



# The HHSA Connection

THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

APRIL 2007

## HHSA Coalition Helps Families Claim EITC

HHSA's Community Action Partnership has been busy getting the word out and encouraging San Diego County working families and individuals to claim their Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC).

During the 2007 tax season, the EITC Coalition distributed more than 70,000 bilingual postcards and 750 English and Spanish posters countywide and is offering tax assistance at nearly 100 sites throughout the County. Additionally, two news conferences took place in March in the South and North regions.

"Thousands of low-income families and individuals qualify, but on many occasions they do not know and do not claim their earned income tax credit," said **René Santiago**, Deputy Director for the HHSA Central and South Regions, during the first news conference in early March. "It's important to get the word out," added Santiago, who spearheads the countywide coalition of 50 agencies and approximately 250 volunteers that provide tax assistance.

Supervisor **Greg Cox** was the key spokesperson at that event, which included working families who have benefited from the EITC and representatives from community service agencies, including the San Ysidro MAAC Project.

Another EITC news conference was conducted in Escondido in late March at the Interfaith Community Services, another tax preparation site. This event was spearheaded by **Nick Macchione**, Deputy Director for the HHSA North Regions, as well as Supervisors **Pam Slater-Price** and **Bill Horn**.

"The EITC campaign is having tremendous success thanks to the support of the Board of Supervisors and the numerous organizations and their volunteers whose efforts are helping to lift families out of poverty," stated Macchione.

Established in 2003, the EITC program has helped about 20,000 families file their income taxes and has returned more than \$10 million EITC dollars to the regional economy.

Individuals and families who worked in 2006 and earned less than \$12,000 and \$39,000 respectively could qualify for an EITC as high as \$4,500.

For more information about the EITC Campaign or to set up an appointment to file a tax return, call 2-1-1 San Diego.



*HHSA's Community Action Partnership got the word out about the EITC program with press conferences in the South Region (left) and North Region (right).*

## A Message from Jean M. Shepard

*Health and Human Services Agency  
Director*



The last days of March brought great news to San Diego County. The Agency, in collaboration with our safety net partners, has been awarded nearly \$40 million in federal funds to expand healthcare coverage for low-income, uninsured, legal state residents.

Under the leadership of Supervisors Roberts and Cox, this major initiative builds on the recommendations of the Healthcare Safety Net study and is one of the top priorities of the action plan approved in December 2006 by the Board of Supervisors. This grant application was further supported by Chairman Roberts in his State of the County address.

The arrival of these funds, to be disbursed over a three-year period, will be a real boon to San Diego County's healthcare safety net. We will receive annual installments of approximately \$13 million, beginning in September 2007. The funds will be used to enroll patients in a chronic disease management program targeting the high cost medical conditions of diabetes and high blood pressure, linking them to a community clinic that will provide their care and serve as their medical home. The proposal will help increase access to healthcare, as well as reduce the pressure on hospital emergency rooms.

San Diego County was selected from a rigorous and competitive process and was one of only 10 counties to receive such funds. Many thanks to our safety net partners who helped develop the proposal -- hospitals, community clinics, physicians and other healthcare providers, and consumer advocates.

*Jean M. Shepard*

## "General" Encouragement for East, AIS

East Region and Aging and Independence Services were honored to have General Bob Haebel, a former San Diego County employee, come to speak at both sessions of their Leadership Meetings.

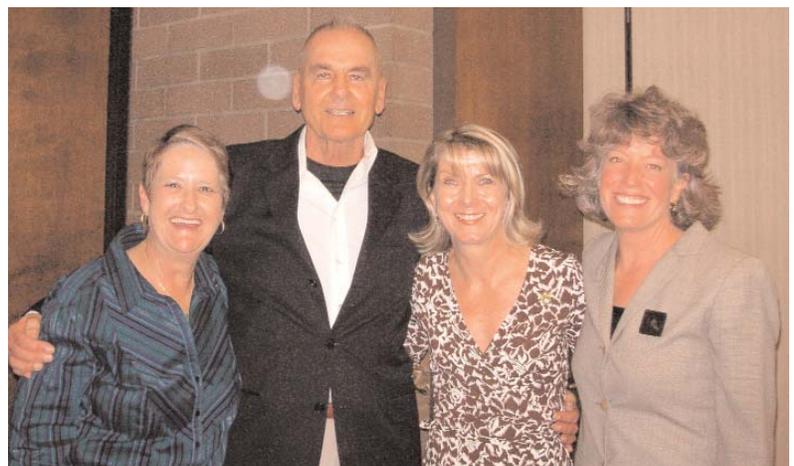
These quarterly leadership meetings are to help supervisors and managers better understand the relationship between employee engagement and great public service.

General Haebel spoke words of wisdom that motivated and inspired the attendees. He explained that there are three types of supervisors: those who make it happen, those who watch it happen, and those who wonder what happened.

Both serious and comical, his speech encouraged the leaders to set their staff up for success, not failure. He also focused on the idea of generating a working environment that builds trust, self-confidence and a sense of belonging. Each person was urged to ponder whether they had "thirty years of experience, or one year of experience thirty times."

Having spent most of his life and all of his employment in public service, General Haebel has gained a plethora of knowledge along the way. He shared with everyone a valuable concept that we should all keep in mind: "People will forget what you said. People will forget what you did. But, people will never forget how you made them feel."

General Haebel's inspirational message was enjoyed and appreciated and East Region Leadership eagerly awaits his next visit.



*From Left to Right: Dottie Ingalls (retired county employee from childcare), General Bob Haebel (Retired County Employee), Pam Smith (East Region and AIS Director), Rhonna Burrelle (Asst. Deputy Director).*

## Child Welfare Services Embraces Team Decision Making

Team Decision-Making meetings (TDMs) are facilitated meetings that involve caseworkers, their supervisors, birth families, community members, resource families, and service providers in all placement decisions regarding children.

This expanding practice creates an opportunity for families to be acknowledged as the experts regarding their lives and the lives of their children. They're empowered by the opportunity in assisting with case planning. TDMs require CWS to include family, foster parents, and the community in our work like never before.

As a result of sharing these decisions with the people most impacted we have seen a reduction in the number of children in shelter care. We have also seen an increase in voluntary case plans, as well as more placement stability for children.

All six regions, as well as Adoptions and Residential Treatment have implemented TDMs. To date CWS

staff has held over 850 TDMs; and consequently made strength-based, group driven decisions on well over 1,000 children! The practice has been embraced and has far reaching positive results for all.

Here's what we are hearing from TDM participants:

"This was great. I wish this type of meeting existed when my kids first got taken away." - Birth parent

"We're grateful for the opportunity to have been heard and informed about what was really occurring in the child's case." - Adoptive/Foster Parent

"Thanks, I FINALLY felt like I was heard, and I am actually part of the plan!" - Dependent Adolescent

"Well done, to all who see this I truly appreciate all the interest in my son's livelihood. Thank you so much" - Birth parent

**KUDOS ♦ KUDOS ♦ KUDOS ♦ KUDOS**

### Transportation Volunteer of the Year for the 2006 AIDS Walk San Diego

**Cathy Rockdashil**, Supervising Human Services Control Specialist, has been a loyal and steadfast volunteer of the Walk for many years. Over the years she has served AIDS Walk in many capacities and has found her longtime niche as a driver for Transportation.

Cathy has had experience with almost every one duty associated with Transportation and is able to fill in anywhere there is a need. Every year I count on her knowledge and expertise to help us get through the hectic parts of the day. We are privileged to have her as a part of the Transportation Team and have honored her with the Transportation Volunteer of the Year award.

- from Donnie Luehring, Walk Manager

### Emergency Survival Program

There are many resources available to help you. For example, the [County's Office of Emergency Services](#) offers an Emergency Survival Program (ESP) with monthly tips to increase emergency preparedness at home, in the community, at work and at school.

The April theme is "Earthquakes," and includes Seven Steps to Earthquake Safety.

[The County's emergency page](#) will provide valuable information in the event of a disaster.



# Legacy Corps Pairs Youth and Seniors

The Legacy Corps just celebrated its second year, after having provided more than 5,200 hours of respite to family caregivers. The program pairs youth 13 to 25 years old with mature adults 50+ as service teams that assist with non-medical care to home-bound seniors, giving their caregivers a needed break.

Team members spend time playing games with the elders, providing companionship, helping with arts and crafts, doing light housekeeping, and even singing songs while developing a caring relationship.

Benefits to the team members include a monthly living allowance of \$200, an educational award of \$1,250 for a year of service, an opportunity to continue learning, and the chance to make a difference for caregivers and older adults.

The program is part of a national project with the University of Maryland Center on Aging and the County's Aging & Independence Services (AIS). San Diego is one of nine sites for this international initiative. AIS partners with New Alternatives, Inc., to coordinate the program.



*A Legacy Corps volunteer reads to two of the older adults participating in the program.*

There will be two free informational sessions about the Legacy Corps for persons who might be interested in participating. The sessions will be held from 1 to 3 p.m. April 5 and 19 in the Sheffield Room at the Town & Country Convention Center, 500 Hotel Circle North in Mission Valley. There will be free parking, food and prizes.

For more information about the Legacy Corps, contact John Scholte, program director, at (619) 253-5155.

**KUDOS ♦ KUDOS ♦ KUDOS ♦ KUDOS**

### Starfish Award

**Ana Armendariz** is a share of cost social worker in the IHSS Medi-Cal Unit at the Southeast Family Resource Center. She has assisted many Multipurpose Senior Services Program Care Managers with our clients all year. She is prompt, courteous and attentive, not only with peers but with clients as well.

Every time I have asked her for some information about a client (whether or not she was the case worker) she found out information for me and helped my client. She goes above and beyond her assigned duties and shows compassion in her work.

She returns calls promptly, provides accurate information and is truly a star employee. At this time, when there are so many new programs and rules in the share of cost unit, Ana has really proven to be a life saver.

I hope she is rewarded for her excellent service not only to the community but also for her interaction with peers.

- from **Iliana M. Sonntag**, Care Manager, County of San Diego HHSA Aging & Independence Services

## County Vaccination Coverage is Near All-Time High

If your kids are up to date on their immunizations, that's a reason to celebrate! Up to date immunizations mean your children are protected against a number of serious childhood diseases like whooping cough, measles and polio. And if your kids need more immunizations, check with their regular source of medical care about getting those shots.

"Immunizations are among the most successful and cost-effective public health tools available for preventing disease and death," said **Dr. Wilma Wooten**, Interim County Public Health Officer. "High immunization coverage levels translate into a community that experiences fewer vaccine-preventable diseases."

Vaccination coverage in San Diego County is near an all-time high level with about 88% of kids 19-35 months of age up to date on immunizations.

National Infant Immunization Week [April 21-28, 2007] and Toddler Immunization Month [May, 2007] are annual observances emphasizing the need to fully immunize children age 2 and younger against a number of serious vaccine-preventable diseases.

The theme this year is "Up-To-Date? Celebrate!" It encourages groups and individuals to support outreach efforts celebrating up-to-date immunizations in babies and increasing and/or maintaining high immunization rates. Local events are being planned, including some by Public Health Service's Immunization Branch and its community partners.

For more information on immunizations, contact your physician. You can also visit [www.sdiz.org](http://www.sdiz.org). To check your child's immunization record with a nurse, have the record in hand and call the Baby Shots Line toll free at 888-692-2575 weekdays during business hours.

### Director's Call-In

Share your ideas and concerns with  
**HHSA Director**      **Director of Operations**  
**Jean M. Shepard**      **Paula Landau-Cox**

First Friday of each month • 8 a.m. - noon  
**(619) 515-6555**

**Compliance Office:**  
**(619) 515-4244**

**Toll-Free Compliance Hotline:**  
**(866) 549-0004**

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*North Central Region Public Health Nurse **Quynh Gredig** provides information to University City residents at Supervisor **Ron Roberts' Bike Safety & Helmet Fair** on March 17. The event provided free helmets for children, resources for families, and included a safety "obstacle" course for children to maneuver their bikes through while riding safely.*



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# Family Success Center Stands Ready to Help

Montgomery Middle School held a kick-off event for its brand new Family Success Center on February 28. The one-stop center, located just inside the main entrance to the campus, brings much needed services to the Linda Vista community and school. From 8:00 am to 6:00 pm, Monday through Friday, families can obtain free legal aid, financial planning, parenting guidance, and physical and mental health support services.

Over 100 people attended the kick-off, including HHSA staff, community partners, elected officials, and Montgomery Middle School staff, students and families. After a brief program with guest speakers, officials cut the ribbon across the doorway to the beautifully decorated center. Perhaps the highlight of the festivities were the musical presentations done by the students - a duet singing a hip-hop song as well as a demonstration by a newly formed jazz band.

The Family Success Center is the result of a partnership between North Central's community collaborative Community Engagement Action Forum (CEAF) and the San Diego Workforce Partnership. The resulting Montgomery Youth Action Team, whose mission is "to promote a thriving Linda Vista Neighborhood by teaming resources and learners to foster whole community development," worked together for two years to bring about the center.

Partners which provide services at the center include: the

## CCS Egg Hunt a Success

More than 100 children from the Vista Medical Therapy Unit and their parents recently enjoyed a spring egg hunt organized by California Children Services' (CCS) occupational and physical therapists.

The egg hunt, held at the California Avenue Elementary School in Vista was able to pair able and disabled children in an opportunity to socialize, learn from each other and hunt for eggs. Parents were able to visit display tables on community resources during the hunt.

The CCS Medical Therapy Unit is a special program of the Agency that provides occupational and physical therapy for children with eligible conditions such as cerebral palsy, spina bifida, muscular dystrophy and spinal cord injuries.



Many North Regions staff have been involved in the Family Success Center development. From left to right: **Francine Nickell**, Assistant Deputy Director; **Cindy Shelton**, North Central Children's Services Manager; **Margie Dominguez**, North Central Public Health Nurse; **Sue Coffman**, North Central "HealthLink" Public Health Nurse; **Linda Lake**, North Central Public Health Nurse Manager; **Nick Macchione**, Deputy Director.

Agency North Regions, University of San Diego, Mesa College, Boys and Girls Club Teen Center, Bayside Community Center, Montgomery Parent-Teacher Guild, Access-YES (teen services), Child Abuse Prevention Foundation, San Diego Workforce Partnership, and Blue Cross of California.



At left, CCS client Rio Tamura discovers an egg with some help from his mom, Katrina. Above, the CCS' Medical Therapy Unit in Vista, who organized the event.