

Rita Hendrixson

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Six years ago Rita Hendrixson, 91, lost her husband and found herself alone. Her daughters had moved out of state and Hendrixson had stopped driving after she retired. She was at a loss to know what to do with herself.

Her daughter came to visit Hendrixson from Georgia and one day said, “Come on, Mom, we’re going to have some fun.”

She brought Hendrixson to the SCV Senior Center and taught her how to ride the bus from her Saugus home to the Senior Center in Newhall.

“The Senior Center saved me. I wasn’t lost and lonely anymore,” Hendrixson said. “It’s now like my second home.”

Hendrixson participates in Wii Bowling and card games at the center.

“There are exercise classes, art classes, educational classes, there is something for everyone here,” she said. Hendrixson, a New Jersey native, moved to Southern California with her husband and first lived in Canoga Park. In 1965 they visited Newhall on the Fourth of July and were enchanted by the parade and the open space. They looked for a house to buy in the area the same day. They found the last house in a new tract of homes being built in Saugus.

She spends five days a week at the Senior Center, arriving before noon and staying until 5 p.m. In addition to the Center’s activities she also finds time to volunteer.

“I will help out in the kitchen when needed, serving meals and I help set up for Wii Bowling and the card games,” she said.

She said that many of the activities share spaces so when one activity is finished another takes its place.

Hendrixson said the Senior Center is a great place to meet new people and to have fun.

“We all have problems, but we come here to enjoy our day,” she said. “It is such a wonderful place. We have fun, a nice lunch and laugh.”

Hendrixson said losing a spouse can cause depression and a loss of interest in life.

“For folks our age, when you lose a spouse, that is the hardest thing,” she said. “It is easy to get depressed and just lounge around in your pajamas all day and just watch TV. You get lonely and that is not good.”

She said the Senior Center is a positive place and gives seniors a chance to socialize and keep their minds active.

“It saved me,” she said.