

## **The benefits of Sequoia Healthcare District**

*October 13, 2010, 09:48 PM Letter*

Editor,

On behalf of Peninsula Family Service (formerly Family Service Agency of San Mateo County), one of the nonprofit agencies supported by the Sequoia Healthcare District, we are writing in response to the article "Full field in health care district race" featured in the Sept. 28, 2010 edition of the San Mateo Daily Journal.

For over 400 local senior citizens who use the Fair Oaks Senior Center operated by our organization, the district's grants program makes possible basic services such as nutritious meals and case management and programs that are critical for on-going health and well-being, such as blood pressure and glucose monitoring, medical translation, health education and fitness. It is not an exaggeration to say that if the programs did not exist, many of our clients would not be alive today. One look around our center demonstrates why. Diabetes, obesity, heart disease, depression, frailty and other life-threatening issues are common risks among many of our clients. Consider 80-year-old Edgar, a regular at the center. Edgar, similar to three-quarters of our clients, barely subsists on \$1,000 in monthly Social Security payments. At an on-site health screening, the nurse recently discovered his blood pressure was dangerously high. Edgar had stopped taking his medication because "he felt better." After a medical exam we now help monitor Edgar and ensure he stays on his medication. Without it, he would have surely suffered a heart attack or stroke. Sequoia Healthcare District directly supports center services designed to help vulnerable seniors like Edgar manage health issues so they do not escalate and lead to preventable emergency room visits and hospitalizations. We urge the public to learn more about the district's local grants that provide preventative health and wellness programs for the thousands of children, families and older adults in the district's community. Upon examination, one can see how these programs provide an exponential return on the district's investment.

Laurie Wishard

San Mateo

*The letter writer is the president of Peninsula Family Service.*