



When Paula Richards (above and far right) moved to Whidbey Island, joining a local artist group helped her find community.

## Healthy aging

# Aging with energy and enjoyment

Staying healthy as the years go by means more than taking your medication, getting exercise, and watching what you eat. All of those are important, of course. But it's also important to do the things you enjoy and that connect you to your friends, family, and community. Here's how a few Kaiser Permanente members keep busy and thrive.

## A new community fuels an active life

**When Paula Richards quit her full-time job as a graphic designer in Seattle and moved to rural Whidbey Island, she knew it would be a big adjustment.** "Living in a completely new place and not working was a huge change for me," she remembers. "It took a year or 2 for my new life to fully soak into my pores."

Three years later, 65-year-old Richards says part of making a successful transition was finding a community. "I joined a group of local artists called Island Bohemians," she says. "It's a chance to meet and spend time with other artists, and to support each other in what can be rather lonely work." She's also active in South Whidbey Tilth, a group that supports sustainable agriculture. She volunteers with both groups, often lending her graphic design talents to publicity efforts.

Richards lives on 5 acres and is a passionate organic gardener, so it's easy for her to stay active and eat fresh, healthy foods. "We grow everything from lettuce and tomatoes to broccoli and kale, pumpkins and squash, blueberries and strawberries, and lots of apples," says Richards, who shares a home with her sister and 91-year-old dad.

Every morning she walks her dog the half-mile down her driveway and back to pick up the newspaper, and she also takes a Pilates class.

Turning down the volume on her lifestyle has given Richards a chance to renew previous passions. "I love watercolor and oil painting, and I finally have time for it," she says. "I'm also enjoying doing a little freelance design work for a few clients." ▀



## Volunteering makes for rewarding retirement

**Ask 92-year-old Rod Hanson the secret to living a long, rewarding life,** and he's quick to answer: "Staying physically active and busy, and volunteering is a good way to do that."

To that end, you'll often find the retired high school wood and metal shop teacher at Lacey's Medical Equipment Bank, repairing donated medical equipment that includes wheelchairs and walkers. The bank makes the equipment available to anyone who needs it, free of charge.

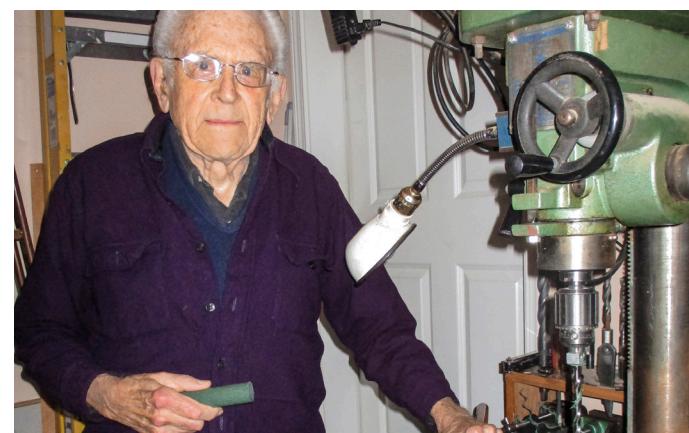
Hanson also volunteers with Mobility Worldwide, a nonprofit organization that makes and distributes mobility carts for people in developing countries who are unable to walk. Working from his shop at home, he cuts and drills handles for the carts from 12-foot plastic

rods made of recycled milk bottles. "I've made about 25,000 handles in the 10 years I've been volunteering," he says.

But that's not all. Hanson volunteers once a week at the Thurston County Food Bank, choosing physically active jobs so he gets extra health benefits. "I sort cardboard boxes. The damaged ones are broken down and bailed, while the good ones are stacked on pallets for reuse," he says. The food bank then sells the pallets.

He also volunteers as a handyman at his church. And when he goes out for a walk, he picks up litter in his neighborhood.

Hanson has been pretty healthy his whole life, and volunteering helps him stay that way, he says. "When I'm up and working, I feel so much better than if I'm just sitting around," he says. "My projects keep my brain engaged, and volunteering surrounds me with the most wonderful people." ▀



**"When I'm up and working, I feel so much better than if I'm just sitting around."**

Rod Hanson's volunteer work keeps him active and busy.

### Healthy living is a family affair

As a kid, Gerene Hipke recalls listening to aunts and uncles talk about their high cholesterol and blood pressure. Those early moments sparked her lifelong commitment to healthy eating and exercise.

A retired teacher, Hipke spent her time in the classroom teaching students the importance of good nutrition and healthy living.

These days, healthy living means weekly warm water therapy sessions recommended by one of her Kaiser Permanente providers. It's been an effective way for Hipke to manage her arthritis pain because exercising in a shallow pool strengthens muscle without putting too much stress on her joints. Frequent walks – with a daily goal of 10,000 steps – help her maintain a healthy weight and boost her mental health.

Hipke also enjoys tending her backyard garden, where she grows lettuce, zucchini, tomatoes, peppers, apples, peaches, a variety of berries, and more. Her bounty comes in handy when she heads to the kitchen.

Hipke cooks from scratch and tries to include fresh vegetables and fruit with every meal. She's always cut salt, sugar, and fat from her meals when possible, seasoning dishes with herbs and spices.

When her husband of 44 years retired, he joined her in the kitchen. They'll usually cook different meals for themselves – he's a fan of meat, she of veggies – but always with a focus on fresh, unprocessed foods.



A former teacher, Gerene Hipke stays healthy by walking, watching what she eats, and tending a large garden.

**"My grandchildren will even point out if I have something unhealthy on my plate."**

"We really had to figure out how to cook side by side," Hipke jokes. "Sometimes when he has a question, he'll call me 'Mrs. Hipke' – like I'm still the teacher."

Hipke's 3 grown sons and grandchildren have learned a lot about healthy eating simply by watching her. "My grandchildren will even point out if I have something unhealthy on my plate," she laughs.

Prioritizing her health means she can spend more quality time with her family. And that's good news, since her family continues to keep her busy. ■



Bill Marcy organizes CPR and AED training and carries AED equipment on his boat.

### Passing along lifesaving skills is his passion

**"When you retire, you still have a job. It's your health," says 75-year-old Bill Marcy.** "We all need to stay active and make focusing on our health the first thing we do in a day, not the last." He follows his own advice by going up and down stairs to the beach at his Fox Island home, jogging, chopping wood, and working in the yard. And he's big on boating.

**"I've taught about 12,000 people this lifesaving technique."**

Marcy had a close call with heart disease 20 years ago. While training for Tacoma's Sound to Narrows 12K, he had "a funny feeling" in his chest, but he figured it was no big deal. Luckily, his personal physician didn't take it so lightly, and a battery of tests led to 7-way bypass surgery. Both before and after his successful surgery and full recovery, Marcy has been making sure other people have a chance to survive heart disease.

**"I was a volunteer firefighter and CPR instructor with the Gig Harbor Fire Department for 26 years, and I've taught about 12,000 people this lifesaving technique,"** he says. Marcy was also a fifth grade school teacher in Tacoma for 31 years.

These days, Marcy organizes annual CPR and AED (automated external defibrillator) training for his yacht club. AEDs provide step-by-step guidance for treating someone in cardiac arrest. He also acquired AED equipment from the fire department that he carries on his power boat and to all community events. "I want to make sure the equipment is available if anyone needs it," he says.

His tip for everyone, young and not-so-young? "Don't ignore your body's warning signs, and get your symptoms checked out. It may be nothing, or it may be something big. If I'd ignored my warning signs 20 years ago, who knows what would have happened." ■