

connection

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

OCTOBER 2007



HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY

HHSA is Pandemic Flu Preparedness Model

The County of San Diego and HHSA continue to be held up as an example to other government entities as a model in preparing for a possible flu pandemic.

The most recent recognition came when SD County Pandemic Influenza Coordinator Jack Walsh was chosen to participate in a nationwide video on Pandemic Flu preparations.

Walsh, also a public health nurse, talked about how public agencies and law enforcement officials can adequately prepare for a possible pandemic and how they can work together to serve their residents.

Walsh stressed that law enforcement agencies and public health officials need to have an open dialogue before an emergency happens - not during it.

"In San Diego County, we already have that interface with law enforcement and public health officials," said Walsh. That's vitally important, and he told viewers of the video "please don't hesitate to communicate with local health officials."

The video is still in production and will include some footage of drills being held in October.

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HHSA honors foster families with picnic

Annual charity campaign kicks off

HHSA Wins Another National Award

HHSA's Agency-wide e-Referral system won first place in the Digital Government Achievement Awards' Government to Business Category. The award was based on HHSA's accomplishments with the Web Referral projects for Mobile Remote Workforce, Aging and Independence Services, and California Children Services.

"On behalf of Cathilea Robinett and the Center for Digital Government, I would like to extend our congratulations to you for winning the 2007 Digital Government Achievement Award," said Janet Grenslitt, Director, Survey and Award Programs, Center for Digital Government and Education.



From the Director's Desk

Jean M. Shepard, HHSa Director

Planning for the future is among the most important – and challenging – tasks facing our Agency.



We must consider a number of resources in planning. Key among them is the Agency's Strategy Agenda, which outlines our goals and how our services are aligned to meet them. Each year we undertake a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis, to assess trends that we anticipate will play a large role in defining San Diego County and the Agency's services to residents. Here are some of the trends we continue to see.

The make-up of San Diego County's population will likely continue to become more diverse. The County's location along the international border, coupled with the fact that it is home to a major port and military bases, makes it an attractive destination for many. It is also expected that the County's population will be older, as Baby Boomers reach the senior years. Both trends present unique challenges for the Agency, as new immigrants and seniors have distinct needs we must consider when we deliver services.

The increase in chronic health conditions – such as obesity, heart disease and diabetes – will create a long-term challenge for us to promote healthier lifestyles and community changes to reverse this trend. The debate over health care reform at the state and national level will also have an impact on this issue, and it is likely that local governments like San Diego County will continue to bear a growing responsibility for maintaining a health care safety net for the low-income and those who are uninsured. At the same time, the threat of a natural disaster - such as the 2003 fires or a flu pandemic - necessitates having plans and resources in place to respond to a large-scale emergency on short notice.

The constant development of new technology to increase the speed and simplicity of doing business also means that the next 10 years will likely be shaped by advancements on this front. For consumers this may mean easier access and more efficient services. But while technology represents new opportunities, it also raises challenges for the Agency, such as the associated costs, the learning curve posed by new systems, and the need to train staff to most effectively utilize the tools available to them.

The public will continue to expect more from us, and we will continue to re-tool and re-engineer our processes to provide services "cheaper, better and faster." The Agency's evolution will continue, but the cycle time for change will quicken. While this presents challenges, it is also exciting.

As we recruit, train and retain our workforce, we'll be focusing on the ability of staff to be adaptable to change, creative and innovative, and always customer-service oriented. This will continue to help us realize success.

Jean M. Shepard

IMPORTANT EMPLOYEE BENEFITS INFORMATION

Monday, Oct. 15, kicks off the second Open Enrollment for the County of San Diego. Every employee must enroll to receive desired benefits for the Jan. 1 - Dec. 2008 plan year. If you do not enroll during the open enrollment period, you and your dependents will be automatically defaulted to your existing benefit plans (medical, dental, vision, supplemental life and AD&D insurance).

There will be ongoing communication regarding this open enrollment including personal information sent to your home mailing address, countywide emails, and payroll stuffers.

22nd Annual Foster Family Picnic

HHSA Honors Foster Families

More than 650 adults and foster children attended the 22nd Annual Foster Family Picnic on September 16 at Admiral Baker Field. The fun-filled day was hosted by HHSA Foster Home Licensing and the Foster Parent Recognition Coalition with the help of generous community partners.

Ethnic dancers, clowns, and a disc jockey entertained the crowd throughout the day. Foster parents received raffle prizes donated by community businesses. HHSA staff from each of the six county regions ran activity booths for the children. Public Health sponsored a Hula-Hoop and Childhood Obesity booth. Other county contributors included Adoptions, Options for Recovery, Polinsky Children's Center, and Probation. Hometown Buffet hosted the picnic lunch. Other community contributors included the Business Exchange Club of San Diego; Grossmont College Foster, Adoptive, Kinship Care Education Program; Optimist Club of Carlsbad; Soroptimist Club of Mission Bay; and West Hills High School Jr. Varsity Cheerleaders. The highlight of the day was Ronald McDonald raffling off ten bicycles donated to foster children by the National City Rotary Club!

HHSA thanks all San Diego County foster families who open their hearts to abused and neglected children, and thanks our community partners, county departments, and county staff for their support of these 1600 foster families!



Above, everyone's favorite clown Ronald McDonald greets foster mother Twila Perucci and her children at the 22nd Annual Foster Family Picnic. At left, it's Raquel Negrete and her family.

Polinsky Center Donation Highlights Volunteerism

There's a beautiful and functional addition to the entrance of the Prevention Pavilion building at the Polinsky Children's Center: a new cast-iron and redwood bench. Upon closer observation you'll notice a bronze plaque that reads: "In tribute to a wonderful mother, Joan Allen Kastner who gave loving care to her children, then to those at Polinsky. Love, Rex/Han/Laura/Janet and Linda, June 2007."

Kastner discovered a volunteer opportunity she loved as a former member of St. Germaine, the auxiliary to the Child Abuse Prevention Foundation. She began tending the babies starting at the Hillcrest Receiving Home in 1990 and transferred to Polinsky in 1994. Her service continued every Saturday morning until a recent surgery earlier this year.

Kastner's 17-member family surprised her on her 80th birthday with the bench tribute for her years of service to Polinsky. Kastner also has a brick in her name in the courtyard of the Polinsky Prevention Pavilion building.

The 'Joan Kastner bench' provides a welcoming respite for Polinsky Pavilion visitors and a meaningful symbol of a lifetime of family love and community support through volunteerism. On behalf of the children and staff at the Polinsky Children's Center, thank you Joan, and Happy Birthday!



SAN DIEGO COUNTY EMPLOYEES CHARITABLE ORGANIZATION

Fifty Years of Giving

CECO Kickoff Breakfast

Annually, in October, the County Employee Charitable Organization (CECO) recognizes the efforts of local non-profit organizations that provide various services to assist community members throughout San Diego County.

Since 1956, CECO has served as the charitable arm of County employees providing grant funding to these groups and community entities. CECO is entirely employee-directed and managed.

In 2007, CECO awarded 127 grants, totaling over \$305,000. On October 10, CECO will be hosting its annual grant allocations breakfast to honor grant recipients. This event will be held at the Kimball Senior Center, 1221 D Avenue in National City. Community members, County employees and any other interested individuals are welcome to attend. For further information about the breakfast, please contact **John Rasmussen** at (619) 515-6657.

For additional info about CECO please visit www.sdcounty.ca.gov/ceco/ or contact CECO President, **Jennifer Uebbing** at (858) 694-3422.

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

HHSA United Way/CECO Campaign Gets Underway

October 1 marked the kick-off of this year's United Way CECO Campaign. As HHSA employees, we see first-hand the needs of our communities on a daily basis: abused and neglected children, the homeless, the ill and disabled, the aged with no support system, families struggling to stay together. Working hand in hand with us in addressing these issues are the community-based agencies funded by two non-profit, volunteer-led fundraising organizations: United Way/CHAD and CECO.

Each year, United Way/CHAD and CECO join their County employee fundraising campaigns into a combined effort. You will soon receive information from your Division or Region representative on how you can assist our community partners by supporting United Way/CHAD or CECO (or both) through a payroll deduction.

HHSA employees contribute approximately \$109,000 to either United Way/CHAD, CECO, or both through payroll deduction for these vital community services. HHSA's goal is to increase that total this year.

Compliance Office:

(619) 515-4244

Toll-free Compliance Hotline:

(866) 549-0004

An ethical workplace is your right...
and your responsibility!



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North Inland Region: Nina Constantino
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Employee Investment and Retirement Symposium Being Held Oct. 24

San Diego County Treasurer-Tax Collector **Dan McAllister** is pleased to announce the next Investment & Retirement Symposium presented by the Deferred Compensation Division. This evening symposium will be held on Wednesday, October 24 at the 4-Points Sheraton from 6 pm to 9 pm.

Come and hear both George Chamberlin, the Executive Editor of The Daily Transcript, San Diego's only daily business newspaper and Host of KOGO's "Money in the Morning" radio program, and Alan Levenson, Chief Economist at T. Rowe Price, as they clarify potential pitfalls in your portfolio and help you navigate through today's volatile markets. Build on your understanding as they bring a unique perspective to our current economic situation, offer insights to what tomorrow might bring and how that might help you and your retirement goals.

The cost is \$15.00 per person or \$25.00 per couple. Dinner is included with your paid registration and free parking is available at the 4-Points Sheraton. Great giveaways and prizes too! Seating is limited and pre-registration is required.

For registration and information, please call the Deferred Compensation Department at (619) 531-5840 or **Lyn Howarth** at (619) 531-5454.

Baracz Receives State Award

Public Health's **Teri Baracz**, Chief Deputy Registrar and County Vital Records Manager, received a Certificate of Excellence from the State of California in recognition of the excellent work done on the Electronic Death Registration System (EDRS) project, which was introduced in March 2006.

Exactly 99.54 percent of deaths in San Diego are registered through the new statewide EDRS which is designed for maximum customer service. "We can get death certificates registered quickly and get people the burial permit quicker, like a religion where someone needs to be buried within 24 hours, or needs to be sent out of state for burial," said Baracz. San Diego was the largest county to use the EDRS in the first year and many of the processes the County used are now part of the statewide training.

Baracz is now on the statewide EDRS executive committee and is the only Chief Deputy Registrar that holds trainings for other local registrars, coroners, hospitals, funeral directors, etc. She also trained the state people on EDRS.



Nikita enjoys blowing bubbles during the Chula Vista Rotary Club and South Bay YMCA Foster and Kinship Care Picnic at Scobee Park.

First-ever South Bay Foster Picnic

The Chula Vista Rotary Club & South Bay YMCA sponsored a Foster and Kinship Care Picnic at Scobee Park in Chula Vista on August 4. More than 100 children, foster parents and kinship caregivers enjoyed giant jumpers, bubble blowing, art activities and a game of kickball.

All of the children received gift bags donated by Wal-Mart. This was the first event of this kind in South Region. Lou Foster, a foster mother, reported that her daughter Nikita "really loved the picnic!"



Picnic-goers enjoyed playing a game of kickball.



They're 'Back to School' and Happy About it!

Sandy Church and **Abelardo Menardo**, HHSA East Region Child Care staff, attended the recent San Diego Adolescent Pregnancy and Parenting Program (SANDAPP) graduation ceremony, where a contagious feeling of joy filled the air. The O'Farrell Community School's auditorium was stuffy and humid, but that didn't seem to matter to the proud family and friends who were there.

SANDAPP uses social workers as guides for teenage mothers and fathers that are working toward earning their high school diploma or G.E.D. Forty of the one hundred thirty-two graduates were in attendance at the ceremony. HHSA's Child Care Section provided the financial support that allowed these young men and women to attend school while knowing that their children were being cared for in a safe environment. Without this assistance, reaching this milestone on the road toward self-sufficiency may not have been possible.

Church interviewed one of the graduates, the mother of a sixteen-month-old girl. The woman had red hair and her freckled cheeks were flushed from the heat as well as the excitement. She graduated from Lindsay Summit and is now attending San Diego City College. Her major is currently undecided, but she is taking classes in Spanish and Chicano Studies.

CCS Medical Therapist Gives Back to Community During Vacation

Jodi Wright, a physical therapist with the California Children Services Medical Therapy Program in North Regions, took a 'busman's holiday' - dedicating a week of her vacation time to volunteer in a special day camp for children with disabilities.

The City of San Diego Park and Recreation Department sponsored the Junior Wheelchair Sports Camp, which provided team and water sports activities for children and teens with conditions such as cerebral palsy and spina bifida.

For many campers, this was their first opportunity to experience the fun of kayaking, hand cycling, sailing, jet skiing, wheelchair soccer and rugby.

"I enjoyed the experience as much as the children,"

What was the hardest part about returning to school? "Being brave enough to go back to school with determination to get the work done to graduate," she explained.

San Diego Board of Education member John De Beck noted that the children of these graduates are the real winners. He praised the graduates for attaining their goals and urged them to continue furthering their education.

Amongst the crying babies, the sweltering heat of the auditorium and applause from all in attendance, Church and Menardo had a renewed sense of purpose and meaning in regards to their jobs with the County after the ceremony. Experiencing first-hand the impact that their day-to-day case-managing activities has on their clients was motivation in itself. The significance of routine tasks, such as making timely payments to providers, meeting regulatory deadlines and responding to all inquiries from the public became even more apparent.

They were able to more fully appreciate East Region's vision: making a difference in the lives of others. This was a wonderful opportunity to see what positive results the partnership between SANDAPP and the County of San Diego is able to bring about.

said Wright. "I plan to continue as a volunteer coach in wheelchair sports programs throughout the year."



Jodi Wright, in the back of the canoe, volunteered at a camp for youngsters in wheelchairs during her vacation.

PA/PG Auctions

PA/PG Auctions are held the third Saturday of every other month at 5201 Ruffin Road in Kearny Mesa (Nov. 17th is the next auction). Registration and viewing of items begin at 8:00 a.m. Vehicles will be auctioned at 8:30 a.m. and all other items will follow. Customers are required to pay for and pick up the auction property by 2:00 p.m. that day. Items available for sale at this live auction include vehicles, furniture, appliances, electronics, household items, jewelry, artwork, antiques, coins, collectibles and much more.



San Diego County Showcased to 1,100 Attendees

CAP Hosts 2007 National Convention

The Community Action Partnership (CAP) San Diego, a part of HHSA, was host of the 2007 annual Community Action Partnership convention August 28-31 at the Manchester Grand Hyatt Hotel. San Diego County Board of Supervisors Vice-Chair **Greg Cox**, District 1, and Central Region Deputy Director **Rene Santiago** welcomed the 1,100 attendees at the opening session.

On August 28, attendees had the opportunity to participate in two community service projects and a bus tour of programs provided for at-risk youth in San Diego. One of the community service projects included meal preparation for homeless students enrolled at the Monarch School. In the second project, attendees worked side by side with members of the Urban Corps to

clean up graffiti and trash in the mid-city area of San Diego. The bus tour included visits to three programs offering services to at-risk youth.

The convention offered 90 workshops over the four-day period that presented best practices proven effective in moving families and individuals out of poverty. Four workshops were offered by local agencies including a panel presentation on the Earned Income Tax Credit campaign which brought \$15.3 million in state and federal tax dollars to individuals and families in San Diego County in tax year 2006. The panel consisted of Deputy Director Rene



*Central Region Deputy Director **Rene Santiago**, left, and County Supervisor **Greg Cox**, District 1, attended the National CAP Convention held here in San Diego.*

Santiago, United Way Executive Director Doug Sawyer, Ron Wicks from the Internal Revenue Service, and Program Manager Teresa Smith from Home Start.

Kudos!

In Home Supportive Services (IHSS) social worker **Susan Humphrey** may have saved the life of an elderly woman in Escondido. She went to the woman's home to do an intake interview and she knew the woman would be home, but there was no answer.

She walked around the mobile home and found an unlocked door and called to the woman. She heard a very faint woman's voice and entered the home. She discovered the woman on the floor with dried blood on her arm. She was partially unclothed with soiled blankets around her. Susan called 911 and her supervisor.

After the woman was transported to the hospital, Susan washed the blankets, located the house key, locked up the home and took the key to the woman. She also got the names of two of the woman's friends and contacted them, and reported the situation to APS.

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 October theme is "Wildland Fires," protecting yourself from devastating fires.

The County's emergency page will provide valuable information in the event of a disaster.



Agency In the News

August 15 - September 15

TV Stories

30

Radio Stories

7

Print Stories

20

Press Events

West Nile Virus

Pro-Active News Example

A San Diego woman called HHSA and notified us that her 30-year-old daughter was properly diagnosed with viral meningitis after seeing Public Health Officer **Wilma Wooten, M.D., M.P.H.** on the news talking about other San Diego County cases.

The woman said her daughter's doctors had not tested her for viral meningitis, but she recognized all the symptoms that Wooten talked about in the news story.

CWS Intern Program Benefits All

The last week in August was an exciting and busy time in HHSA Child Welfare Services offices as 46 SDSU Social Work students started their nine-month internships. Each intern is matched with a CWS social worker who has a degree in social work. The number of CWS staff participating in the program increased this year by over 50% from prior years through nominations by Program Managers. Eighteen percent of the SDSU social work students chose CWS for their internship.

The CWS Intern program is a cost-effective method for training future employees. Interns bring energy and new ideas to the CWS offices and provide additional services to families. Many of the interns become CWS employees who have acquired extensive experience and knowledge in this specialized area of social work. Many of the interns receive a Title IV-E stipend which they pay back by working for two years in a child welfare agency. Since the IV-E program began in 1992, 180 of the graduates completed their two year payback as County employees, with 98 continuing after their payback obligation was completed.

County employees who wish to earn a degree in social work can apply to receive a stipend through the Title IV-E Child Welfare program. Title IV-E advances the County's efforts to support career development among employees. Interested employees can email Omar.Lopez@sdcounty.ca.gov.

Vietnamese Community Hosts Public Safety Forum

The Vietnamese Federation of San Diego, San Diego County Board of Supervisors Chairman **Ron Roberts**, District 4, and **Bonnie Dumanis**, San Diego County District Attorney, hosted the Vietnamese Community Public Safety Forum on September 8th in Linda Vista. The family-oriented community forum is representative of Roberts' and Dumanis' proactive commitment to Healthy and Safe Communities by promoting a dialogue with communities throughout San Diego. Forum topics included information on elder abuse and Internet predators.

The Vietnamese Federation plans a follow-up forum on consumer protection, gangs, child protection, and Linda Vista's Family Success Center at Montgomery Middle School. Opened in January 2007, the Family Success Center is a collaboration between the community, Montgomery Middle School and HHSA North Central Child Welfare Services. It serves as a one-stop center for families in the community needing services. North Central Region is proud to participate in forums like these to educate and provide resources to the Linda Vista community.

DIBBS

As an HHSA employee, you are directly involved in the operations and delivery of County services. You are sitting in an ideal position to suggest improvements. A suggestion that is implemented could receive a cash award, up to \$20,000. (The amount depends on the type of award and the first-year net savings.)