

AGING & independence

July 2009

At a Tough Time, Turn to the Community

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After her husband died three years ago, Shirley L. Jones was not going to let herself get lost in grief. She chose not to go into seclusion at home and focus on his illness and death, but instead to honor his memory and channel her energies in a positive direction.

Three months before her husband's death, something wonderful was born in her San Diego community, the George L. Stevens Senior Center, which houses the 4th District Seniors Resource Center. Shirley decided to devote more time to the center, becoming a member of the board of directors.

Shirley, who is in her early 70's, has become one of a handful of loyal volunteers who pitches in every week to do what needs to be done, helping Executive Director Rosemary Pope nurture this site into a welcoming place for older adults and others in the neighborhood. She'll proudly give you a tour of the beautifully designed building, which houses an assembly room that can hold more than 450 people. It doubles as a nutrition site during the week and a space for large community events. The building also has an exercise room that used to hold the Feeling Fit Club, but that group has expanded so much that they moved into the assembly room. The center has a library and a multipurpose room for the quilting and crafts classes, plus a computer lab.



SHIRLEY L. JONES

From September to May, Shirley leads classes on basic computer skills. She admits she's no computer whiz, but she can demonstrate the basics and loves to work with photos. This past spring, she taught her students how to make calendar pages on the computer, using their own photos.

Shirley's granddaughter keeps her up on the latest in technology. Her granddaughter also has an ulterior motive: she wants Shirley to start dating again.

"My granddaughter is trying to get me a date using the Internet," Shirley says. "I told her that if I'm going to meet someone, I want to do it face to face." She does admit that she keeps checking her email.

Besides volunteering at the center, Shirley also enjoys activities there, especially line dancing on Tuesdays and Thursdays. This is another way to meet people and she loves the exercise. Outside of the center, she's active in her church and enjoys bowling.

Plus every month, she joins 24 other members of WOW (Women of Wonder) Red Hatters, a group of active older women who wear red hats when they go out to socialize by having lunch or going to an event or a play.

"Those who have lost loved ones should get involved in their community," she says. "You can be surprised how uplifting that is for you." ▲



THE VITAL AGING CONFERENCE WITH PHYSICIAN/CLOWN DR. JOHN GLICK, LEFT, HAD RED-NOSED VOLUNTEERS LAUGHING AS THEY SQUEEZED 14 PEOPLE INTO A HUGE PAIR OF UNDERWEAR.



COOL ZONES PROVIDE BREAK FROM HEAT

The Cool Zones program has grown to include more than 130 sites throughout San Diego County. The essence of the program is simple: reminding older adults to head to a Cool Zone (or another air-conditioned setting) during hot days. Using a Cool Zone cuts individual energy costs and the risk of blackouts, as well as protects the health of frail seniors. As part of the program, seniors are also educated about the effects of heat, and how to stay cooler at home. AIS partners with SDG&E on the program.



Cool Zone sites include libraries, nutrition centers, courthouses, covered malls and other locations that have air conditioning. People can find a Cool Zone location near them by calling (800) 510-2020, or clicking the polar bear logo on the home page of the Network of Care, www.sandiego.networkofcare.org/aging. ▲

TRANSIT BUDDIES IN NORTH COUNTY

The North County Transit District (NCTD) has started a Transit Buddy program, where volunteers provide one-to-one training for older adults on how to use the transit system. The program will be of particular use to those seniors who are no longer able to drive safely, but it is open to any older adult who would like to learn more about transportation options.

Transit Buddies will teach potential passengers of the Breeze, Sprinter and Coaster systems how to pay the fare, request a transfer, how to use the special accessibility features, review safety precautions, show them how to read the "Rider's Guide," help them plan a trip, and more. The training will be personalized to the needs of each older adult.

NCTD is also looking for seniors and others who would like to be Transit Buddies. Training will be provided, plus each Transit Buddy receives an NCTD ID card allowing unlimited access on NCTD transit for free during the month in which they are volunteering.

For more information, call (760) 966-6525. ▲

EXERCISE GUIDELINES AVAILABLE ONLINE

San Diego County has many avenues for older adults to keep fit all year, including our Feeling Fit Clubs, Silver Age Yoga and many other programs. We realize that physical activity is a critical part of daily life, one of the most effective ways for seniors to maintain their health and independence.

Two federal agencies now have exercise guides available online. The National Institute on Aging (NIA) has updated its exercise guide for older adults, "Exercise and Physical Activity" and it's available on the NIA Web site. The guide offers tips for getting started in an exercise program, as well as specific exercises for strength, endurance, balance and flexibility. The guide also includes a monthly progress test to chart your improvements. To order this free publication or to download it, see www.nia.nih.gov/exercise. Or you can call (301) 496-1752

The U.S. Department of Health & Human Services also offers guidelines online for healthy activity. "Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans" has a special section for active older adults. The guidelines seek to help older adults select types and amounts of physical activity appropriate for their abilities. The guidelines for older adults are also appropriate for adults younger than age 65 who have chronic conditions and those with a low level of fitness. There is another section for active adults that has suggestions for seniors who are fit and have no limiting physical conditions. See www.health.gov/paguidelines. You can also call toll-free: (800) 336-4797. ▲

HONORING



RETIRED AND SENIOR VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

VOLUNTEER OF THE MONTH

Roger Crim, nominated by Laurie Switzer and Kristine Hayes of the USS Midway Museum, is our RSVP Volunteer of the Month. Roger has been an RSVP volunteer for more than three years and has served more than 1,650 hours. He is a former U.S. Navy F-8 pilot and a retired commercial airline pilot. Roger volunteers as a docent at the museum, and is a member of the docent



ROGER CRIM

program's management team. He serves as a lead docent, managing a team of 25 people every Wednesday afternoon. He is chairman of the USS Midway Museum Docent Council. Congratulations, Roger. Your dedication to volunteering is making a difference in the community.

RSVP VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Public, nonprofit and health agencies seek volunteers in their communities. Potential volunteers can call RSVP at **(858) 505-6399** for information on the following opportunities:

Santee Fire Department needs volunteers for fire safety inspections for three hours a day, one day a week. Training and uniform provided.

Reuben H. Fleet Science Center needs exhibit gallery facilitators, information ambassadors, science center facilitators and booth attendants.

San Diego County Sheriff's Museum needs docents.

Jewish Family Services needs friendly visitors, nutrition program volunteers and handypersons.

AARP needs volunteers for information referral and helping with community events.

Community Christian Service Agency needs volunteers to assist the homeless.

Habitat for Humanity seeks administrative assistants, construction volunteers, cashiers, greeters, donation pick-up drivers, and at-home phone workers.

Senior Volunteer Patrols throughout the county need volunteers for their community-based programs.

Birch Aquarium at Scripps needs volunteers for Discovery Lab, information & visitor center, plus an exhibits interpreter.

County Veteran Service seeks administrative support volunteers.

County of San Diego Mission Valley Family Resource Center needs volunteers for office support.

San Diego Hospice needs clerical assistants, delivery couriers and patient care volunteers.

SPOTLIGHT: SAN DIEGO BLOOD BANK

The San Diego Blood Bank, the primary supplier of blood to the majority of hospitals in San Diego, was founded in 1950 by the San Diego County Medical Society. The blood bank must collect 400 pints of blood every day for area hospital patients. The San Diego Blood Bank collects, processes, and supplies more than 150,000 units of life-saving blood to the region annually.

The blood bank achieves its mission through the participation of local residents who make a difference by donating blood or devoting time at the various donor centers and blood drives throughout San Diego County.

San Diego Blood Bank volunteers play a pivotal role in ensuring that the community has a plentiful blood supply available for local patients. As a part of the blood bank's *Volunteer Difference* program, volunteers are given the opportunity to donate their time at mobile drives or in the canteen at donor centers. Volunteers earn points for each hour worked and enjoy more benefits each time a new Life Level point total is achieved. Points are redeemed in the Life Saver Volunteer Store for items like volunteer T-shirts, polo shirts and more.

See how you can make a difference in life as a volunteer at the San Diego Blood Bank by calling the RSVP office at **(858) 505-6399**.

NATIONAL AWARDS FOR TWO PROGRAMS

Two AIS programs have received Achievement Awards from the National Association of Counties (NACo). The programs, Senior Expo: Protect Yourself & Your Wallet and the Intergenerational Dance program, are being recognized for their innovation.

The Senior Expo: Protect Yourself & Your Wallet events, are done in partnership with the District Attorney's Office and the County Library and San Diego City libraries, and are sponsored and funded by the Barona, Sycuan and Viejas Tribal Governments. The Senior Expos combine physical self-defense classes by black belt Mary Davis with financial self-defense information from representatives of Adult Protective Services and the District Attorney's Office.

The Intergenerational Dance program brings young people and older adults together to dance in a community gathering space, the public library. The program promotes interpersonal relationships between generations while incorporating and encouraging regular physical activity. AIS has partnered with the County Library on this program.

The awards will be presented July 26 in Nashville. ♣

NEXT SELF-DEFENSE CLASS SCHEDULED

The next Senior Expo: Protect Yourself & Your Wallet event has been scheduled:

July 14 (Tuesday) at the Point Loma/Hervey Branch Library, 3701 Voltaire St., San Diego 92107.

All events run from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Lunch is provided. To reserve a seat, call **(800) 510-2020** and press "4." Leave your name and phone number, plus the July 14 date. ♣

SHARE AIS WITH OTHERS

Do you know of other people who could benefit from the information provided in this *Aging & Independence* bulletin? Would they (or you) also like to be on our email list to receive notices of special items? If so, send mail and email information to Denise Nelesen, 9335 Hazard Way, San Diego, CA 92123; or denise.nelesen@sdcounty.ca.gov, or call **(858) 505-6474**. ♣

PROGRAM CAN CUT YOUR UTILITY COSTS

Do you use more electricity because of a health condition? Maybe you have a motorized wheelchair with a battery you need to charge. Or you use an oxygen concentrator. Or you need more heating or cooling than the average person because you have a compromised immune sys-

tem. There are many physical reasons why people might use more electricity, which translates into higher energy bills.

SDG&E has a special program for these situations. The Medical Baseline Allowance provides additional utility charges at the baseline rate, which is the lowest rate for residential customers. So your costs would be lower for the same amount of energy use.

You do not need to qualify by income or age. And you can be a renter whose landlord pays the energy bill and still qualify. Interested customers just need their doctor to sign a form verifying the need.

For more information, call **(800) 411-7343** or email to medicalbaseline@sdge.com. Applications are available from the SDG&E Web site (www.sdge.com) in English, Spanish, Vietnamese and in large print. ♣

HOME-MODIFICATION AID AVAILABLE

People with disabilities who live in apartment complexes, rental housing or their own homes within the City of San Diego might be eligible for certain home-modification assistance up to \$1,000 as part of Accessibility 1000, a program of Access to Independence and the Fair Housing Council of San Diego.

Possible home modifications include ramps, widening doors, installation of grab bars, bathroom and kitchen improvements and more. Eligibility is limited to low- and moderate-income households.

For more information and to apply, contact Access to Independence at **(619) 293-3500**. ♣

'EXTRA HELP' FOR MEDICATION COSTS

With prescription drug costs increasing, many people are looking for ways to save on medications. There is a low-income subsidy available that can save you money if you qualify. Contact the nonprofit HICAP (Health Insurance Counseling and Advocacy Program) for free assistance with the "Extra Help" program or other Medicare enrollment information. HICAP is administered by Elder Law and Advocacy. Call **(800) 434-0222** for an appointment. ♣

WEB SITE FOR MEDICARE ADVOCACY

California Health Advocates is a nonprofit organization dedicated to Medicare advocacy and education for Californians. CHA's Web site provides accurate, unbiased information about Medicare benefits, plus resources for professionals working with California's Medicare beneficiaries. See www.cahealthadvocates.org, or you can call the main office in Sacramento, **(916) 231-5110**. ♣

SEND IN YOUR ITEMS

This monthly calendar welcomes your contributions. Just send items by the 10th of each month preceding the issue date to: Denise G. Nelesen, editor, Aging & Independence Services, 9335 Hazard Way, San Diego, CA 92123-1222. Or fax to: (858) 495-5080. Or you can email to: denise.nelesen@sdcounty.ca.gov.

JULY 11, SATURDAY

4 TO 8 P.M.

The Bastille Day Celebration, an annual fundraiser for Southern Caregiver Resource Center, will be held at the Fairbanks Ranch Clubhouse on San Dieguito Road. Cost is \$125 per person. For more information or for reservations, call (858) 268-4432 or see www.caregivercenter.org.

JULY 14, TUESDAY

11 A.M. TO 1:30 P.M.

“Senior Expo: Protect Yourself & Your Wallet” will be presented at the Point Loma/Hervey Branch Library, 3701 Voltaire St., San Diego, CA 92107. This program provides both physical and financial self-defense techniques. Reservations required; call (800) 510-2020, press “4,” and leave your name, phone number and state the July 14 date.

JULY 16 AND AUG. 6

11 A.M. TO 1 P.M.

Food for Thought at the Vista Library, 700 Eucalyptus Ave. in Vista, features yoga and lunch (for a donation of \$3.50 for seniors and \$6 for others). The yoga program is free. To sign up for the lunch, call (760) 726-1340, ext. 1531.

JULY 17, FRIDAY

9 TO 11 A.M.

The Patchwork of Hope Network will present an educational seminar to raise awareness about shingles and after-shingles pain at the War Memorial Building, 3325 Zoo Dr., in Balboa Park. This is a campaign led by the National Council on Aging and the National Pain Foundation. For more information, see www.AfterShingles.com. Registration required by July 14; call (619) 236-6905.

JULY 23, THURSDAY

1 TO 4 P.M.

“Housing Options for Older Adults,” a free seminar for older adults and caregivers, will be held at the College Avenue Older Adult Center, 4855 College Ave., San Diego 92115. Learn about move options, and the cost, both financially and emotionally. RSVP required by July 17; call (858) 637-3223 or see www.jfssd.org.

JULY 27, MONDAY

11 A.M. TO NOON

A free Hearing Help workshop, featuring advancements in digital hearing aid technology, will be held at the Grossmont Healthcare District, Conference Center, 9001 Wakarusa St., La Mesa. Registration required; call (800) 827-4277.

JULY 27, MONDAY

11:15 A.M.

“Fruits and Vegetables for a Healthier Body” will be presented by Vickie Velasco at the College Avenue Older Adult Center, 4855 College Ave., San Diego 92115. For more information, call (619) 583-3300.

JULY 28, TUESDAY

10 TO 11 A.M.

“How to Maintain a Healthy Voice” will be presented by Kathleen Catterall, manager of Speech Therapy for Sharp Rehabilitation Services, at the Sharp Memorial Outpatient Pavilion, Classroom B, 3075 Health Center Dr., San Diego. Registration required; call (800) 827-4277

JULY 28, TUESDAY

5 TO 6:30 P.M.

A Bilingual (English/Spanish) Caregiver Support Group for people age 60 and younger who have a family member with Alzheimer’s disease or related dementia will be held at the National City Public Library, 1401 National City Blvd., National City. The support group will be offered on the fourth Tuesday of each month. For more information, call (858) 622-5800.

AUG. 20, THURSDAY

9 A.M. TO 2 P.M.

A caregiving conference will be held at the East County Community Center, 4975 Memorial Dr., La Mesa. This free conference is provided by the San Diego Caregiver Coalition. Lunch provided. Registration required; call (800) 827-1008.

ADVISORY COUNCIL

The AIS Advisory Council will meet at noon Monday, July 13, at AIS, 9335 Hazard Way, San Diego 92123. Open to the public.

CA SENIOR LEGISLATURE

The San Diego CSL meets at 10 a.m. on the second Monday of the month at AIS.