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I worked at the front desk of the Sebastopol Senior Center for approximately eighteen months commencing in September 2016. During that time, I had the opportunity to observe first hand the many issues that seniors struggle with on a daily basis. Minor as well as very significant health issues were highly prevalent. Cognitive decline including loss of memory and reasoning capabilities was also a big issue. There was a tremendous need for decent and safe housing which, as you know, is in short supply. Transportation was an ongoing need. There was isolation as a result of loss and diminishing support systems. There was also the matter of protecting vulnerable seniors who were experiencing abuse. Finally, there was the grave matter of mental illness, depression, addiction and other psychological issues. The Sebastopol Area Senior Center is a “hub” which continues to address these very real problems with socialization, resources, contacts, classes, day services programs and vital support. Statistics back up everything I’m saying because it’s nothing new.

Often I felt overwhelmed being exposed to so much hardship on a regular basis. At the same time, I was profoundly touched by the courage I witnessed every time I set foot in those doors. The concept of the senior center was created during Lyndon Johnson’s administration. The mission became a moral imperative. Senior centers are largely funded by local municipalities for this reason. In Sebastopol, it shouldn’t be any different. Each of us are hardwired for kindness. It’s the root of our existence. In spite of what the media and history would have us believe, our species has survived because our first inclination is to reach out and help someone in trouble. Our well being and joy in life is intrinsically connected to the well being and joy of others. We, as a society, must strive to do better for one another. Anything less and that will be the real shortfall.

Anne Tedder