



Websites can provide necessary connections

By Ellen Waldman

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Be savvy. Be connected. Be healthy. Sounds like good advice, but this is also the heading from a website for a local organization, Be Savvy Southern Oregon (<https://besavvyso.org>). They're offering a simple way to address all three of these areas in one place: their website.

It was developed by the Community Volunteer Network under the umbrella of Pacific Retirement Services in Medford. What they've done on this site is provide a range of offerings from information about COVID-19, to virtual activities, to ways to get involved as a volunteer. Too often in this past year, too many people were not doing well, and it's been clear that connecting with others is a missing component. Even if you don't want to meet in person, there are so many ways to contribute to your well-being and be of help.

Let's start with this part of the website first: Our partner organization, Community Volunteer Network, provides meaningful volunteer opportunities in Southern Oregon for adults 55 and older. CVN directly offers volunteer opportunities to serve, and we coordinate with more than 40 non-profit agencies throughout Southern Oregon to find the right fit for each prospective volunteer. As a volunteer, you may serve anywhere from one hour a month to forty hours a week. Contact us at (541) 857-7780 so that we can help you find fulfilling volunteer opportunities that matches your interests.

Why volunteering helps right now in particular is that it's been shown that during the hardest of times, doing something for others is one of the best ways to help yourself, too. Peruse the list of all the participating agencies on their site, and see if one doesn't speak to you. Then, take the next steps and get involved. Volunteering is not going to look the same way it used to, but for sure, there are still many others who need what you have to offer. Start here and make a new commitment this year.

On the COVID-19 information page, there are statistics of the numbers of cases for both local and national levels. Also, local testing sites, as well as a perspective on the vaccine from an older adult's point of view. They include a list of stores that have special shopping arrangements for older adults who might feel more vulnerable. There are also a few more in Ashland which they don't mention, like Market of Choice and the Ashland Food Co-op.

Here's more that this site covers: medical transportation for seniors, fraud alerts, and a comprehensive list of Jackson County resources.

In a whole different vein, they offer educational topics like how to download an app, how to Zoom, and other computer skills. You could spend an entire day's study and learning on this site alone. To complete the package, they have virtual tours of museums, audio books to enjoy, and games to play.

Frankly, with the overwhelming amount of information we're confronted with daily, having one spot you can access this makes things a lot simpler. The hope is that you will find something that engages you and you can start there.

This column would not be complete without reminding you of the other excellent offerings online through OLLI at SOU classes, too. (<https://inside.sou.edu/olli/index.html>). For a small fee, you can avail yourself of many interesting topics to stimulate and enrich your mind. Meeting primarily on Zoom still allows for face-to-face interactions with others, even though they're virtual.

At some point, we will be able to rejoin with other people in classes and through volunteer activities. But until then, stay engaged and enlightened through the avenues that are still available. Cheering us on to greater days ahead, be savvy, connected, and healthy.