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## Bay Area Older Adults: Helping seniors remain active and engaged

Mary Larsen - Staff Writer

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### **Courtesy of Anne Ferguson**

Anne Ferguson, front row at left, leads Bay Area Older Adults members on a nature hike in the hills in 2017.

Feel like getting out of the house? Prefer to stay in until further notice? Bay Area Older Adults has ideas and resources for hundreds of outdoor and indoor activities.

Founder Anne Ferguson was inspired to start the nonprofit Bay Area Older Adults in 2008 by her two favorite people – her grandparents Jean-Paul and Jacqueline Latil.

“They were always learning and out with nature, so they taught me how to love and appreciate wildlife, culture and to care about the future of our planet,” Ferguson said. “BAO programs reflect them.”

Although group activities have been mostly off-limits since the start of the pandemic, there are signs of hope, like the first crocuses poking up after a long, snowy winter.

“I am finally starting to feel normal again, because last week we took our first small group of 10 people out on the trails,” Ferguson said. “Everyone appreciated being out in nature and with each other even more than before since we hadn’t been out in eight months. We will slowly and safely bring back our flagship programs that include educational walks and cultural explorations both in the local area and day trips outside the county.”

Asked if she had a favorite wildlife refuge in the area, she said it was difficult to choose “after walking in more than 74 parks in the Bay Area.” Among them, though, is the North Ridge Trail at Purisima Creek Redwoods Open Space Preserve, “because it has a combination of dense forest and openings where you can see the Pacific Ocean on clear days and the eastern side of the Santa Cruz mountain range,” she said. “It is a great place to go if it is raining or too hot, because the tree canopy protects you.”

What makes Ferguson most proud of her endeavor is that she is having a positive impact on people’s lives.

“When they tell me how much they appreciate the programs, I feel grateful,” she said.

## **Active activities**

Following is a sampling of recent BAO offerings on the organization’s website.

- Walks and wildlife viewing. Opportunities abound throughout the South Bay and Peninsula, including the Baylands Preserve, Monte Bello Open Space Preserve, Shoreline Lake and Park and McClellan Ranch Park. There are also virtual walking tours such as a History and Wildlife Tour of Ravenswood Open Space Preserve and Birding and History at Shoreline Park.
- Gardens. Open for a stroll are Allied Arts Guild and Sunset Garden in Menlo Park, the Stanford University Arboretum, Gamble Garden in Palo Alto and the Bamboo Garden at Foothill College.
- Virtual lectures. Topics range from nutrition to home-selling.
- Field trips. Find listings for music and art classes, museum and gallery visits, theater outings, historical sites and music venues.
- Volunteering. Whether your interests lie in education, the arts, support services, the environment, gardening or elsewhere, the dozens of organizations listed provide

plenty of ideas for ways to keep busy and give back.

There is a group events section on BAO's website, but activities are currently limited due to ongoing COVID-induced restrictions. Past events have included tours, walks, lectures and classes.

Anyone can use the BAO website, but optional free membership in the group includes a monthly newsletter with activities listings and discounts on BAO events; a paid membership adds further discounts and access to special events.

To view a video highlighting some of the group's activities, visit <https://youtu.be/RSG7a-lSpfA>

For more information, visit [bayareaolderadults.org](http://bayareaolderadults.org).

### **BAO members' testimonials**

According to founder Ferguson, Bay Area Older Adults participants enjoy the camaraderie, nature and learning the nonprofit organization offers. Following is some of the feedback she has received.

- "BAO has added a dimension to my life that I was lacking. Belonging to BAO has had the effect of feeling like there was a place I could go where 'everybody knew my name,' like a family. It has become a vital part of the community of people I've come to know. It fills my calendar ... my mind ... and my heart."
- "BAO programs are important to me because they keep me hiking outdoors and socially engaged. As I have gotten older and more into retirement life, motivating myself to get out socially is more difficult, but BAO makes this easy. I would not be hiking if I hadn't joined BAO."
- From a visually impaired member: "I really liked learning about the plants, what they felt like and the animals, the sounds they make. After all of the exercise from this outing, I am interested in doing more of these next year. My body actually felt better and I was left thinking about how important the rivers, canals and waterways are to our community and livelihood. I appreciate the social recreation. I did not think such a positive experience could be so well facilitated or even available."