants' homes
- ★ Provide **28,414** transportation trips
- ★ Home-deliver **8,367** activity packets
- ★ Conduct **3,767** activity sessions remotely
- ★ Make **14,118** case management phone calls
- ★ Conduct **784** telehealth assessments
- ★ Deliver **362** bags of groceries from food banks

We hope for a more stable and calm future. As for today, we continue to be grateful for our staff of healthcare heroes and the resiliency they show as they serve our community.



Juls shows a participant some love at the San Leandro Center.



Miriam, a CEI driver, delivers a meal to a participant's home.

Flexibility helps CEI adapt to unprecedented conditions

To say that our world has drastically changed in the past six months is an understatement. How we go about our daily lives has shifted dramatically, and supporting our seniors is no exception. Everyone—from the seniors themselves to our entire staff—has had to adapt and pivot to face new challenges.

Thankfully, our PACE healthcare model allows for a great amount of flexibility in terms of the types of care offered and how that care is delivered. Every participant's care plan is customized and our teams work together to learn about each individual, so they can spot changes and make adjustments to care plans. This allows CEI to deliver the best care possible that addresses the whole person. And in recent months, we have seen one major theme rise to the surface: participants are experiencing the stress of continued isolation at home.

Missing seeing people face-to-face

When the shelter-in-place orders went into effect in mid-March, visits to CEI centers slowed. Only the seniors who were not safe remaining at home visited the centers on a regular basis. Seniors who did not have an immediate need for rehab stayed at home with the option of doing movement and exercises via Zoom. We were also not able to offer some services, including podiatry, dentistry and acupuncture.



Claire, an Occupational Therapist, instructs Ms. Adusara on the exercise bike.



Ms. Ly is happy to see Angela visit to drop off supplies during the pandemic.

These restrictions have taken a toll on participants. Ms. Dejesus, a member at the Downtown Oakland Center who recently moved here from New York, told us: "I'm missing my friends. I'm missing my teddy bear. I'm missing Angelique. I'm missing them all. I can't wait to hug you, even if it's from six feet away. I miss you all."

As time has gone on, we have witnessed a growing need for more participants to come into the centers. Some seniors require more in-person services, including health care that has been delayed or deep social isolation—issues that may be prevented or solved with more regular visits to a CEI center. Seeing friends and other people is important to overall well-being, as is exercising in the gym and getting out of the house.

Bringing participants together safely

Recognizing that our participants need more care and socialization, we prepped our centers in late July to welcome back more participants. Safety is paramount so

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we have implemented a very careful and structured plan. After our care teams determined which seniors would benefit the most from a return to the centers, we started inviting these participants back on a limited basis. Seniors who are thriving through our continued support of phone calls, Zoom activities, meal deliveries, home care and rehab visits, will continue sheltering in place with added home support and continued telehealth visits.

Group size and frequency of visits are more limited than before the pandemic. Plus, the amount of time spent inside the buildings is shorter. Participants will only spend three hours at a time and arrive in shifts, giving our on-site staff time to clean the center between shifts. Before rolling out to all centers, we used Berkeley as a pilot to test the process and ensure it worked well keeping participants as safe as possible during their rides in CEI vehicles, medical appointments and visits to the centers.

Each participant has now been sent a letter outlining the protocols and letting them know what to expect when they arrive. Additionally, there are protocols for every person

entering our buildings designed to keep everyone safe and reduce risk as much as possible. Signage, decals and floor markers are installed in each location, as well as hand-sanitizing stations. Furniture and equipment are spaced out and each senior is given their own table for use during their stay.

PPE supplies and training

We are grateful for the donations of personal protective equipment (PPE), including gloves, masks, gowns, surgical masks, and face shields by the California Medical Association. Thanks to donors and our regular suppliers, we have not experienced a shortage of PPE.

CEI requires all of our staff to wear various levels of PPE, sometimes exceeding CDC guidelines, based on their interactions with each other and with participants. Our education team—Quality Assurance RN Jennifer Kim, Nurse Educator Marsja Varves, and VP of Clinical Operations Laura Flannigan—provided the staff with additional specialized training on when and how to wear certain types of equipment.



Ms. Lovato comes into the center to be safe during the pandemic.

Excitement for the future

We have been amazed at how resilient and adaptable everyone has been during all of the changes in our world caused by the pandemic. CEI is grateful that PACE gives us the freedom to adapt and bolster our resilience. While many of our seniors deeply miss visiting their centers, they understand why. But the excitement of returning soon is spreading—and that excitement does not need a mask. ■

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Remembering the bright colors during COVID

As an only child, Ms. Beatrice Bey mastered ways to occupy her time. Before joining CEI in September 2015, she rediscovered that skill and started coloring as a hobby while living with her daughter and other family members. Her coloring flourished with the supplies Center for Elders' Independence provided, including "fancy pens" and markers that help her brighten and breathe life into her detailed coloring pages. She loves making pages for special occasions to give to people and is often asked to color pictures for friends and staff at the center she attends.

Before finding CEI, Ms. Bey was homeless for seven years. "The shelter found me a place to live at the San Pablo Hotel. That's where I first heard of CEI. I saw people coming and going from the center, so I asked what the program was." And within two years of moving to the San Pablo Hotel, she had also found a home at CEI.

CEI has supported her during COVID and beyond

During COVID, Ms. Bey has found that just like before, her hobby "...is mainly about my health. Coloring relaxes my mind," she says. "At first I was feeling down because I couldn't go anywhere because we were on lockdown. But CEI supported me before COVID and has helped me out during the pandemic as well." Ms. Bey is one of the few early participants who wasn't safe at home all the time, so she started coming into the center recently on a limited basis. She is grateful to be safely back around the people—CEI staff members—that she's grown to love. "Even if it isn't for more days like before COVID," Ms. Bey says, "seeing them is something that means a lot."

Missing exercise in the gym, church and her motorcycle club

Another thing Ms. Bey misses is the gym. Claire Bonde, Occupational Therapist at San Leandro Center said, "Ms. Bey typically exercises on the NuStep, which promotes cardiovascular health, as well as strength in arms and legs. She loves listening to gospel, her favorite music, while she exercises."

During activity time at the center, Ms. Bey gets a loaner iPad and listens to music or watches programs while making jewelry or coloring. "I love listening to gospel and I will be glad when I can go back to church," she says. She also loves that CEI provides her with materials to keep doing what she loves outside of the center. Before COVID she was active in a social club called The Other Side of Darkness, which is affiliated with motorcycle riders, and she misses that, too.

A recent graduate of CEI's Weblinks Training Program

During stay-at-home-orders, Ms. Bey was selected to be in CEI's new Weblinks Basic iPad Program, which provides loaner iPads and training to our participants with the support of our partner Community Tech Network (CTN). We help participants get connected to the Internet and set up the iPads for ease of use.

Once the participants get an iPad, they go through a seven-week training via Zoom. They learn the basics of how to work the iPad and how to navigate the Internet, and the iPad is also set up in the specific language of the participant. In these times, Ms. Bey is proud to say she finished her classes in July, along with 10 other participants.

Hope for the future and a brighter today

Ms. Bey looks forward to the day when things will be better for everyone. But in the meantime, she has settled for using vivid shades to color her pictures in order to brighten her world and the worlds of the others she gifts with her colorful masterpieces. ■



Ms. Bey shows off her coloring binder, full of all her beautiful pages of art.

Seniors and iPads and Zoom. OH MY!

Have you tried getting your senior loved one up and running on a new iPad for a Zoom call? Imagine if they also spoke another language. That is among the challenges we face in getting participants online. Many CEI services are now delivered remotely for safety purposes. But that requires Internet access, having a device, and knowing how to use it—fundamental skills that many seniors had not developed before COVID. We set out to change that.

CEI received a substantial grant from the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC), and has partnered with Community Tech Network to teach our seniors how to use an iPad and be online. Community Tech Network is a San Francisco-based non-profit that specializes in teaching seniors basic computer skills. Coupled with our IT and Activities departments, 11 seniors graduated from our first seven-week course in August. They learned how to use the iPad, access the Internet, and join the Zoom classes. Once online, participants are able to join CEI-hosted Zoom activities, including bingo, live concerts, trivia games and group exercise.

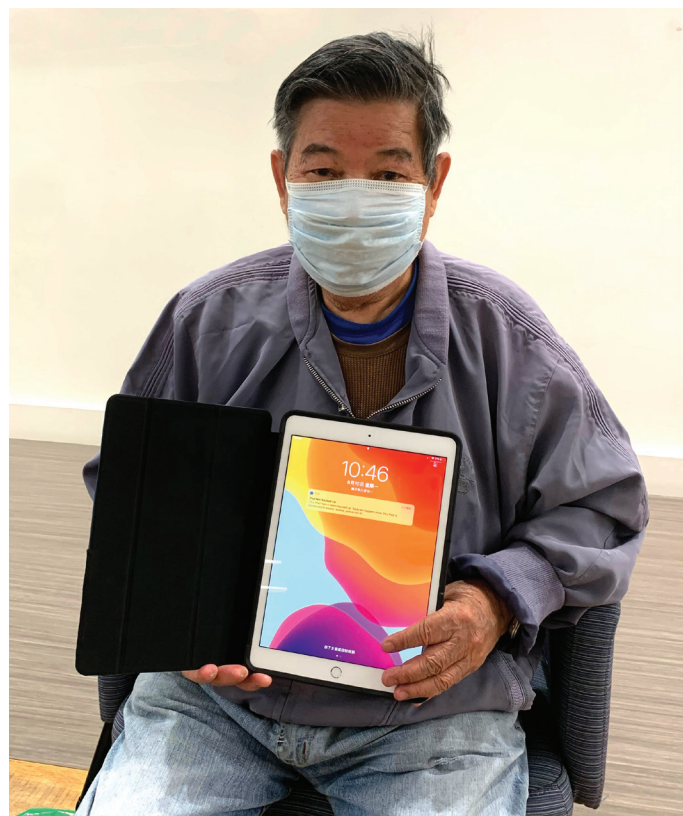
More importantly, they can now see their doctors and other medical providers for telehealth visits. “It was imperative to get them online as they are sheltering-in-place longer than hoped,” shares Justin Lola, Vice President of Information Technology at CEI. “Interest is definitely high among our participants. They are eager to learn.”

Many lessons are learned along the way, and not just for the participants. Volunteer and Activities Manager Andrew Hayes says, “We had to learn ourselves how to best support the students remotely as they learn where the volume buttons are located. Yes, it’s that basic and quite important.”

Future Lessons and Classes

Classes are continuing this fall. Each class has four students and there are two classes in English and two in Cantonese. Andrew emphasizes that this means, “the Cantonese students received their iPads set up in their language and are being taught in their language.” Each student also receives a binder of the curriculum along with their loaner iPad.

These classes are potentially life-changing for our seniors...



Zhi Don Huang learns to use an iPad thanks to a grant from the California Public Utilities Commission.

Once a student graduates, they may receive a Wi-Fi only iPad as part of their “congratulations” package. Telehealth for Seniors graciously donated some pre-owned devices and we hope to receive more in the future. In addition, CEI will assist the graduates in obtaining Internet access at their homes. Justin adds, “That way, they can use the Internet not only for the iPad, but possibly for other technology that will help them, too. Internet access is vital for these classes and future services. This is a transformational step in assisting our seniors in their homes.”

These classes are potentially life-changing for our seniors as they now have ways to see their doctors, their friends and their children and grandchildren—all while staying safe at home. It truly is all about connection. ■

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Facing injustice head-on



Each center observed a moment of silence for eight minutes and 46 seconds to honor George Floyd.

When the senseless death of George Floyd hit the news, it became evident that CEI had to join in support of the Black Lives Matter movement and the fight for inclusion and equality. We wanted to stand in support of our diverse staff and participants, their families and friends, and the communities we serve to speak out for justice in our communities.

On June 5, everyone across CEI's locations stepped outside to observe the eight minutes and 46 seconds that a police officer held his knee on Floyd's neck, causing his death. For many, this was a powerful moment. Some said they learned that 8:46 is a long time while others said it was an emotional reminder of continual injustice in America.

CEO Linda Trowbridge wrote to staff, "This is a time to lift our voices and ultimately to take action. I hope you are finding your own unique ways to do so." Also, to honor the emancipation of those who had been enslaved in the United States, CEI observed Juneteenth 2020 as a holiday.

Stemming from the cry for social change in America, CEI is striving to become an even more inclusive organization, reaching deep in search of understanding and empathy regarding diversity and inclusion. To create a safe place and process for this to occur, our Human Resources department started the JEDI (Justice, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion) Council. The Council is composed of volunteers from across the organization to address race, religion, cultural background, gender and other social constructs that sometimes divide us.

Catherine Johnson, VP of Human Resources, described the first steps of the JEDI Council. "We will start with getting an 'as-is' view of where CEI is on the continuum of becoming an anti-racist, multicultural organization. Once we have

that, we can begin to address the important questions, and have a clear and transparent roadmap and resources that will move us forward." The Council will also help address difficult questions by moderating conversations.

The first conversation happened in mid-July over Zoom and the feedback was overwhelmingly supportive for CEI to continue facilitating conversations, events, and safe places for people to interact.

We may all come from different backgrounds, but we are united in our belief in CEI's mission to advocate for seniors and to make their lives better. To do that, we must continue to grow together. ■



Staff and participants walked outside with signs in support of the Black Lives Matter movement.

Caring for CEI participants for 25 years

It's simple, really. Michael Bingham has worked at CEI for 25 years because he loves his job, feels supported by CEI, and loves the people he takes care of. As a home care geriatric aide, he sees participants in their own environments, their own homes. He helps them with daily tasks they have difficulty doing, such as bathing, preparing food, doing laundry, cleaning, and even running errands.

Sometimes, Michael says, he's there to keep them company and be a friend. "One thing I didn't expect was the friendships I've developed in getting to know the participants." These blossoming relationships, built on trust, make it difficult when people pass away. "But I learn from everyone," he says.

One particular participant, Mr. Toby Simon, passed earlier this year and Michael says he misses his company and loved being a friend to him and his wife, Ms. Linda Metcalf-Simon, who won the Caregiver of the Year award from CEI in 2018.



Michael helps a senior at the Downtown Oakland Center.



Michael is proud to call CEI his second home, still serving his community and the organization after 25 years.

When asked what the best thing is that he has learned after 25 years working at CEI, Michael says, "I learned that it's a team effort to help people live and function as best as they can. And working here has helped me understand different backgrounds," for which he is grateful. In the future, he looks forward to making new friendships with more participants. ■

Medical students train at CEI

As the general population becomes older, the need for geriatric medical professionals continues to rise. Beginning in July, Center for Elders' Independence started a training ground for internal medicine students wanting to learn how to treat an older population. Each student spends one of their rotations at a CEI center, learning from a fellowship-trained geriatric physician in this subspecialty.

LifeLong Medical first-year residency students and Kaiser Permanente third-year residency students are participating in this program, learning essential skills for frail and older adults. These include adjusting medications, assessing

individual's functional mobility, devising care plans and most importantly, delivering care as part of an integrated team that follows the PACE healthcare model. ■

"This is a great service and huge recognition of our staff's unique qualifications to teach. We are very fortunate to offer this training to the next generation of doctors."

— Dr. Lincoln Sison, Co-director providing the students' clinician education

Providing emergency preparedness training

As part of the State of California's LISTOS campaign, CEI is working with the Public Health Institute to help our participants become better prepared for emergencies. LISTOS—which means “ready” in Spanish—is a statewide initiative by Governor Newsom and the Office of Emergency Services.

LISTOS has produced trainings and toolkits, and enlisted CEI and other community-based organizations to provide these emergency preparedness resources to vulnerable populations. Disasters, such as earthquakes and fires, can happen at any time. Now, during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is more important than ever to know how to plan, prepare, and get to safety.

Participants learn how to prepare for emergencies

Recipients receive workbooks in a handy bright backpack with room for essential items. This makes it easy to grab and get to safer ground if necessary. The workbook outlines four easy steps to prepare for a disaster:

1. Find five trusted allies and share your plan
2. Prioritize your health needs and create lists
3. Create emergency supply kits
4. Plan how and when to evacuate

If these steps are followed, it will make a huge impact on safety in an emergency. The guidelines and workbooks come in Spanish, Chinese and English, as well as a large-print version for the visually impaired.

Preparation will help East Bay Seniors stay safe in an emergency

Once seniors complete the workbook, they will have a plan and know different ways to stay safe when a disaster or emergency occurs. There are also online training sessions to learn more. Practicing these emergency preparedness steps will help people know how to protect themselves and others, including family members and the community. CEI has delivered workbooks and backpacks to 673 seniors at Eden Housing and Human Good so far, with plans to distribute them to all of our participants.

To receive more information about LISTOS, and the Emergency Preparedness Kit, please e-mail Lenore McDonald, lmcdonald@cei.elders.org.



Mission Statement

The Center for Elders' Independence provides high quality, affordable, integrated health care services to the elderly, which promote autonomy, quality of life and the ability of individuals to live in their communities.

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