Community group friends give Miraloma Park resident motivation to keep going

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Hildegard â??Hildeâ?• Rolfes with her son, Andy, at her 95th birthday party at Miraloma Community Connectors.

Miraloma Park Community Connectors was set up to provide neighbors a place for exercise, conversation, to share skills and hobbies,

Itâ??s also a place to make and deepen friendships. For Hildegard â??Hildeâ?• Rolfes, it was the key to recovery.

A stroke five years ago wiped out her memory, but she has come back strong. And she credits credits her recovery and current health to her son, who moved from Los Angeles to take care of her â?? and now lives with her, her two daughters, who live nearby, frequent visits by friends and Community Connectors exercise classes.

â??Family and friends are my main motivation to keep going,â?• Hilde said.

She and her husband moved to San Francisco from Germany in the early 1950s, and took over his brotherâ??s bakery. Her family sold the business and moved out of the Haight toward the end of the â??60s when hippies and drugs arrived. They moved into a house near Mt.Davidson. â??I thought I was moving to the country, it seemed so far out of the city,â?• said Hilde, â?•but i love this neighborhood.â?• She still lives in the house where she and her husband raised their family.

Luckily, the stroke didnâ??t paralyze her limbs, but she said she couldnâ??t remember anything, not even where she lived or her own name. She didnâ??t recognize her own children. She knew she didnâ??t belong in the hospital though and kept trying to escape, except she didnâ??t know where to go.

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It took about six months of daily trips to physical, cognitive and speech therapists to bring back her physical strength and mental alertness. Two years ago, Hilde walked up to the top of Mt. Davidson. She also still swims at the Stonestown YMCA. And Andy attributes her clear and barely lined complexion to never wearing makeup, except for special occasions.

Miralomaâ??s Connectors program rose out of a neighborhood resilience program sponsored by the Miraloma Park Improvement Club last fall, when nearly 700 neighbors attended its Disaster Preparedness Fair. One of the fairâ??s goals was to establish a program that would help older adults and those with disabilities fight isolation, to become part of the community, and to help them maintain the physical strength to age in their own homes.

With financial and organizational support from the San Francisco Community Living Campaign, MCCs offers a free program consisting of Always Active exercise classes, weekly coffee and conversation gatherings, and educational and entertaining workshops. Neighbors are encouraged to share skills and hobbies to cultivate new friendships.
Always Active Classes are held at the Cornerstone Trinity Baptist church basement on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10:30 to 11:30 a.m.

On July 12, after the exercise class, Community Connectors held an intergenerational Game Day and free lunch with teens from the church. The following three Thursdays, it held â??Aging 360â?• workshops to share how even small adjustments can help you live safely and comfortably in your own home.

The main benefit of MCC, though, is to strengthen neighborly ties.

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