

# scan club

A NEWSLETTER FOR SCAN HEALTH PLAN® MEMBERS

ISSUE 2, 2021



## When a Pandemic Hands You Lemons

*“We all need something to retain some sort of normalcy and keep from withdrawing any more than we have to.”*

—SCAN member Jim E.

In the last issue of *SCAN Club*, we featured stories of members who found ways to stay active and connected in the time of COVID-19. It’s clear from the letters and emails we received in response that many of you were inspired reading about your fellow members. Many who wrote in told us how they, too, have made the most out of this challenging year. We’ve shared some of their responses here and think you’ll agree that SCAN members are incredibly creative and interesting!

### Apologies to Netflix, But...

When **Jim E.** read about how some of his fellow members have been staying busy during the pandemic, it got him thinking about how thankful he is to be attending online classes through the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at California State University, Fullerton (OLLI-CSUF).

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# Staying Safe—When It's Safe Again

Most of us are chomping at the bit to get back to normal life. And there's reason to be hopeful that we are indeed getting there. But normal will need to look a little different, possibly for the foreseeable future. Keep the following tips in mind as we dip our toes in the post-pandemic waters.

## 1. We're not out of the woods yet.

Medical experts expect it will take some time before enough people are vaccinated for our communities to be safe—even then, it's not certain how long that immunity will last.

## 2. It's been more than a year since the pandemic began and there may have been changes to your health.

*Take these into account before picking up where you left off:*

- **Are you due for your annual health exam or any preventive tests or care?** Your doctor and other healthcare providers have precautions in place to keep you safe for in-person visits. Schedule your appointments soon rather than waiting; slots will fill up quickly as they open up.
- **If you've changed the type or amount of exercise you're doing, check with your doctor** to make sure it's safe to go back to your old routine. Then, gradually work your way back to the intensity and length of your pre-pandemic workouts. (If you're one of those who actually got *more* fit during the pandemic—*keep it up!*)
- **Schedule your annual eye appointment to see if your vision has changed.** If it has, update your glasses or contacts with the new prescription to prevent falls and other problems.

## 3. Virtual healthcare is here to stay.

Even as more in-person appointments become available, virtual healthcare will likely continue to be a popular option as many of us have come to appreciate the convenience of going online. And not just for medical appointments. SCAN members can get a mental workout through BrainHQ ([scan.brainhq.com](https://scan.brainhq.com)) or use their SCAN online member account to take care of practical things (like changing to a new doctor) and find fun ways to get healthier (with the Rally wellness program).

For now, however, keep wearing those masks and social distance in public places. Wash your hands and use hand sanitizer often. These steps will keep us healthy in many ways, including helping to avoid colds and flu, so there's no reason to stop them anytime soon—and many reasons to continue.



**Doing Our Part** – SCAN has been working hard to stay on top of the rapidly changing nature of the COVID-19 vaccine roll-out so that we could in turn keep members informed about when, how and where to get their shots. We've sent letters and emails to members and held Straight TeleTalks. As things change, we're keeping our Member Services team and website updated to help members understand their next steps. Many of SCAN's medical directors and nurses have been volunteering on weekends at community vaccination events. And our Senior Advocates are happy to share their vaccination photos to encourage others to follow their lead. Shown here are Senior Advocate Maxine Marcus and husband, Alan.



# EVERY SCAN MEMBER MATTERS

*A message from our VP, Business Excellence and Diversity Strategy*



You're probably used to seeing a message from our CEO, Dr. Sachin Jain, in this spot. For this issue of *SCAN Club*, Dr. Jain turned his column over to me. If we have not had the pleasure to meet yet, I'm Timshel Tarbet, SCAN's vice president of Business Excellence and Diversity Strategy. I'm new—and my position is new, too. What's not new is SCAN's commitment to keeping seniors healthy and independent.

My charge is to ensure that our mission rings true for every SCAN member. One thing that has been abundantly clear to me since my first day is that this company cares about each of its members, regardless of age, race, background, sexual orientation, culture, health condition or ... anything, really.

At the same time, we know that different communities don't always receive equal levels of care. With that in mind, I want you to know that we are committed to closing those gaps, where they exist, for our members.

Here are just a few examples of what we've done so far:

- **We held Straight TeleTalks about the flu and COVID-19 vaccines in English and Spanish** to assist members in understanding the importance of the vaccines, as well as where and how to get them.
- **We're working with medical groups that serve ethnic communities** to provide customized support to better care for their patients.
- **We're bringing a number of experts to speak with SCAN staff on a range of diversity-related topics.** This understanding helps us better serve you and also makes us a stronger team and a better company.

We are still at the beginning of this journey, but I want to let you know the work has begun. Please know that this is not about giving the same care to everyone—the best healthcare is personalized, after all. It's about ensuring everyone can get the care they need—you need—to stay healthy and independent.

I look forward to sharing more with you in future issues of *SCAN Club*.

All my best,

**Timshel Tarbet**, Vice President  
Business Excellence and Diversity Strategy  
SCAN Health Plan

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*That was a very good presentation. It was clear, easy to understand and much appreciated.”*

*– One of the almost 30,000 members who took part in one of our COVID-19 vaccine TeleTalks*

## ASK MEMBER SERVICES

**Q:** Since SCAN HEALTHtech provides help using technology for health-related issues, can they help me set up an appointment online for my COVID-19 vaccination or other care?

**A:** While HEALTHtech's technology experts can't make appointments for you, they can help get you set up so that you can take care of things like that on your own. For example, they can help you sign up for an email address if you don't already have one or create an account in your medical group's patient portal. (Many doctors have used these portals to schedule members for COVID-19 vaccines, in addition to sending lab work, test results and appointment reminders.) The SCAN HEALTHtech experts can also help you figure out a virtual visit with your doctor, set up mail-order prescriptions or get health-related information.



**SCAN HEALTHtech**  
1-833-437-0555 (24 hours, 7 days a week)

**Make a note: Member Services has new hours of operation.**

From April 1 through Sept. 30, Member Service Advocates are available Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

If you have a non-urgent question outside Member Services' business hours, you can leave a message and your call will be returned on the next business day. Or, send an email to [memberservices@scanhealthplan.com](mailto:memberservices@scanhealthplan.com).

“ I’m not the type of person to dwell on the negative, but it’s somewhat comforting to hear people acknowledge that they’re in the same situation, and what you’re dealing with is what everyone is facing, too.”

—Jim E.

The three to four classes Jim attends each week via Zoom provide opportunities to keep his mind active and to get welcome interaction with others. “It’s camaraderie you wouldn’t otherwise have because you’re not going to see people,” he says.

Jim is taking a variety of online classes. There’s Sports Talk, Money News, History of Rock and Roll, WWII History and courses in technology and medical news. “I like that I’m learning new things, stuff that I’ve always had an interest in but have never taken the time or made the effort to learn about,” he says. “It has kept my mind active thinking about things, rather than just watching Netflix all day. Nothing against Netflix, but there’s more to life than just that!”

OLLI is a membership organization that provides older adults with learning opportunities in a university setting. Before COVID-19, Jim attended OLLI courses in person on the campus of Cal State Fullerton. Once the university closed due to the pandemic, OLLI-CSUF was able to move most of its more than 150 class offerings to Zoom, except those (like one of Jim’s favorites) that rely on in-person meetings. “I’m really looking forward to being able to attend the Poker classes again,” Jim says.

OLLI programs are offered at more than 100 institutes nationwide, including most University of California and California State University locations. To find one near you, visit [osherfoundation.org/olli\\_list.html](https://osherfoundation.org/olli_list.html).

## No Travel Ban Can Stop His Wanderings

Limitations on travel during the pandemic haven’t kept **John R.** from exploring distant lands and meeting new friends in faraway places, but it wasn’t that way at first. “At the beginning, it was hard staying isolated,” John says. “It seemed like the term ‘social distancing’ was somewhat of a misnomer and that ‘anti-social’ distancing was a more accurate term.”



But that was before John discovered that far-flung places and people were as close as his smartphone and home computer. “I soon began to make friends from all over the world. This resulted in a lot of new and interesting experiences,” he says. “For example, I can have a friendly discussion with someone in Los Angeles or New York (or both at the same time), or take a virtual tour of the Louvre with a new friend in France.”

John is particularly interested in stereoscopic 3-D imaging. He says that in virtual meetings with members of his stereo club, the technology makes it appear as if they are “right here with me, wherever they are in the world.”

Connecting with faraway people and places has made the world smaller in a way, too. John says, “I might find myself in a conversation with someone in Thailand, Australia, Japan or China only to discover that they and their families are concerned about exactly the same things we are here.”

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## Positive Thinking Is Her Superpower

It could be said that **Virginia H.** has had more than her share of challenges to deal with during the pandemic. In May, she was diagnosed with breast cancer, which led to surgery in September and chemotherapy starting in December. Then, she kicked off the new year by testing positive for COVID-19.

“My kids make me laugh because they call me the bionic woman,” she chuckles. “They say, ‘You must be superwoman, going through chemo and then getting COVID and not even having to go to the hospital.’”

Her kids may joke, but Virginia does believe a superpower of sorts has helped her overcome the challenges she’s faced. “I am a firm believer in the power of positive thinking. I always look at the bright side,” she says. “Even when I got COVID ... it scared me, but I said ‘I’m going to get through this,’ and I gave myself positive affirmations. I was really fortunate, and I know having a positive attitude has a lot to do with it.”

Virginia wields her superpower in everything she does. Almost all activities at the building where she lives and works as a part-time activity coordinator are on hold now, but Virginia does what she can to brighten the days of the other residents. She decorates the rec center’s bulletin board with seasonal themes. And during the holidays, she donned a Santa suit to deliver gift bags to residents’ doors.

“If you think limitation that’s what you’re going to have,” she says. “If you think ‘I can get through this,’ it can happen for you.”



## Answering the Call of the Wild

Even though **Irma M.** takes all the necessary precautions to stay safe from COVID-19, she still has a houseful of visitors to keep her company. On her half-acre property in Southern California's mountains, Irma nurses a menagerie of sick and injured birds and wild animals back to health.

For more than 20 years, Irma has worked with the Pacific Wildlife Project as a wildlife rehabilitator. The grassroots non-profit organization of volunteers rescues, rehabilitates and releases distressed animals, and the pandemic has been a particularly busy time for the group. Some of the animals that have been under Irma's care recently include an injured white pelican, a peacock and a squirrel who requires hand-feeding because of a broken jaw from being hit by a car.

While much of her time lately has been devoted to caring for her wild houseguests, Irma hasn't forgotten to take care of her own health. "I had gained some extra weight that was beginning to affect my thyroid, and I didn't want to have to take medication," she says. "So, I used a Lindora (diet) plan as a guideline for what to eat and lost 20 pounds. I also made friends again with my scale and now weigh myself regularly, do yoga and get in my 10,000 steps a day. Now the yoga is easier, I feel lighter and my clothes fit better."



*Irma with one of two pelicans she recently helped nurse back to health. The pelicans, who could not be released back into the wild, are now in a bird sanctuary at The Flamingo Hotel in Las Vegas.*

“ I know my age—I've got the wrinkles to remind me—but I'm not going to let a number keep me from doing what I love.”

—Irma M.

Irma says she misses her human connections. She's looking forward to being able to go out to lunch with friends again and continue the tradition of making tamales next Christmas for her neighbors, for example. But spending time with her furry, feathered or scaly wards is helping her stave off loneliness and keeping her active while doing something she's passionate about.



## What are you looking forward to once you are vaccinated and things open up again?

We know you've been thinking about where you want to go, who you want to see and what you want to do once it's safe again. Is it the gang's weekly game of Texas Hold 'Em? Seeing live performances? Cheering in the stands for your favorite team?



**Send an email or letter to tell us what you've missed, why you miss it and what it will mean to be able to do it again. Write to the SCAN Club Editor at the street address or email on the back of this newsletter.**

# Minding Your Mental Health

“ I’m generally a glass-half-full kind of person. I mean, I tend to think there’s a silver lining somewhere to be found in most situations. But after being separated from family and friends for so long, the doom-and-gloom news reports and constant worry over getting COVID, I have to admit it’s been a real challenge to stay positive and not feel overwhelmed by it all.”

– Signed, *Usually Sunny in California*

Dear *Usually Sunny*: We get it! After more than a year of living in a pandemic, many of us are dealing with mental health issues. In fact, more than 42 percent of people surveyed by the US Census Bureau in December reported symptoms of anxiety or depression—that’s up 11 percent from the year before.

For some of us, this is our first experience with any kind of mental health issue. Learning healthy ways to cope can help you work through these feelings and make it easier to bounce back from stressful situations. For others with existing mental health issues, the added stresses of the pandemic make it even more important to know your warning signs and take steps to care for yourself.

## A Mental Health First Aid Kit

To start, try a combination of coping tools, like the ones suggested here. Keep the ones that work in your own “mental health first aid kit” to use as you need them.

**Stay social.** Social interaction is one of the most powerful antidotes to anxiety and depression. With in-person meet-ups still limited, many older adults have turned to virtual meeting technology, such as Zoom and FaceTime, to spend time with family and friends.

**Lend a helping hand.** Are there ways you could use your extra time and talents to help others? There may be a student who would benefit from online tutoring sessions with you. Many organizations are also looking for friendly callers to reach out to isolated seniors. Helping others can be a satisfying and positive distraction.



**Schedule “you” time.** For many of us, one victim of the pandemic has been a regular schedule of activities to look forward to. But you can still schedule specific times each day for whatever brings you joy—sewing, meditating, an online class, dancing, you name it! Putting it on your calendar can help you be sure to make time for it.

**Take news breaks.** It’s good to be informed, but a constant stream of news can be very stressful. Better to check for updates just once or twice a day, at set times and from credible sources.

**Think positive.** This can seem like a tall order, but choosing to have a positive attitude helps many people work through tough times. Taking a positive view rarely makes things worse, whereas negativity feeds anxiety and depression.

**Try mindfulness.** Even short periods of mindfulness practice, such as in yoga or meditation, can have a positive impact on your health and well-being. The internet has many free, online courses. And there are meditation apps for your smartphone.

**Be good to your body.** Mental health and physical health are related—so eat a healthy and well-balanced diet, exercise at least 30 minutes a day and don’t have more than one or two alcoholic drinks a day. Talk with your doctor about how you can safely stay on track with your preventive tests and immunizations.

**Educate yourself on mental health.** Recognize Mental Health Month in May and raise your mental health IQ by visiting these online resources:

*National Institute of Mental Health*  
[nimh.nih.gov](https://www.nimh.nih.gov)

*National Alliance on Mental Illness*  
[nami.org](https://www.nami.org)

*Mental Health America*  
[mhanational.org](https://www.mhanational.org)





## Move This to the Top of Your Healthcare To-Do List

It's never too soon to start thinking about advance care planning. In fact, the sooner the better. We understand that an advance directive is one of those things that's easy to put off, so we've broken it down to these steps:

1. **Choose a healthcare proxy.** This is someone who will speak for you should you be unable to make healthcare decisions for yourself.
2. **Identify your values regarding healthcare.** Do you want "heroic measures" taken to prolong your life, for example? Or is comfort your main goal?
3. **Have a conversation** about these values with your loved ones and your healthcare proxy.
4. **Complete an advance directive form.** This helpful website includes directions and a simple form you can use: [prepareforyourcare.org](http://prepareforyourcare.org).
5. **Give copies of your advance directive** to your primary care doctor and your healthcare proxy.

Once you have your advance directive in place, it's a good idea to review it regularly. Your priorities might change as your health changes.



## You Speak; SCANListens

One important way to give us feedback is to respond to the different healthcare surveys that come your way. From your doctor's office, for example, or from Medicare. There's also another way for you to weigh in on various topics throughout the year: **Join SCANListens.**

All you need is an email address and we'll send surveys that you simply click to answer. Surveys vary in length (no more than 10 questions), and they arrive every month. Take part in the topics that interest you; skip those that don't. Past surveys have asked about the COVID-19 vaccine, SCAN's benefit materials and how you deal with chronic pain.

**To learn more and sign up, go to [scanhealthplan.com/scan-listens](http://scanhealthplan.com/scan-listens).**

## Is the Pandemic Affecting Your Mental Health?



So much of our regular behavior has had to change over the past year that you might not even notice the changes that could be signs of a mental health issue. Everyone responds to stressful situations in different ways but there are some things to be on the lookout for:

- You're eating much more or much less than usual
- You can't sleep at night and can't concentrate when awake
- Chronic health problems seem to be getting worse
- You're drinking or smoking more than you usually do
- You feel lonely, angry, worried or sad most of the time
- It feels overwhelming to do simple things, like fix meals for yourself
- Your heart often races for no reason

Recognizing these red flags can help prevent an issue from getting worse. The key is not to ignore it. While a little stress from time to time is normal, stress that lasts can be harmful to your physical health, too. Be sure to reach out to your doctor, describe your symptoms and ask for help.



### If You Need More Help

If a mental health issue keeps you from your daily activities for more than a couple of days, call your doctor. **If you are in crisis—if you are thinking of hurting yourself or someone else—call 911** or one of these free and confidential hotlines:

**National Suicide Prevention Lifeline**  
1-800-273-8255

**Friendship Line California**  
1-888-670-1360

# Need Assistance? SCAN Health Plan is here to help.



## Sales Information

**1-800-547-1317; TTY: 711**  
8 a.m. – 8 p.m. Pacific Time (PT)  
Seven days a week from Oct. 1 – Mar. 31  
Monday – Friday from Apr. 1 – Sept. 30



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## Member Services

**1-800-559-3500; TTY: 711**  
8 a.m. – 8 p.m. Pacific Time (PT)  
Seven days a week from Oct. 1 – Mar. 31  
Monday – Friday from April 1 – Sept. 30



**REGISTER ONLINE**  
For all your plan info

[scanhealthplan.com/register](http://scanhealthplan.com/register)

SCAN Health Plan® is an HMO plan with a Medicare contract. Enrollment in SCAN Health Plan depends on contract renewal. Other providers and pharmacies are available in our network.



SCAN Club Editor  
3800 Kilroy Airport Way, Suite 100  
Long Beach, CA 90806-5616  
[SCANClub@scanhealthplan.com](mailto:SCANClub@scanhealthplan.com)

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## Health and wellness or prevention information

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