

# Living Together, Embracing Kindness

By Julie André

“I laugh more since Carol moved in,” said Lois, 75, of McKinleyville. Her housemate of two years has improved her everyday life.

For her part, Carol, 65, most enjoys that Lois “respects me as an individual.” She can just be herself, she said. “There’s no walking on eggshells.”

Connectedness, comfort, security and stability, flexibility and freedom, and, overall, kindness and genuine care. Humboldt County residents who have come to share a living space later in life express gratitude and appreciation for their housemate.

“It’s the little things,” said Ken, 81, of Cutten, to sum up the dynamic of his relationship with Rob, who is 65. Complete strangers just 10 months ago, these two men easily highlighted the positive aspects of their experience of living together.

For Rob, it’s Ken’s hospitality when his daughter and grandson visit, and the music he plays in the background. For Ken, it’s Rob’s thoughtfulness when bringing in the mail or letting him use his espresso machine. For both, it’s a shared interest in sports and old movies that they watch on Ken’s big TV.

Even very independent folks are grateful for the informal socialization of having another person around. Eureka homeowner Michael, 74, said that “It is fulfilling to have someone else occupying the space in a non-intimate way.”

After caring for family for a decade, Michael

cherished living by himself. But when he spotted an ad for Northcoast Homeshare, he realized that he had been trying too hard to convince himself that it was fine to live alone. His housemate Eduardo, 32,



**‘THE LITTLE THINGS’ — Rob and Ken have shared a house in Cutten for the past year.** Julie André photo.

enhances his life by contrast. While he “really likes when he comes home,” he said that “when he’s not here, I appreciate my alone time even more.”

As rewarding as those partnerships can be, they initially exist because of one person’s need for affordable housing. However, both parties often benefit from the economies of scale that come with sharing a space.

Delle, 79, has been renting out a furnished room in Arcata to Melody, 61, since July 2021. The extra income allows her to explore alternative health solutions not covered by insurance. “It would be difficult for me, being self-employed ... having my own apartment and paying everything myself,” Melody said. They share streaming services, sometimes groceries, and help each other out in a myriad of ways.

Northcoast Homeshare itself receives huge props during conversations with homesharers. “This program has been a godsend to me,” said Melody, and Rob emphasized the agency’s matching process: “the groundwork was fantastic,” he said.

Northcoast Homeshare ([a1aa.org/homesharing/](http://a1aa.org/homesharing/)), a program of the Area 1 Agency on Aging in Eureka, pairs older adults with others looking for housing to help them stay in their home. The program screens and advises both individuals for suitability and compatibility.

As the Northcoast Homeshare program coordinator, few things bring me more satisfaction than the feel-good sensation that comes with the continued success of a compatible arrangement. I am so thankful for the work that I get to do at A1AA as your local housemate matchmaker.

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**A FLOCK of dowitchers gather, wade and forage at Arcata Marsh in November.** Mark Larson photo.