

HHSA Connection

MARCH 2008 A Monthly Newsletter for the Employees of San Diego County Health & Human Services Agency

Leap of Faith Brings Success

Each year, as part of San Diego County Adoption's recruitment efforts, a calendar is created highlighting children who are in need of a "forever family" through adoption. This year the Leap of Faith Calendar featured a total of 24 children ranging from one to sixteen years of age. Many of the children are featured with their siblings. It's hoped that an adoptive family will open their hearts to not just one child, but two or three.



This year, in addition to the featured children, Adoptions was fortunate to partner with the San Diego Chargers. Each month of the calendar has a corresponding picture of a Charger football player engaging in play with a child or group of siblings.

Since October 2007, adoption recruitment staff has distributed nearly all 90,000 calendars throughout San Diego County. The calendars were promoted by Adoption's recruitment partner CBS 8 and were available at a variety of locations such as credit unions, libraries, and select restaurants. The free calendars were extremely popular and in high demand.

To date, approximately 65% of the children featured in this year's calendar have been matched with an adoptive family. It is hoped that by the end of 2008 all of the children featured will have found that special adoptive family that they can call their own.

Medicine for the Masses

What would your job be at a POD? And just what is a POD?

East Region employees discovered the answers by participating in a POD (Point of Dispensing) drill, a coordinated effort between East Region and Public Health Services.

A POD is a site where medications or vaccines intended to prevent disease may be given quickly to a large number of people in the event of a public health emergency. During such an event, County of San Diego Disaster Service Workers (DSW) would be called to respond. HHSA is striving to train employees on what their job roles might be in the event of a disaster since all employees are considered Disaster Service Workers.

Around 35 employees and ten lead positions were appointed and trained a week ahead of the POD exercise. Employees received a training the morning of the event. They learned how a POD operates and the different roles they could be assigned to.

Some employees, such as nurses, were assigned based on medical skills needed in specific areas. Other employees were able to choose a role they felt best suited for their strengths. For instance some employees who felt they had friendly communication skills were assigned to work at the "Start



Public Health Nurse **Kris Soriano**, right, gives fellow PHN **Kassie Bostwick** a flu shot during the East Region POD exercise.

Here" station, where customers are greeted and given instructions. A few employees at the "Special Needs" station were able to utilize language interpretation skills to assist Spanish speaking customers through the process.

In addition to training County employees to work in a POD, a total of 312 flu shots were provided. Future plans are to expand the workforce that is trained to work the PODs in order to be able to conduct multiple sites with varying employees' strengths and protect East County residents quickly and efficiently.



From the Director's Desk

Jean M. Shepard, HHSA Director

The recently released San Diego County Report Card on Children and Families, produced by our partner the Children's Initiative, is a biennial measure of the health and well-being of children, youth and families in our community. Recent findings indicate that we are making significant gains in some important areas.



For example, there has been a considerable rise in the percentage of children with health insurance. In 2005, 93% of families reported that their children had health coverage, which is on par with the state average and well above the national level. As noted in the Report Card, our rate of births to teens is better than the state and national averages. Immunization rates among preschool age children are improving. Among adolescents, the use of alcohol, cigarettes, and marijuana continues to decline.

While evidence of positive health trends among children and families is encouraging, there is still work to be done. For instance, our community has seen an increase in the number of babies born at a low birthweight. Reducing childhood obesity is another ongoing challenge that we will continue to address.

The 2007 report card has 25 key indicators of the overall welfare of the county's children, youth and families. The indicators cover a wide range of issues, including health, school performance, substance abuse and juvenile crime. As we work collectively to improve the health and well-being of San Diego County residents, I encourage you to take an in-depth look at the 2007 San Diego County Report Card on Children and Families.

(The full report can be found online, www.sdcountyreportcard.org.)

North Regions Hand Out First-ever North Star Awards

The North Star Award is North Regions' highest level of employee recognition and acknowledges employees who, through their exemplary performance, demonstrate leadership, innovation, quality, and excellence.



• **Brenda Ochoa**, Kearny Mesa Family Resource Center Supervising Human Services Specialist: During the October 2007 wildfires, Ochoa demonstrated outstanding leadership in a crisis situation when supporting staff and fire victims at the Rancho Bernardo Local Assistance Center (LAC). Having developed and implemented an innovative plan to organize operations to streamline the eligibility determination process, she quickly responded to the Ramona LAC's need to organize workflow.



• **Alice Blonskij**, North Coastal Family Resource Center (FRC) Supervising Human Services Specialist: Blonskij demonstrated excellence and quality in serving the community during the recent wildfires, working long hours for 22 consecutive days at the Ramona LAC and at her worksite to catch up on her unit work. Blonskij was selected by Strategic Planning and Operational Support (SPOS) to assist the Agency with reviewing the nearly 4,000 Disaster Food Stamp cases and ensuring corrective action was completed where necessary.



• **Karen Vorwerk**, North Coastal Family Resource Center Human Services Specialist: Vorwerk has consistently achieved excellent work performance, including 100% accuracy finding in her food stamp casework. She is a leader in her field, expertly navigating the new CalWIN system and is known by staff as the "go to" resource. Vorwerk has been valuable in training new staff in North County. She provides coverage and assistance for other workers in addition to maintaining her own casework. Vorwerk's commitment to quality customer service was demonstrated when she discovered and elevated a system-wide Electronic Benefits Transfer problem to expeditiously provide a homeless customer her benefits, supporting the woman's goals towards self-sufficiency.

County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency

Editor: Tom Christensen

Section Editors

Aging & Independence Services: Denise Nelesen
Alcohol & Drug Services: Martha Armenta
Central Region: Elise Lorentz
Child Welfare Services: Cathi Palatella
East Region: Katie Judd
Financial & Support Services: Donna Matta

Mental Health: Sabrena Marshall
North Central Region, North Coastal Region,
North Inland Region: Nina Constantino
Public Health: Wilma Wooten
South Region: vacant



Board of Supervisors
Greg Cox, District 1
Dianne Jacob, District 2
Pam Slater-Price, District 3
Ron Roberts, District 4
Bill Horn, District 5



Chief Administrative Officer - Walter F. Ekard

Health & Human Services Agency Director - Jean M. Shepard

County Scores on Preteen Vaccine Week Event

Preteen Vaccine Week is an annual, statewide activity that promotes a preteen doctor visit and recommended immunizations for children ages 11 and 12. A kick-off event was held in Rancho Bernardo during the Football Club San Diego President's Cup Soccer Tournament, in partnership with the County of San Diego HHSA Immunization Branch, State Department of Public Health, the California Immunization Coalition, the National Meningitis Association and California Distance Learning Health Network (CDLHN). Over 2,500 kids and their families attended; public health officials, as well as sports celebrities, were there to deliver key messages.

This event highlighted the importance of adolescent health and immunizations, with a half-time show featuring the State Public Health Officer and Director of the California Department of Public Health, Dr. Mark Horton; County Deputy Public Health Officer, **Dr. Dean Sidelinger**; and LA Galaxy professional soccer players Chris Klein and Peter Vagenas.

Interactive booths at Rancho Bernardo High School and 4-S Ranch Community Park were set up for teens to play games, receive prizes, and learn more about adolescent health and vaccines. Izzy the Bear, the Immunization Mascot, delighted the crowd with dancing and photos with the kids. LA Galaxy players also helped the kids compete against Izzy the Bear for prizes in a kicking contest.

Several county agencies participated in celebrating and promoting the week: San Diego Parks & Recreation, San Diego Public Libraries, Alcohol and Drug Services, Healthlink North



Deputy Public Health Officer Dr. **Dean Sidelinger** talks about the importance of immunizations during the kick-off to Preteen Vaccine Week during the soccer tournament.

County, School Nurse Resource Group and Share the Care Dental Health Initiative. The County Board of Supervisors issued a proclamation declaring Preteen Vaccine Week throughout San Diego County.

For more information on adolescent immunizations and Preteen Vaccine Week, please contact **Christine Garcia** at christine.garcia@sdcounty.ca.gov or call 619-692-8805.

Being "Senior Smart"

The HHSA Aging & Independence Services (AIS) and KGTV-Channel 10 are sponsoring a new Web site that features information for older adults, an events calendar and resources for seniors.

The "Senior Smart" Web site is a tie-in with an appearance on the KGTV mid-day news each Monday by AIS Director **Pam Smith**. The TV segment highlights a variety of topics geared toward the senior community.

Did you know?

You should make sure your information is current and updated in Outlook. You can update most of the information in the Outlook address book yourself. Click the start button in the lower left corner of your computer screen. Select Search and then "for people." Select "active directory" from the drop down menu and type in your name to search. Double-click your name and you can edit some of your basic information. It's that simple!

Super Self-Sufficiency Saturday

On February 9th, the County of San Diego and United Way hosted a "Super Saturday" event at North County Lifeline to help low-income families navigate services and resources like Food Stamps and Earned Income Tax Credit.

North County Lifeline and other community agencies, including Vista Community Clinic, Interfaith Community Services and Faith Based Credit Union, offered free tax preparation, electronic filing, information on savings accounts, activities for children, and more.

"Super Saturday" is one of the positive outcomes of the partnerships developed from the North Regions' strategic initiative entitled, "Self-sufficiency in Families and Individuals."

The Initiatives' priorities include developing and implementing strategies to increase self-sufficiency of families through Welfare-to-Work, Earned Income Tax Credit, and Food Stamp programs.



North Inland Hosts Job Shadow Day

HSA North Regions partnered with the youth job readiness program, Escondido Education COMPACT (Creating Opportunities, Making Partnerships, And Connecting Teens), to provide high school students with a hands-on approach to career options through a Job Shadow Day on February 7th.

Students began their day with a half-hour orientation held at the North Inland Regional Center (NIRC) in Escondido, which provided an introduction to the Agency, inspirational opening remarks by Assistant Deputy Director **Donna Hand**, and an overview of the benefits of working for the County. Students also learned about confidentiality and the range of positions offered by HSA, education levels required, and potential salaries.

Next, the students met their hosts and shadowed them in their job duties. Upon returning to NIRC for a luncheon, they shared their experiences of the day and were given the opportunity to ask questions of Deputy Director **Nick Macchione**.

When asked to describe their experience in one word, the students said things like “exciting,” “enlightening,” and “informative.” Overall, the students rated their experience as “excellent” on their evaluation forms with several expressing interest in working for the County. Staff from North Inland Public Health, North Inland Child Welfare Services and California Children Services’ Escondido Medical Therapy Unit served as mentors.

The North Regions Job Shadow Day is a pilot program for the rest of the Agency, implemented as a result of the 2006-07 Strategic Recruitment Deep Dive.



San Pasqual Academy Breaks New Ground



A groundbreaking ceremony was held at San Pasqual Academy on Feb. 6th to mark the beginning of work on the new south cottages. The new residences will allow more students to attend the campus.

Employee Discounts Available for Padres Games

Being a County employee has several benefits. One such benefit is the ability to purchase San Diego Padres tickets to certain games at a discount. Specially discounted tickets (\$15) have been set-aside in the Right Field Lower Reserved Sections 129 - 137 at Petco Park. Discounted tickets are now available to the following games:

April 4 (Fri) versus Los Angeles Dodgers ***Sections 225-235

Special promotion – Padres Rally Towels

April 26 (Sat) versus Arizona Diamondbacks

Special promotion – Padres Seat Cushions

May 23 (Fri) versus Cincinnati Reds

Special promotion – Padres Beanie Caps

June 7 (Sat) versus the New York Mets

Special promotion – Padres Caps

June 28 (Sat) versus Seattle Mariners

Special promotion – Padres Replica Jerseys

July 13 (Sun) versus Atlanta Braves

Special promotion – Khalil Greene Caps for kids

Aug 15 (Fri) versus Philadelphia Phillies

Special promotion – Padres Fan Bags

Sept. 13 (Sat) versus San Francisco Giants

Special promotion – Padres 6-Pack Coolers

Tickets must be purchased no later than 72 hours before each game. You can purchase tickets by going to the Padres Group Ticket Information Web site and entering the following code to purchase your tickets: Promotional Code: SDCOUNTY (all capital letters)

Contact Department of Human Resources Employee Benefits Division at 888-550-2203 if you need further assistance.

Compliance Update

All HSA staff must remember to turn in their yellow disclosure cards to their supervisors by March 7th.

Supervisors must then turn in all their department’s disclosure cards to their Department Personnel Officer by March 21st.