COUNTY NEWS

PUBLISHED FOR EMPLOYEES OF THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

May 2008

County Employee Mentors Afghan Troops

Craig Cook (second from right), a Building Maintenance Supervisor with the County's General Services Department and a Machinist Mate Senior Chief in the Navy, stands with a County flag that flew over FOB Lightning in Gardez, Afghanistan.

Craig Cook had just arrived in Kabul when the guard at the airport asked his Navy unit how many they were and whether they had their dog tags on. The unit was about to board an armored bus for a camp two miles away. The road to the camp had recently been attacked.

And now, on their way, it was lined with people watching the traffic pass. A choking stench filled the air.

"We are definitely not in San Diego," Cook would later write in his journal. The people they passed looked tired, he wrote.

"You see it in their faces, in their eyes, in their walk and in their gestures. I guess centuries of the world trying to conquer you would wear anyone down. The children look like children anywhere except it's 35 degrees and they have no shoes and torn clothes and they look like they hadn't bathed in their lifetime. Some look at us in admiration and some in despair."

Cook, 46, is Machinist Mate Senior Chief. But you may know him better as a County coworker. A Building Maintenance Supervisor at the Vista Courthouse, Cook has been with the County since 1994. Cook's wife, Martha Madera, works for the Health and Human Services Agency in Escondido. The couple has three children.

Craig has served in the Navy for 25 years – 11 in active service and 14 as a reservist. He is one of 25 County employees that Human Resources counts as currently deployed.

Cook began his 9-month deployment in February and is mentoring an Afghan Army Command Sergeant Major. The challenge, he said in an email exchange with *County News*, is to teach the Afghan military to use its intelligence before its weapons. The Afghan Brigade of 220 soldiers is led by 30 officers and 50 sergeants. Nearly all of them have seen combat, against the Russians, Taliban, or fighting as mujahedeen.

"The U.S. military is used to sustaining long battles with logistics, munitions, manpower, etc.," Cook wrote. "The Afghan Army is used to shoot 'til you run out of ammo, then suffer the loss. We have to teach them that war/battles are won with more than bullets."

(Continued on Page 3)

Innovative County Program Graduates Third Class

Clarence Burton (center) with Mina Nguyen, his job coach from the Department of Parks and Recreation, and Mark Stern, a life skills coach provided by Aging and Independence Services.

Though he is just 18 years old, Clarence Burton's life is about to come full circle. He will begin working at Polinsky Children's Center, a place where Clarence and many of his siblings have lived over the years.

"One of my big things is giving back," said Clarence. "I look at where I am now compared to where I've been, and it wouldn't have been possible without all of the people that helped me along the way."

Clarence is one of 11 young people who graduated from the County's Workforce Academy for Youth program on April 16. The program provides six-month paid internships for foster youth who are about to "age out" of the system and transition to adult lives on their own.

After completing his internship in Parks and Recreation, Clarence was hired as a student worker at Polinsky Children's Center. The other graduates also have been hired by the County.

Why is this man being duct taped?
(Find out on Page 4)

Todd Burton (left) and Nick Vent (right), both HAZMAT team members, help Mike McCullough, an Environmental Health Specialist, seal up his suit during decontamination training.

News Briefs News Briefs

Juvenile Hall Opens its Doors for an Inside Look

Juvenile Hall is offering the public behind-the-scenes tours on Saturday, May 3, and County employees can skip to the head of the line if they arrive a half hour early.

The annual Juvenile Hall Open House will run from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.; County employees wanting early entry should arrive at 8:30 a.m.

All ages are invited, but children younger than 18 must be accompanied by an adult. The address is 2801 Meadow Lark Dr. in San Diego, near Children's Hospital.

Visitors will receive a behind-the-scenes tour of Juvenile Court, Juvenile Hall and the Girl's Rehabilitation Facility. More than 10,000 youth are booked into the 54-year-old facility each year. Many parents use the tour as a scared straight event for their kids. Officers role play with the kids, treating them like detainees, making them walk in a single file line with their arms folded, shirts tucked in and pants pulled up.

Golf Tourney to Raise Money for Disadvantaged Kids

The 12th Annual Volunteers In Probation Golf Tournament is set for Friday, June 6 at Cottonwood Golf Course in Rancho San Diego. Volunteers In Probation, Inc., the non-profit arm of the Probation Department that raises money to provide basic needs for disadvantaged youth to help their rehabilitation process, is hosting the tournament.

Players of all skill levels are encouraged to sign up. The shotgun start begins at 1 p.m. The cost is $110 per player and includes a box lunch and buffet dinner. For $25 you can attend just the dinner and auction beginning at about 5:30 pm.

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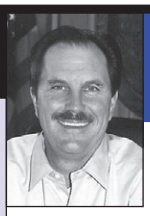
County employees have saved thousands of dollars and earned money from their great suggestions. You could be next! Submit your great ideas to DIBBS today.

Learn more at http://cww.co.sandiego.ca.us/dhr/DIBBS/index.html.



In Walt's Words

A Shot at Being a Healthy Kid

Measles is a thing of the past, right? It went the way of polio, Howdy Doody and poodle skirts. It was one of those diseases that, up until the 1950s and early 1960s, were serious health threats to children in the United States. Back before scientists developed the vaccines we now use to immunize our children.

Well, not really. We recently learned for ourselves that measles, while controlled through high rates of vaccination, is not entirely in our past. It's still in our community, and still a threat.

In early February, measles broke out in San Diego County, and before the outbreak was over, 12 children suffered through the disease, which comes with a fever and those tell-tale spots that start at the head and spread down to the toes.

It was the county's first outbreak since 1991, and began when a 7-year-old child who had not been inoculated against measles returned from a trip to Switzerland with the disease.

That child then spread this highly contagious virus to four children at the doctor's office, and from there, measles spread to more children. None of the youngsters infected with measles had been vaccinated because they were infants and too young to receive the vaccine, or because their parents had chosen for them not to be vaccinated.

All told, thousands of people were exposed to measles, including 250 passengers who boarded a flight to Hawaii with one infected child.

The choice of some parents not to immunize their children put many others at risk, especially ones who were defenseless against the disease because they were younger than 1 – the minimum age for a measles shot.

County Public Health Services immediately swung into action, dispatching staff to the school and into the community to follow the virus's trail. Staff had to determine where the children had been and warn others about possible exposure.

The parents who didn't immunize their kids share the belief that the measles, mumps and rubella vaccine has been linked to autism and other health problems. But there just isn't the scientific data to back this up. As a father of three and brand new grandfather to a newborn baby girl, I can relate to parents wanting to protect their children from all of the dangers out there.

But I also know that science has shown us that our kids face a greater danger from disease than from immunization.

If there was a bright side to all of this, it got people talking about immunizations, and it got them talking about measles and other childhood illnesses.

Our County Public Health Officer, Dr. Wilma Wooten, says it best: "We can't make parents vaccinate their children. We can only educate and inform them and hope they make appropriate, informed decisions."

May is Toddler Immunization Month, a annual observance to remind folks of how critical immunizations are to protecting our kids. It's not only measles we're worried about. It's also mumps, whooping cough, polio, chicken pox and other serious illnesses.

Now's a good time to make sure everyone in the family is up to date on their vaccines, too.

For information on how to get your child immunized call the Baby Shots Line, at (619) 692-6600; or visit: http://www.sdiz.org.

Walt

Walt Ekard
Chief Administrative Officer

County Employee Mentors Afghan Troops
(continued from page 1)

The Afghan commander has to relay that understanding to his troops, Cook wrote. But first, Cook has to make sure the commander believes it himself.

From the first stop at Camp Phoenix, Cook's unit of 12 Navy personnel traveled to Forward Operating Base Lightning, in Gardez, which has been his home away from home ever since.

The base has personnel from Poland, Romania, Guam, France, the Netherlands and the United States.

"There are always different flags flying," Cook wrote. Recently, the County of San Diego's flag flew over Lightning. Chief of General Services (Facility Operations) Michael Urquhart and his assistant Karuna McAllister sent the flag to Craig. County coworkers also have sent him Sunday newspapers – which the troops get a kick of reading for the Southern California home prices – as well as hand sanitizers; snacks; and other goodies.

"Please thank them for all their support," he wrote.

Lightning, which sits about 8,000 feet above sea level, is surrounded by the snow-covered Himalayas and looks like a MASH unit, but rather than tents there are B-huts, quickly constructed wooden structures to house offices and sleeping quarters.

"The ground is covered by hardened dirt layered with 12 inches of gravel and rocks – big rocks," Cook wrote in his journal, which he shared with *County News*.

A local merchant sells his wares on the base bazaar. Because it is too dangerous for service personnel to travel off the base, some merchants are allowed onto the outer part of the base.

"Walk slowly, or suffer a twisted ankle or foot. They do that for drainage of rain and snow. According to the staff here, this base gets attacked seven to 10 times per year by rockets or mortars. So far, so good. All I know is, I'm going to bomb shelter B-14."

Cook and his unit rarely leave the base because traveling is too dangerous; convoys are commonly targeted. But he will be returning to San Diego for a brief visit in July before returning to his work in Afghanistan. He plans to present the flag that flew over the base to the County. There's something else on his agenda, too, he wrote.

"I can't wait to taste a cold margarita."

You can write to Cook at craig.f.cook@afghan.swa.army.mil.

2008 Admin Professionals' Luncheon Goes Out with a Bang

From the moment invitations were sent out, attendees knew that this year's Administrative Professionals' Day event held something unique in store for them.

The invitation for the luncheon, hosted by the Public Safety Group (PSG), read: "Attend at your own risk! But, your appearance is CRITICAL to the outcome of this extraordinary event. You will be subject to interrogation…"

More than 400 attendees arrived to find a "CSI"-style set-up with yellow crime tape and were issued Sheriff's identification tags for access to "the scene." At their seats, guests received goodie bags labeled as "evidence," and enjoyed a meal while watching video clips of their favorite TV crime shows.

When PSG Deputy Chief Administrative Officer Harold Tuck was "shot" and wounded during his introductory remarks, PSG's professionals were able to show off their crime-solving abilities.

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CECO/United Way Contributions Now Online

Managing your employee charitable contributions is now easier than ever, thanks to a new Self-Service option provided by the Department of Human Resources (DHR) and the office of the Auditor & Controller.

Said Auditor & Controller Tracy Sandoval, "These new enhancements not only provide employees considerable flexibility in making and managing their contributions, it also results in significantly improved record keeping procedures required for audit purposes."

To begin contributing or to change a current contribution to CECO and/or the United Way, simply log on to PeopleSoft and select "CECO/United Way Pledge." From there, employees can elect to make changes to the amount of their charitable paycheck deduction, as well as view and print their contribution history for tax purposes or personal records.

Last year, CECO donated more than $253,000 to 127 local charitable efforts through the direct contributions of County employees. DHR Deputy Director Willie Cook said, "We are pleased to assist all of those County employees who participate in either CECO or the United Way. Their efforts to meet the needs of our community ultimately benefit us all."

Slater-Price Hosts Escondido Senior Fair

Supervisor Pam Slater-Price, along with the County Office of Aging & Independence Services and the City of Escondido, teamed up for a different kind of senior health fair in Escondido called "Healthy Senior Living."

"This is a fantastic event that has something for every senior and caregiver," Slater-Price said.

(News Briefs continued on Page 6)

Need an expert opinion?

Have a burning question, need some advice, don't know where to turn? *County News* is here to help! Next month, we'll introduce a monthly advice column. And you, dear readers, can write to us with whatever's on your mind. We'll take your queries and track down the best County expert to answer them. Write to us at: CountyNews@sdcounty.ca.gov.

2008 Admin Professionals' Luncheon

(continued from page 3)

Guests were selected to undergo handwriting analyses, mouth swabbing, interrogation and fingerprinting.

"This year's event was over the top," said Anna Rivas-Castro, an Administrative Secretary with the Department of Public Works.

"Everything was so creative, and the organizers paid tremendous attention to detail!"

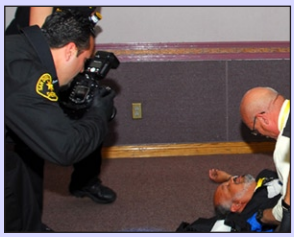
The Administrative Professionals' Day luncheon is an annual event that hundreds of staff look forward to, and the planning begins months in advance. According to Sheriff's Staff Officer Kim Madigan, more than 70 PSG employees helped with planning this year. While numerous departments and divisions contributed creative ideas and great execution, the Sheriff's Crime Lab staff was especially critical to the lunch's success, Madigan said.

"The support that we received from department heads was just incredible. They gave us the red carpet!"

Tuck, who recently moved over to the Finance and General Government group to become the County's Chief Information Officer, said the luncheon "was definitely a great way to end my term as DCAO of PSG. It was both educational and fun. Thanks to all who planned this wonderful event; and again, I want to express my most sincere appreciation for the contributions made each day by the County's Administrative Professionals."

After valiantly working to identify Tuck's assailant, PSG crime scene investigators were able to announce a breakthrough in the case before the end of the luncheon.

The suspect? Assistant Chief Administrative Officer Helen Robbins-Meyer, who good-naturedly submitted to arrest by Sheriff's Deputies.



PSG crime scene investigators show off their crime-solving abilities on willing participant Harold Tuck.

Cops Turn to Cell Phones to Find Missing Kids

For all you know, that car stopped next to you at the red light could be carrying an abducted child. But how would you know? There are no large electronic signs hanging over this quiet street, and your radio, which would broadcast the news of that missing child, is switched off.

But then your cell phone rings, alerting you to a text message. It's an Amber Alert, and the vehicle described, along with its driver, sends a chill up your spine.

It's him, the guy in the car right next to you. You dial 911.

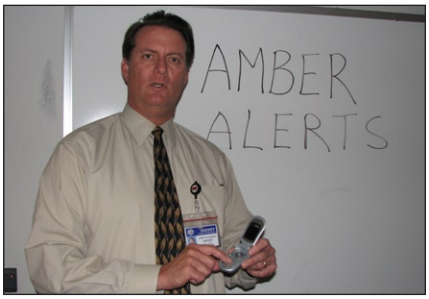
That's a scenario law enforcement hopes will play out when people register their cell phones for Wireless Amber Alerts. The Sheriff's Department this month is launching "Opt in for Amber," and joining a national campaign to enroll millions of cell phone subscribers in this free program.

"What we need is the eyes of the public," said Sheriff's Sgt. Mark O'Connor of the Juvenile Unit. O'Connor said the Sheriff's Department would be publicizing the campaign to County workers through paycheck stuffers and all-employee voicemails. The department will unveil the campaign during a media event on May 27.

Child Protective Services is attending Neighborhood Watch meetings to offer training on how to use the Wireless Amber Alerts.

Most people know Amber Alerts as the bulletins that break into radio or television programming, or light up the Caltrans signs on freeways. The bulletins are provided through collaboration between law enforcement and broadcasting companies.

Amber Alerts were named for Amber Hagerman, a 9-year-old Texas girl who in 1996 was snatched from her bicycle by a man in a pickup truck. She was found dead four days later. Her killer never was found.



Sheriff's Juvenile Unit Sgt. Mark O'Connor explains "Opt in for Amber" to Sheriff's Crime Prevention Specialists.

As of Feb. 28, 392 abducted children across the country have been located because of an Amber Alert.

Now, with bulletins being sent to cell phones, law enforcement agencies hope to have even greater success by reaching people when they're not on the freeways or in front of a television.

"If we can get more eyes looking for that van, that truck, that child, the quicker we can get to them," O'Connor said.

Cell phone subscribers can elect to have Amber Alerts sent to them for only certain zip codes, said Lt. Valerie Bickel, with the Sheriff's Family Protection Detail. So if a person lives in San Diego, but makes frequent trips to Phoenix, that subscriber could choose to receive alerts for only those locations.

Bickel and O'Connor say that adding cell phones to the Amber Alert will strengthen an already powerful law enforcement tool.

"Even the crooks know now," Bickel said. "They've got an Amber Alert and they're going to find you."

Signing up for Wireless Amber Alerts is free. From your cell phone, simply text AMBER, followed by a space, and then your zip code to 26237.

For information, visit http://www.wirelessamberalerts.org.

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Decontaminating the Decontaminators

It's never good when the people in the white suits show up.

Something has exploded, something has spilled. And they will clean it up.

But once HazMat's work is done, who cleans them up? Normally, they take care of that, too. But in a major emergency, when they're stretched to the limit, and there are lots of people who have been contaminated too, they're going to need some help.

That help has to come from people who know what they're doing, people trained in the rules of decontamination.

Margarita Mogollon, an Environmental Health Specialist Inspector, uses duct tape to seal the booties to the protective suit worn by Carmel Fuentecilla, a HAZMAT field inspector.

A new crop of these helpers is now ready. About 70 County employees are undergoing decontamination training offered by County HazMat team members at the Department of Environmental Health.

The day-long training sessions, held April 9 and 16 and May 8 at the County's Department of Environmental Health on Hazard Way, provide County employees, many of whom are HazMat inspectors and food inspectors, the basics on how to decontaminate HazMat workers and county residents who also have been exposed to chemicals or radiation.

"What we're trying to do is bring them up from a basic awareness level to knowing what to do," said Supervising Environmental Health Specialist Nick Vent, a member of the county's HazMat team who leads the training.

The county's HazMat team is comprised of 50 San Diego firefighters and 10 people from the County's Department of Environmental Health.

On April 9, Vent and fellow HazMat team members Todd Burton and Brad Long took their class of about 15 employees into the parking lot behind DEH and set up a series of three wading pools, and a large shower tent divided into three aisles.

The County owns 10 such tents, and they are used when a large number of people have been contaminated. Water is piped in and emitted through dozens of nozzles, like a carwash.

In the center aisle, a conveyor built with lightweight metal and plastic is ready for victims on stretchers.

"This is nothing more than taking a shower and that's all it is. And that's what you need to tell people because they're going to be wigging out," Long said.

The class was divided into two groups – victims and responders. Responders stepped into their protective white suits, boots, gloves and masks and the victims sealed it all together with duct tape.

Responders went to their posts and victims lined up near a radiation portal monitor, which detects radiation levels on people who pass through it.

"KABOOM!" shouted one of the instructors. The drill had begun.

The victims passed through the portal and then the showers, though the water wasn't running and no one was required to disrobe. Afterward, Margarita Mogollon, an environmental health specialist who is a HazMat inspector, removed her mask. She said she'd been imagining what an actual emergency would feel like.

"The stress level will really be high, so it'll be different," she said.

"It's good to act it out because then you're definitely more prepared," Mogollon said, as she wound tape around the top of a booty worn by Carmel Fuentecilla, a HazMat field inspector.

Then it was the victims' turn to suit up and practice decontaminating the responders. The responders lined up and waited to step into the three wading pools. At each, they were hosed from head to toe, and in the last pool, they stepped out of their suits, leaving them in large plastic bags.

The day was nearly over, but not before the big reward: Nick Vent on a stretcher stripped down to swimming trunks and rolled through the running showers.

Normally, warm water is piped in. HazMat doesn't want victims to risk hypothermia on top of everything else. But on this day, the water ran cold. It was an amusing and lighthearted end to a day devoted to terrible what-ifs.

Trade in Your Old Mowers

Supervisor Ron Roberts and the Air Pollution Control District are once again offering the popular Lawn Mower Trade-In Program – this year on Saturday, May 17 in the CAC's north parking lot.

Participants will be able to trade in their old mowers for a discounted cordless, rechargeable, electric Black & Decker Model CMM1200 lawn mower. The rechargeable battery operates the mower for about an hour, and the unit comes with a 2-year factory warranty.

All you need is photo I.D. and proof of San Diego residency; one working lawn mower per household (oil and gas emptied from tank prior to arrival); and $150.00 (cash, check or credit card with proper I.D.).

The number of lawn mowers available is limited and will be available on a first-come, first-served basis. Participants may want to arrive earlier than the 8:00 a.m. start time. Feel free to bring a lawn chair for your comfort while in line.

The "Start Line" will begin at the East driveway of the North parking lot, on Pacific Highway. Please do not leave your mower unattended until you have received your "Participant Number." For information, contact the San Diego County Air Pollution Control District, (858) 586-2707.

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Escondido Senior Fair (cont.)

The fair featured expert discussion groups, fitness demonstrations, several health screenings, and various senior-orientated organizations, all focusing on the entire picture of health – not just the symptoms.

One of the signature offerings was the popular "Meet the Pharmacists," where seniors had their medications assessed for negative interactions.

Health officials are finding that symptoms of health decline can be stymied with a few of the simple things that give us contentment - the same topics covered at the fair, including jobs and community involvement, fitness and well-being, lifelong learning and personal enrichment.

Code Enforcement Opens Four Community Storefronts

Wondering what to do about that old car rusting away on your street? Or how about the trash and overgrown brush that's turned that nearby lot into a fire hazard – and eyesore? Now, residents in the unincorporated communities of San Diego County can walk into one of four new Code Enforcement storefront offices and easily get the help they need.

"The idea was to have a face in the community," said Pam Elias, Code Enforcement Chief. The new offices, in Spring Valley, Bonita, Ramona and Fallbrook, are open on Mondays. The pilot program is the first of its kind in San Diego County; more storefronts may be added.

"We want to provide residents with a convenient location within their community where they can stop in and meet with their assigned Code Enforcement Officer," Elias said.

Code Enforcement, part of the County Department of Planning and Land Use, takes complaints about abandoned vehicles; brushing and clearing; building; grading and storm water; graffiti; noise; trailer coaches, fire hazards; and waste and zoning. Residents can obtain information regarding County codes and other records that affect properties within their communities. Storefronts are open on Mondays at:

- **Spring Valley Community Center**, 8735 Jamacha Blvd.; 9 am to 4 pm.
- **Bonita Public Safety Center**, 4355 Bonita Rd.; 8 am to 4:30 pm.
- **Ramona Community Center**, 434 Aqua Lane; 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- **Fallbrook Sheriff's Substation**, 388 East Alvarado St.; 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

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West Nile Victim Joins County's Fight Against Virus

All it took was a small drip from an outside water pipe to attract mosquitoes to Grace Oberst's window screen. Before she knew what hit her, 67-year-old Grace, an El Cajon resident, was bitten and immediately came down with flu-like symptoms.

"Days later, I remember sitting on my back patio and thinking I've never felt this way before. I felt dazed and I knew something must really be wrong," said Grace.

Her face was flushed, her head and back hurt.

"My daughter told me that I was vomiting for two days, although I have no memory of that."

The timing was terrible. Grace's husband had just suffered a stroke, and when he saw her admitted to the hospital, he went into cardiac arrest.

Grace's condition grew worse, and she lost consciousness for 12 days. Doctors struggled for a diagnosis. Then, Grace's son-in-law was watching the news, and saw a story about the County's West Nile virus education program. He insisted that doctors test her for West Nile.

Sure enough, she tested positive and began her slow recovery. Grace's husband also recovered.

Now, Grace is helping the County to educate the community about the potentialy deadly disease. She was one of three survivors who spoke during a County media event April 24 at Norman Park Senior Center in Chula Vista.

Grace Oberst, a San Diego County West Nile virus survivor.

"My message to the community is don't take anything for granted. Don't take chances, have your guard up, use repellant. Be aware. Don't think that this can't happen to you."

In nearly all locally acquired human West Nile virus cases, mosquitoes were found in backyard water sources near the victims' homes.

West Nile virus has already been detected in the county earlier this year than in previous years. Last year, there were the 15 locally acquired cases, and of those, 14 victims were people over the age of 50.

While individuals of all ages can contract West Nile virus with devastating short and long-term results, seniors are at greatest risk for severe illness and death. For more information about West Nile virus, call the County's West Nile virus information line at 888-551-INFO (4636) or visit www.SDFightTheBite.com.

The Results Are In!

All employees were invited to take part in the recent Work Safe, Stay Healthy (WSSH) Communication Evaluation Survey, which was available from Feb. 8 through Feb. 22. The Department of Human Resources (DHR) hoped the survey would provide feedback regarding the success of each component of WSSH. Below is a sampling of the information DHR garnered from 2,640 employee responses:

- 97.4 percent of employees are aware of WSSH
- "Spot the Hazard" is not only the most recognized WSSH program or activity, but also the program in which the greatest number of employees had personally participated; more than 35 percent of survey respondents have "played" Spot the Hazard
- Of the many WSSH educational resources available, the 7-Minute Safety Trainer Lessons have generated the most awareness and popularity; more than 42 percent of respondents engage in a 7-Minute Lesson at least quarterly
- 62.8 percent of survey respondents visit the WSSH Web site at least quarterly
- 81.5 percent of respondents knew how to report a safety concern

Fire Victim Couple Recovering, With Help from CECO and County Coworkers

Steve and Diane Ron stand in the remains of their Rancho Bernardo home, destroyed in the Witch Creek fire.

Anytime Diane Ron would leave her Rancho Bernardo home for a trip, she worried it wouldn't be there when she returned.

"This time it really happened," she said. Ron and her husband Steve, both County employees, were in Michigan for a funeral last October when the Witch Creek fire destroyed their home of 22 years.

Their adult daughter was caring for their dog, and before she evacuated she managed to save a few belongings from the house, which was in the Westwood neighborhood south of Lake Hodges.

For the Rons, there was no use rushing back home – there was no home anymore – so between watching news reports, they started replacing what was lost. Underwear was the first item in the cart. And so began the long process of rebuilding.

The Rons – she is an appraiser for the Assessor/Recorder/County Clerk and he is a project manager in Public Works – are still working to settle with the insurance company, while trying to plan their new home.

The couple was one of three beneficiaries of CECO's County Employees 2007 Fire Relief Fund. The fund collected a total of $8,240, said Vicki Rajsky, past CECO secretary and current executive board member.

CECO volunteers formed a committee to review the applications and approved disbursing the funds between the three County employees who applied for relief, Rajsky said.

There was one additional application, which came in after the process was completed and the employee was referred to the County Employees Crisis Fund. In December and January an additional $605 in contributions came in and was sent to the County Employees Crisis Fund as approved by the CECO Board of Directors prior to the beginning of the contribution period.

The Rons were amazed at the generosity shown to them.

"We had offers of housing, food, clothes, furniture. And we took advantage of just about everything that was offered," Steve Ron said.

He said he and Diane were grateful to their County coworkers and CECO for the help, and also to the Board of Supervisors, for voting to allow County fire victims 80 hours of time off.

The Rons were able to salvage some of Diane's jewelry and some ceramic pieces. They're waiting until their new home is built to start replacing furniture.

Said Steve Ron: "Everyday is better than the one before because we're one day further from it."

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Learn to Invest Like Warren Buffet

Hear how to exploit a down market – just like billionaire Warren Buffett – during this Investment and Retirement Symposium on Wednesday, May 21.

Mary Buffett, former daughter-in-law of Warren Buffett and author of "The New Buffettology" and "The Tao of Buffett," will take her audience through the thought process that has made Warren Buffett one of the world's richest people.

The symposium is offered by the Deferred Compensation Program, and is planned for 6 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at the Sheraton Four Points San Diego, 8110 Aero Dr. Dinner and parking is included in the registration fee -- $15 per person or $25 for two people.

There also will be discussion led by Alan Gin, creator of San Diego's Leading Economic Indicator Index and a member of The Burnham-Moores Center for Real Estate.

Registration is required by May 16. Simply fill out the form that was emailed to County employees and send to Mail Stop A-49. Questions? Call Deferred Compensation, (619) 531-5840.

Library to Receive National "Library of the Future" Award

The American Library Association (ALA) has selected the Library's Gateway/Al Bawaba Project as the winner of the 2008 ALA/Information Today, Inc. Library of the Future Award.

This annual national award honors the library that has developed the most innovative customer training program for information technology. The award reception will be held July 1, during the American Library Association Annual Conference.

The Gateway Project was developed to allow Middle Eastern immigrants to utilize the Library's free computer classes in their native Arabic language. Arabic-speaking instructors were trained to lead a series of eight-week long, free computer classes in three library branches (El Cajon, Casa de Oro and Rancho San Diego).

The project was named Gateway, which is Al Bawaba in Arabic, because the library is a gateway to learning, literacy, education and enlightenment. The Gateway Project was funded through a federal Library Services and Technology Act grant administered by the California State Library.

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News Briefs News Briefs

Firestorm Efforts Recognized at Recent Padre Game

Department of Animal Services Animal Control Lt. Laura Ward, along with representatives from the Sheriff's Department and 211, recently took part in the First Responders Recognition Event at the Padres pre-season game at Petco Park on March 28.

They all were ushered onto the ball field and thanked by Padres officials and community leaders for a job well done. Padres' players and coaches exchanged hats with the First Responders as the crowd applauded.

The Padres wore the caps throughout the game -- which they won, 4-1, against the Los Angeles Angels.

A Bright Idea for Earth Day: Fluorescent Light Recycling

Ever wonder what to do with old Compact Fluorescent Lights (CFLs) when they burn out? The County has the answer – recycle them.

In honor of Earth Week, the County of San Diego, local businesses and regional leaders teamed up last month to spread the word about recycling CFLs.

Local businesses announced they were making it convenient for their employees to recycle used lights by bringing them to work. Meanwhile, the County and area cities are starting "take-back" partnerships with local retailers to make recycling easier for the public.

"We know people want to be environmentally friendly," said Board Chairman Greg Cox. "Our goal is to make every day Earth Day and make it easier for consumers to recycle these products."

The campaign is aimed at letting the public know that recycling CFLs and other fluorescent lights is not only the right thing to do, it's the law. CFLs are more energy efficient than incandescent bulbs, but they contain small amounts of mercury. Improper disposal of these items can be harmful to the environment. Under California law, CFLs, like batteries and electronics, must be recycled.

Companies that allow their employees to bring used lights to work for recycling include Qualcomm, Pfizer and Cubic. Retail companies that are setting up disposal sites include IKEA. Information on proper disposal of CFLs and other wastes is available at 1-800-237-BLUE or at www.WasteFreeSD.org

County Workers Lie Down on the Job... For a Good Cause

Imagine experiencing the joy of new addition to your family, only to get the devastating news six months later that your daughter has leukemia. It happened to the parents of South Bay resident Deziree, and they are just one of the many families who depend on blood drives like the one hosted by the County to provide life-saving treatments.

Board of Supervisors Chairman Greg Cox rolls up his sleeve for the County's annual blood drive.

Board of Supervisors Chairman Greg Cox kicked off the month-long event by rolling up his sleeve to make his 113th donation.

"I have donated blood throughout my life. It is an easy way to help people in need in our community, and I am proud that so many County employees helped with the blood drive by donating blood as well as volunteering their time to organize the event," said Chairman Cox.

Blood drives were held at 25 County of San Diego locations, including the County Administration Center, the County Operations Center, the County Probation Office and a variety of Health and Human Services locations.

County employees have almost met the goal of 700 donations with one blood drive left on May 8, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., hosted by Purchasing and Contracting, 10089 Willow Creek Rd., Suite 1050 in Scripps Ranch.

This year's event marks the 24th year the County has partnered with the San Diego Blood Bank to help patients in the community, resulting in more than 13,000 pints of blood.

The San Diego Blood Bank must collect 400 pints every single day to treat people like Deziree and other patients faced with conditions such cancer, blood disorders and trauma. Many patients need multiple transfusions.

If you were not able to donate at one of the County locations, you can still make a donation in the name of the County. Just donate at any San Diego Blood Bank center or bloodmobile and use the code "SD99." Donors must be at least 17 years old, weigh at least 110 pounds and be in generally good health. For a complete list of requirements and places where you can donate, visit www.sandiegobloodbank.org.

News Makers

County's CUPA stands out

Twelve DEH employees, a Senior Deputy County Counsel, and a Deputy District Attorney from San Diego County participated in 14 of the 85 presentations and panel discussions at the 10th Annual CUPA Training Conference in San Francisco last month.

More than 1,000 people representing industry, federal, state, local and foreign agencies attended the conference for Certified Unified Program Agencies. CUPAs are the local branches of Cal/EPA, and they implement and enforce the laws and regulations governing hazardous waste and materials, hazardous materials management plans, underground storage tanks, above ground petroleum storage tanks and the California accidental release program.

DEH and BIOCOM, a local industrial association, received leadership awards. Out of 84 CUPAs in California, DEH was recognized as the Outstanding CUPA for 2007. DEH also earned this distinction in 2005.

Recently County HazMat Chief Michael Vizzier received an email from another CUPA. Steve Anderson with the Roseville Fire Department wrote: "I had the opportunity to view/listen to part of the haz waste training module given by one of your inspectors. Thanks. I better understand why your team stands out with awards among the CUPA crowds."

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News Makers

County Rebuild Liaison Honored as Woman of the Year

Deena Raver, San Diego County Fire Rebuild Liaison, was honored by State Senator Dennis Hollingsworth as the 36th Senate District's Woman of the Year. The ceremony took place in the California Senate Chambers on March 10.

Hollingsworth selected Raver for her exemplary service following the 2007 Firestorm. Raver has provided individual rebuilding guidance to more than 200 fire survivors.

DEH Chief Reappointed to U.S. Presidential Advisory Committee

Michael Dorsey, Chief of the Community Health Division of the Department of Environmental Health, has been re-appointed for another two-year term to serve on the Good Neighbor Environmental Board (GNEB).

On March 19, Dorsey attended the GNEB meeting in Washington D.C., where the GNEB presented its most recent report -"Natural Disasters and the Environment along the U.S.-Mexico Border" to White House representatives.

The GNEB is an independent, presidential advisory committee that operates under the Federal Advisory Committee Act. Its mission is to advise the president and Congress on good neighbor environmental and infrastructure practices along the U.S. border with Mexico.

Ramona Grasslands Preserve Recognized

The Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) received the 2008 Outstanding Environmental Resource Document award from the State Association of Environmental Professionals (AEP) for the Ramona Grasslands Preserve Area Specific Management Directives (ASMDs). The ASMDs document establishes biological, water quality and cultural goals for an effective program to maintain and restore the grasslands.

In September 2007, DPR, along with its partners, won the local San Diego AEP Chapter award in the same category. DPR anticipates opening the Ramona Grasslands Preserve to the public for passive recreation, including multi-use trails, in summer 2009.

County Budget Earns Distinguished Award

The County's 2007-08 and 2008-09 Operational Plan has earned the Distinguished Budget Presentation Award from the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada (GFOA).

This award represents a "significant achievement" by the County according to GFOA and, "reflects the commitment of the governing body and staff to meeting the highest principles of governmental budgeting."

To earn the award, the County's Operational Plan had to satisfy a set of rigorous nationally recognized guidelines for effective budget presentation. The guidelines assess how well the County's Operational Plan serves as a policy document, a financial plan, an operations guide and a communications device. The County's Operational Plan was rated proficient in all categories.

Fraught with Financial Woes? Three Ways the County Can Help

Whether at the gas pump or the grocery store, most people are feeling the pinch of the slowing economy and sliding housing market. But what happens when that pinch becomes more of a problem? In addition to salary, paid holidays and healthcare plans, the County can offer the following helpful resources to County employees:

- Any County homeowner- not just those in financial crisis- can apply for property tax relief. If a property's market value has fallen below its assessed value, the office of County Assessor Greg Smith can make a temporary reduction in the assessed value of the home. If you purchased your property at the height of the current real estate market, you can file an Application for Review of Assessment by **May 30, 2008**. Homeowners will be notified in early July of the Assessor's determination of their property tax relief request.

- For those employees who may find themselves in a concerned financial condition, the County offers help through its Employee Assistance Program (EAP). "This is a completely free, completely confidential benefit provided to every single employee," explains Jan Mazone, Deputy Director of Human Resources.

  Employees can call Value Options, the County's private external service provider, at (866) 208-0436 for counseling services, education and referrals. According to anonymous data compiled by Value Options, the number of County employee calls for financial assistance increased from 45 and 47 cases in 2005 and 2006, respectively, to 72 cases in 2007.

  For further information about the Employee Assistance Program, visit www.achievesolutions.net/sdcounty or click here to read more.

- For employees who feel that they are in a financial crisis, the County Employees' Charitable Organization (CECO) may be able to help. According to www.sdceco.org, CECO's Crisis Fund can help active employees who are experiencing a "one-time financial crisis." Funding is made available with the expectation that the employees have met their families' basic needs in the past and will be able to do so again in the future, as soon as their crisis circumstances have been alleviated.

  A successful application package can result in a one-time grant being administered in as little as one week. "We're here to help employees in need of one-time assistance," said CECO President John Rasmussen. "Unexpected emergencies or crises can affect anyone; we understand that and want to support our County employees."

Ver•ba•tim

Fred Heckeroth (General Services) makes Camp Barrett, one of the County's Juvenile Probation facilities, "a better place."

"Fred is always courteous and upbeat whenever he comes to our facility. However, this evening, he went above and beyond by assisting us in assessing a plumbing problem in one of our dorms. He not only assessed the problem, but fixed it in a short time. I wish to recognize and appreciate Fred for all of the contributions he makes…"

LaTiasha Alexander (HHSA/Southeast Family Resource Center) was complimented by a client who wrote "Your agency must consider her a true asset!"

"The courteous and prompt service that I received today was remarkable, and in my opinion, excellent customer service."

Tayce Rogers (Child Support Services) provided such excellent customer service that the client thanked her for making her visit "the BEST I have ever had at Child Support Services."

"Tayce Rogers was most helpful, clear, knowledgeable and non-judgmental."

Mike Burke (Environmental Health/Hazardous Materials) was rated "Excellent" for his "Great Customer Service" and for "taking the time to explain what is needed to return to compliance."

"Mike Burke has always, through the years, been very pleasant to work with. Mike has been firm and yet provided good information on why and how. He is very knowledgeable and helpful in helping us solve problems."

Alan Reddick (ARCC/Mapping Division) came to the rescue of a reporter from the *San Diego Business Journal* who was having a difficult time obtaining the information she needed.

"You could not have been more helpful. You saved the day for me."

Virginia Fox (Air Pollution Control District) was applauded by an employee of the City of San Diego's Water Department for being "wonderful to work with, quick to research issues, and always following through…"

"I wanted to express my thanks to you for having an employee who is so willing to help her customers. Ms. Fox has always been able to see the lighter side of things and has handled what could be frustrating situations with much appreciated humor."

Elizabeth Perez (Health & Human Services Agency) was thanked for providing great customer service.

"Elizabeth is a person who is always helpful as many times as I have needed her assistance. I am so glad for all the help she has given to me."

Vickie Wittmayer (ARCC/Realty) received several letters of gratitude for her property assessment expertise concerning boats and planes.

"I received exemplary help from an associate, Vickie Wittmayer, who offered advice in a professional way."

"Thank you for going the extra mile and contacting me regarding the form I needed to complete. I appreciate that in today's technological world, government agencies can be flexible enough to contact people in a variety of ways."

David Tadlock (General Services/Facilities Management) received accolades from the Medical Examiner's office for a "stellar performance" and the "utmost professionalism" handling a critical situation at the morgue.

"David was particularly mindful of our needs and very creative in his ability to devise a solution that should serve those needs, while avoiding major cost and disruption…Thank you for providing such dedicated and professional staff members."

Regina McInerney (ARCC/Realty) helped a customer find answers to some important questions after her father-in-law passed away.

"Regina was most helpful and kind on several occasions. She was patient and knowledgeable. She made me feel like her time was my time. I really appreciated her professionalism."

Ivon Romero (Child Support Services) received compliments for "great service, gracious attention and good work."

"I was helped in my own language and all my questions were answered. Thank you."

Sharon Jassy (Auditor & Controller/Payroll) provided "enormous assistance" which resulted in an employee being able to purchase her first home. "Sharon went above and beyond…"

"You have been wonderful, providing me with the necessary documents in what I thought was a total nightmare. Your expertise is outstanding."

John Huey (ARCC/Realty) was complimented for providing a "very positive experience."

"Mr. Huey returned my call quickly. More importantly, he was extremely courteous and patient with me. He resolved my concerns immediately. My dealings with him were quite pleasant and I found him to be very well informed and responsive."

Divina Go (Health & Human Services Agency) received praise from one of her clients.

"Mrs. Go is very, very understanding and helpful. I am so grateful for her assistance in all matters."

Debbie Bailey (General Services) was recognized by Supervisor Dianne Jacob for her work on the Ramona grasslands project and also by The Nature Conservancy and the Department of Parks and Recreation as someone who is "great to work with."

"I wanted you to know that these are not isolated comments, as I hear these comments from Public Works and others as well. Thanks for all your hard work and your way of delivering outstanding customer service."

Retirements

Thomas Alcantar (Health & Human Services Agency)
Jill M. Anderson (Sheriff)
Susana C. Balino (Assessor, Recorder, County Clerk)
Lynn E. Barnes (Sheriff)
Carl G. Bishop (Probation)
Maria C. Bonczyk (Superior Court)
Ewald W. Brieske (Health & Human Services Agency)
Tony L. Buras (Environmental Health)
Lloyd T. Buse (District Attorney)
Penny A. Bussey (Health & Human Services Agency)
Linda H. Castelan (Sheriff)
Emma V. Chuidian (Retirement Association)
Mary Ann Cook (Purchasing & Contracting)
Linda L. Craig (Superior Court)
Kenneth J. Culver (Sheriff)
Robert W. Curry, Jr. (Sheriff)
Lawrence K. Daley (Sheriff)
John J. Dewitt (Parks & Recreation)
John E. Dorval (Public Works)
Connie A. Duncan (Superior Court)
Linda S. Edwards (Health & Human Services Agency)
Darryl J. Fowler (Environmental Health)
Theresa A. Frias (Sheriff)
Sheila M. Grasso (Assessor/Recorder/County Clerk)
William J. Hansen (Sheriff)
John Hardesty (Health & Human Services Agency)
Marilyn K. James (Superior Court)
Kathleen M. Keenan (Health & Human Services Agency)
Mark T. Kelly (Sheriff)
Stephen F. Lodefink (Health & Human Services Agency)
Julian P. Lomahan (Sheriff)
Elise Lorentz (Health & Human Services Agency)
Jane A. McClure (Registrar of Voters)
Janet M. Miller (Health & Human Services Agency)
Victoria M. Mizel (Health & Human Services Agency)
Elizabeth A. Murney (Health & Human Services Agency)
Emilita R. Noriega (Health & Human Services Agency)
Vincent Peppard (Health & Human Services Agency)
Carmen Rheinbold (Health & Human Services Agency)
Samuel P. Richards (Public Defender)
Ellen A. Riley (Library)
James B. Samson (Health & Human Services Agency)
Wesley H. Schermann, Jr. (District Attorney)
Mark L. Schlissel (Health & Human Services Agency)
Carol L. Scribner (Animal Services)
Walter W. Shields, Jr. (Health & Human Services Agency)
Eleanor Sipperley (Health & Human Services Agency)
Lavonna D. Smith (Superior Court)
Jacqueline R. Stanley (Health & Human Services Agency)
Merrilyn D. Tong (Sheriff)
David K. Toth (Public Works)
Lydia H. Velazquez (Superior Court)
Anna E. Vigil (Public Defender)
Christopher D. Vonolnhausen (Sheriff)
Harlie Waggener (Probation)
J. M. Washington-Robertson (Health & Human Services Agency)
David R. Woods (Sheriff)
Thomas H. Wright (Health & Human Services Agency)
Sandra P. Yoakum (Auditor & Controller)

Service Awards

30 Years
Derek E. Clark (Sheriff)
Judy F. Flores (Sheriff)
Robert J. Florez (Parks & Recreation)
Janice J. Horning (Human Resources)
Jon W. Turley (Health & Human Services)
Dennis F. Yoshonis (Sheriff)

25 Years
Elaine Amstadt (Health & Human Services)
Carmelita P. Barros (Health & Human Services)
S. Jeff Bosvay (Wastewater Management)
Kristina M. Call (Health & Human Services)
Bridget Ann Cartier (Sheriff)
Robert M. McArdle (Facilities Management)
Cynthia Gomez (District Attorney)
George H. Manglallan (Farm & Home Advisor)
Sonja R. Scott (Animal Services)
Wendie L. Voight (Facilities Management)

20 Years
Edward Lee Adams III (Health & Human Services)
Kristal Andrews (Animal Services)
Laurie S. Apecechea (Environmental Health)
Sonia V. Aranico (Health & Human Services)
Ramona G. Arellanes (Health & Human Services)
Mary B. Arkwright (District Attorney)
Kathryn M. Bellamy (Health & Human Services)
William Bixby (Health & Human Services)
James M. Blanton (Sheriff)
Estelita A. Caoile (Health & Human Services)
Timothy L. Caulder (Public Works/Airport)
Ronald Coppola (Health & Human Services)
Brian F. Coyne (Sheriff)
Everett L. Daniels (Probation)
Angela Denise Ellis (Sheriff)
Angelina Gavin (Health & Human Services)

20 Years continued
Rose Marie Gorbea (District Attorney)
Diane L. Gulczynski (County Counsel)
Melvin Hall (Sheriff)
Steven W. Holcomb (Sheriff)
Stephanie R. Howell (Probation)
Irene M. Hubbard (Child Support)
James G. Joyce (Sheriff)
Deborah Kailey (Health & Human Services)
Gaylord L. Kuamoo (Sheriff)
Darryl L. Leapart (Sheriff)
Maria Magsaysay-Byrne (Health & Human Services)
Mary K. Malone (Health & Human Services)
Marlon D. Marek (Inactive Waste Site Management)
Delmont J. McClain (Probation)
Michael E. McCormick (Sheriff)
Robert J. Mitchell (Sheriff)
Robert Murillo (Environmental Health)
Elizabeth Osborn (Health & Human Services)
Debbie L. Piper (District Attorney)
William H. Poe (Sheriff)
Heidi B. Quiroz (Health & Human Services)
Carmen O. Rodriguez (Public Defender)
Michael J. Shanks (Auditor & Controller)
Willie J. Shippen (Sheriff)
Monica J. Smith (Health & Human Services)
Randall G. Smith (Air Pollution Control)
Gregory A. Snodgrass (Sheriff)
Susan K. Spotts (Planning & Land Use)
Hallie M. Stubbs (Probation)
Desiree Thomas (Health & Human Services)
Evelyn D. Thompson (Health & Human Services)
Andrea Tostado (Health & Human Services)
Olivia Trevino (Sheriff)
Daniel V. Vasquez (Health & Human Services)
Judy Williams (Health & Human Services)
Shirley Williams-Fink (Health & Human Services)

In Memoriam

Francisco Aceron (General Services, 1988)	2/08
Edward J. Alvarez (Purchasing and Contracting, 2008)	1/08
Donald F. Aubert (Sheriff, 1991)	2/08
Ann M. Bowman (Health & Human Services Agency, 1994)	2/08
Vernon Cartwright (General Services, 1982)	2/08
David Chute (Probation, 1982)	1/08
Helen V. Davidson (Health & Human Services Agency, 1970)	3/08
Virginia Davidson (Library, 1976)	3/08
Madonna M. Dempsey (Health & Human Services Agency, 2007)	2/08
Ernestine Dickens (Probation, 1982)	1/08
Mildred V. Erbe (Health & Human Services Agency, 1980)	2/08
Irene Harrison (Edgemoor Hospital, 1972)	2/08
Benjamin M. Hurt (Auditor & Controller, 2006)	3/08
George W. Ingersoll (Probation, 1977)	3/08
Mildred L. Jones (District Attorney, 2001)	2/08
Anh Ngoc Koci (Health & Human Services Agency, 1989)	2/08
Wayne D. Koser (Municipal Court, 1977)	2/08
Dorothy F. Lowery (Health & Human Services Agency, 1984)	3/08
Bernard Malone (Marshal, 1973)	2/08
Fielding Phillips (Probation, 1992)	1/08
Barbara A. Pinkston (Health & Human Services Agency, 1994)	12/07
Carroll R. Pugh (Planning & Land Use, 1990)	3/08
Evelyn Sheehan (Hospital, 1961)	3/08
Naomi E. Sparling (Probation, 1990)	3/08
Wilson H. Thomson (Assessor, 1973)	2/08
Charles B. Walters (Public Works, 1987)	3/08
Rita L. Watson (Registrar of Voters, 2002)	2/08

"Our thoughts and prayers are with the family and friends of active County employees Susan Conrad, Health & Human Services Agency (3/08); Bradley Schaefer Sheriff (3/08); and Linda Waggoner, Health & Human Services Agency (3/08)."