

Seasonal Blues: Feeling depressed, but only in winter?

By Linda Fodrini-Johnson

The holiday season brings with it a myriad of emotions and social gatherings. These are typically tied to positive experiences and uplifting memories, but for some, the holiday season can bring up emotions that are difficult to deal with. During the holidays people may struggle with the pain of loss and grief, or less than perfect interactions with family members. These emotional situations can lead to feelings of sadness and, in some cases, depression.

Even when some people have all positive holiday experiences filled with joyous activities and gatherings, it is possible to still feel sad or depressed when the whirlwind is over and the new year begins.

This phenomenon is called Seasonal Affective Disorder. If this cycle of sad emotions during the holidays sounds all too familiar to you, you might have this diagnos-

able disorder. You might even know a family member that has it. Thankfully, there are ways in which to address it.

Seasonal Affective Disorder can be caused by a disruption in melatonin and serotonin. Normally, we produce melatonin during the night time when it gets dark to help us sleep. When there is less sunlight and more darkness during the long nights of winter, your body may produce too much melatonin. Serotonin, a chemical and neurotransmitter that regulates feelings of happiness, is also diminished by lack of sunlight. The combination of these two imbalances can cause depression. Here are some ways to combat SAD:

1. **Be proactive.** Visit your physician proactively, especially if you know this happens to you every year. Tell him/her about your symptoms. An anti-depressant medication may be suggested as a remedy for that time period and may even need to be taken before any symptoms are evident.

2. **Purchase a therapy light.** You can find a therapy light on Amazon for around \$50. Use this to expose yourself to light for several hours each day. The light mimics the sun's effects, produces serotonin, and regulates melatonin which helps combat seasonal depression.

3. **Stay active.** Take a workout class, go for a run or walk outside, or watch a DVD/television program that has structured exercise. Movement helps combat depression of all sorts!

4. **Stay engaged.** Encourage yourself to go out and enjoy a light spirited movie or concert even if you don't feel like going out. Structure it into your week by having standing lunch plans or eating dinner with your family each night.

5. **Eat well.** Sugar and refined carbohydrates can contribute to feeling blue. Try to avoid processed sugar and move towards fruits, veggies, and proteins. Keep some hummus and cut up veggies ready for snacking. Ask your physician if adding

fish oil and Vitamin D to your diet might help.

If you make all the above changes and you are still feeling down, it might be time to call a professional counselor. At Eldercare Services several of our Professional Care Managers who are also licensed therapists. Give us a call and we will get you an appointment.

If you are feeling like life is not worth living, you should address these feelings immediately by calling 911 or an emergency suicide lifeline. Your feelings are real and there is help. Depression is very treatable. When you are in the middle of it, it can be hard to believe that there is a "life-preserver" out there for you or your family member, but there are certainly resources that can help.

Mental health can have a negative effect on physical health, so please stay well and seek professional advice if you are experiencing SAD. It can be hard for many of us to ask for help but our lives are short and each of us deserves to live each day to the

fullest. That means we need to seek answers for mental health challenges as well as medical challenges.



Linda Fodrini-Johnson, MA, MFT, CMC, is a Licensed Family Therapist and Certified Care Manager. She has been practicing professional care management since 1984. Linda founded Eldercare Services, a full-service care management and home care company in 1989. Eldercare Services is now a division of Home Care Assistance and continues to provide Bay Area families with care management, advocacy, counseling, support groups and education.

Comedic production raises money for charity



Photo provided

By Ania Keenan

The air buzzed with irreverent energy. The noise echoed around the small theater as people made their way to their seats. As the clock struck seven, the lights dimmed and the stage was filled with a soft, wide spot light. Taking a cue from the lights, the audience settled down and four teenagers made their way to center stage. The one to the far left took a small step forward and in a commanding, slightly British, voice proclaimed "Welcome to the Goats of Denmark." The crowd erupted in cheers.

The Goats of Denmark is a student run comedy club that hails from the halls of Miramonte High School. Although it is not affiliated with the Miramonte administration, it holds several shows annually. One in the spring, in the fall, and most recently, in the winter.

There were two shows on Dec. 21 and 22, drawing a mostly student-populated fan base to the Orinda Library.

The show consisted of 10 short sketches, each written by a different cast member, that brought the show to a total run time of about an hour.

Opening the show was "Thanksgiving Controversy" by Michelle Giovinazzo, taking a satirical look at the avoidance of politics while shining a light on the hypocrisy of this effort demonstrated the unique perspective offered by student

comedy.

Taking a slight break from political metaphors the show progressed with Athena Davis's "Diary of a Wimpy Kid: All Grown Up." The short story checked back in with the classic characters as they entered their senior year of high school, and continued the show's trend of plot twisting relationships.

Closing the show was the cast's final sketch, written by Jenni Coletta, "Pooh-dale." The parody take on the hit show "River Dale" places high stakes high school drama in the hands of the beloved stuffed animals from the Hundred Acre Wood.

Most every sketch involved the entirety of the cast, with the exception of the between scene improv pieces. As other cast members moved props and changed costumes, one to three cast members would take the stage to perform. These included everything from comedic reading of text messages to a prose love poem to the animated Hercules from Disney's "Hercules" as performed by Davis.

The ticket sale price was case based, with a little comedic twist. As every guest went to pay for tickets, each rolled a set of two dice. The numbers rolled was the price of the play for that person.

The group decided that the evening's proceeds of around \$1,000 will be donated to a local charity yet to be determined.

In Memory

Peter Emil Graf

(3/31/30 – 12/30/19)



Peter Graf passed away in Grass Valley on December 30th, 2019 at the age of 89.

Peter was born in Baltimore, Maryland, the oldest of three boys, to parents who emigrated from Switzerland. He attended schools in Binghamton and Syracuse, New York. He received a BS in Chemistry from the University of Rochester and a PhD in Physical Chemistry from the University of Wisconsin in Madison. He met Susan Flanders Ward while in Madison and they

married in 1958 in Rye, New York. They moved to the San Francisco Bay Area where Peter worked for Chevron Research in Richmond, California. They had three sons, Michael W. Graf (El Cerrito, CA), David D. Graf (Loma, CO), and Peter A. Graf (Boulder, CO). They lived in Orinda for 35 years before moving to Nevada City in 1996. In 1963, Peter and Susan built a ski cabin in Alpine Meadows with friends, and the family enjoyed years of skiing and hiking in the Sierras. Peter was also an avid windsurfer, mostly in South Padre Island in Texas, and after retiring learned to mountain bike and telemark ski. Peter volunteered at the South Yuba River State Park and the Bear-Yuba Land Trust. He helped the Sierra Club to build the Bradley Ski Hut and was a member of the Bear Creek Planning Committee in Alpine Meadows.

In addition to his wife and three sons and daughters-in-law, he is survived by his brother Rudi (Newcastle, Maine) and his nine grandchildren: Asa, Sam, Emil, Noah, Elsa, Henry, Toby, Ned, and Jasper.

In Memory

John Edward McClellen

April 21, 1931-December 14, 2019



John Edward McClellen, Sr. died peacefully on December 14, 2019. He is survived by his wife of 64 years, Joyce; children Jerry (Lilian), John Jr. (Joanne), and Jeff (James); three grandchildren, and three great grandchildren.

John was a fourth generation Californian, born in San Francisco on April 21, 1931, to Harold McClellen and Edna Soderman McClellen. He enjoyed his childhood years in San Mateo with cousin Lou Ann Breadlow Civiletti. John attended Santa Clara University on a baseball scholarship, playing summer ball for the semi-pro team Prune Packers. His favorite baseball memory was from a 1951 game against Lefty O'Doul's SF Seals, hitting an 8th inning, game-winning, 3-run rocket over the left field fence.

Upon graduating from Santa Clara in 1953, John served as a 2nd Lieutenant in the U.S. Army Reserve, assigned to an artillery unit of the 2nd Infantry Division at Fort Lewis.

In 1955, he started his career with Bethlehem Steel Corporation in the Labor Relations Department. In 1982, John finished his career with Kemper Insurance as a Hearing Representative in their law department, retiring in 2002.

A Moraga resident for 54 years, John was an active community member. He coached several LMYA baseball teams and served Boy Scout Troop 51 as lead and assistant scoutmaster for 10 years. He enjoyed attending Campolindo and Cal football games, serving Friends of the Moraga Library, and belonging to local chapters of SIRS and Kiwanis.

John leaves us with many good memories of a life well lived, having enjoyed his family, friends, sports, pets, and travels to Hawaii. His sparkling blue eyes, quick sense of humor, and gentle kindness will be missed. Aloha, John!

Donations can be made to: Friends of the Moraga Library at 1500 St. Marys Road, Moraga, CA 94556

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