

# COUNTY NEWS



PUBLISHED FOR EMPLOYEES OF THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

September 2007

## GMS By the Numbers

- 17 Managed Competitions
- 12 Re-engineerings
- \$338 Million redirected to front line services, equipment, infrastructure (since 1997)
- 0 Number of employees laid off as a result of these actions
- 12,000 Computers refreshed every four years
- 98+ Number of County services that public can access via the Web
- 3 Maximum number of years any IT tool can stay on a County computer before being refreshed
- 18,046 Number of County employees in 1997
- 17,027 Number of County employees in 2007
- 1,019 Positions—that's how much smaller the County workforce has become in 10 years
- 500,000 That's how much county population has grown during the same decade



## ...In the Community

- 41% How much we've increased hours of operation at County libraries since 1997 (from 55,094 to 77,725)
- 67% Amount circulation has increased at County libraries due to more books, videos & tapes for residents to check out (2,941,685 to 4,924,639)
- 57% Increase in number of people visiting County parks
- 63% Increase in acres of parkland for current and future residents to enjoy
- 90% Reduction in cost of paperwork done by Public Health Nurses
- 25% Increase in number of patients that Public Health Nurses can now see



## County Celebrates Success of General Management System

Rewind to 1997.

Heaven's Gate was in the news, dot com stocks were going strong. San Diego County was on the verge of bankruptcy and finances were so tight that employees were encouraged to take leave without pay. Departments routinely dealt with hiring freezes and budget cuts. Roofs were left to leak. Computer systems were patch-worked together and the archaic infrastructure resulted in frequent outages.

In the years since 1997, the tech boom went bust, and disasters of unimaginable proportions have touched San Diegans' lives (9/11, the Cedar and Paradise wildfires, school shootings and Hurricane Katrina). The nation now lives with terrorism threats, awareness of the avian flu pandemic, and the ongoing effects of war in Afghanistan and Iraq.

An outsider would have to wonder how a government entity in shambles could hang on. But instead of crumbling, the County has flourished.

The County of San Diego currently has one of the highest credit ratings of any California county, which means taxpayers' dollars stretch further when funding large projects. Prudent reserves (and policies in place to protect them) translate to stability during an economic downturn or crisis. A County-wide computer system that is refreshed regularly empowers employees to improve efficiency, service and convenience in helping the public. A revitalized emergency preparedness system is in place and public services have been expanded.

What was the key to transforming the County? It was a leadership team open to change and the dedication of County elected officials and staff who made it all work. And it was all wrapped up in a process called the General Management System (GMS).

The GMS is a comprehensive way to do business. It requires that the County identify long-term priorities, while simultaneously monitoring current activities and measuring progress toward long-term goals. This annual cycle of planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation ensures that the priorities set by the Board of Supervisors are clear, that goals are achieved and that County government is accountable to the public it serves.

"In a word, the GMS is about excellence," says Don Steuer, Chief Financial Officer. "We have this solid foundation from which we can do our jobs better, serve our customers better and create a better County for those who live here."

Rich Robinson, who retired from the County in 2002 as the Deputy Chief Administrative Officer for the Public Safety Group, helped craft the County's first GMS model.

*(Continued on page 7)*

News Briefs

**Bash for Cash**

The music of yesteryear will profit today's causes at the 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Big Band Bash at the Beach is coming up on Saturday, September 29 from 12 to 7 p.m. at the Oceanside Pier in Oceanside.

The benefit concert raises money for non-profit organizations that serve North County residents, including the County's own Children In Need, Inc. (CIN). Run by Health and Human Services Agency staff members on a volunteer basis, CIN helps provide financial support for enrichment activities to kids who might not otherwise be able to purchase athletic equipment, rent an instrument for music lessons or wear a special prom dress. Since CIN is run by volunteers, there are no administrative costs; every penny raised helps the children.

This year's event features seven hours of music from three bands on two stages, as well as lunch and raffle drawings. Tickets are \$5 and information on how to purchase is available on the CIN Web site; click on "**Fundraising Events.**" This page also lists opportunities for County employees to show their support of CIN, including a program to register a Ralph's or Albertson's rewards card so that with each purchase the stores issue a rebate to CIN. For more information, contact **Mindy Ripley.**

**Online Offerings Improved**

Until recently, Board of Supervisors meetings could only be viewed live. Now, new software called Granicus enables viewers to watch any meeting **on-demand**, starting with the July 24 meeting. Meetings are also indexed by agenda item, allowing users to efficiently skip right to their relevant segment rather than having to fast-forward or watch an entire repeat.

Viewers can also subscribe to the Board meeting archives via RSS Feed, which provides an automatic update whenever new minutes or an agenda are posted. Features include a subscription to the Board of Supervisors "**Minutes Feed**" and the Board "**Agenda Feed.**" To learn more about what an RSS Feed is, visit the **Granicus Streaming Media Help** page.

Newsmakers

Public Health Officer **Wilma Wooten, M.D., M.P.H.,** is scheduled to receive the Urban Trailblazer Award at the Equal Opportunity Awards Dinner presented by the Urban League of San Diego County on September 6. This fundraising event is a special salute to local legends in the healthcare and technology fields. Among her many contributions to the community, Dr. Wooten is being recognized for her volunteer efforts as a speaker for the HIV/AIDS Awareness seminars for the Urban League Young Professionals and for continuing to carry the torch of leadership for African Americans and women in the health industry.



In *Walt's* Words

**A Decade of Accomplishment:  
A Future of Excellence**

One of the most rewarding aspects of my job as Chief Administrative Officer for our County is that I get to work with a great team of people and I get to hear about the amazing things you all accomplish as you go about your work.

This month, we're marking an important milestone in San Diego County government history: It's been ten years that we've been operating under the General Management System (GMS).

Other articles in this issue of County News will highlight specific accomplishments and will put into perspective how much we've changed and improved as an organization. I want to use this space to note that none of this would have been possible without you.

County employees have been through a lot in the past ten years and we've worked hard to take this organization from one that was facing bankruptcy, living year to year, working with outdated tools in leaky buildings to one that is now among the most well-respected and widely-recognized local governments in the nation.

During the past ten years, you and your colleagues worked on managed competitions (most of which you won), streamlined numerous business processes and vastly improved the services we provide to customers and the way we provide them. We've moved services and information onto the Internet and we've improved our ability to plan for and manage new programs.

As a result, San Diego County is a healthy organization that invests in its employees and its infrastructure and that looks forward with anticipation rather than anxiety. Our budgets are structurally-balanced. We budget for training and IT equipment to stay current. We have prudent reserves, a strong credit rating and comprehensive emergency recovery plans—all of which will hold us in good stead in a world where circumstances and needs can change rapidly.

I hope you are as proud to work here as I am and that you will continue to help us become even better. Even with all we've accomplished, we can never rest on our laurels. Just as we've experienced a decade of accomplishment, I am certain that we are headed for a future of excellence. To get there, I will need your creativity, commitment and hard work. Fortunately, I'm confident that you and we are up to the challenge!

Walt Ekard  
Chief Administrative Officer

## GMS Focus: Managed Competition Bid Against Private Sector Sets Fleet on Course for Excellence

"I'm a tax payer, so you can bet that I care!" exclaimed John Clements, sitting in his office on Overland Avenue. Clements, the County's Fleet Operations Manager, takes his job responsibilities to heart: his father retired from the same job, then called Chief of Fleet Operations, in 1978.

Clements is as efficient as they come: there's no clutter on his desk, no piles of loose paper, no tilting mounds of file folders, and no family photo collages. He is all about business; specifically, all about running the County fleet like a business.

Ten years ago, a private consultant concluded that the County fleet's daily operation was costing taxpayers \$500,000 more each year than similar fleets across the country.

At the same time, says Fleet Coordinator Bob Simmons, "Our salaries were low compared to other government fleets of similar size and vehicles."

With neither taxpayers nor employees receiving their money's worth, the County realized that it was time to identify a more efficient way to provide Fleet services. Overall costs needed to be reduced while improving service and customer satisfaction.

The most costly Fleet unit, Maintenance Support, was a good place to start. This unit is responsible for smog checks, fueling, preventive maintenance, repairs and DMV registration for each of the County's 3,850 vehicles.

Clements, who was the manager of Maintenance Support at the time, admits that while they were not the most efficient, "We were still doing a lot of things right, a lot of good things. We knew that we could run our shop as efficiently as any private company could."

As one of many managed competitions undertaken by the County to streamline the way it did business, a Request for Proposals was released. Fleet was under the gun to prove that it could maintain County vehicles better, faster and cheaper or Maintenance Support would be privately run by the firm with the winning bid. This division of General Services took a hard look at its oper-

ations and proposed several changes, including a reduction in the number of service centers and employees.

Clements says that "At the time, proposing these cuts was very difficult; but it helped us immensely in the end."



*Fleet Technician Augie Espinoza replaces a battery from a County Sheriff's inmate transport bus.*

**Over the past decade, Fleet's revitalization has saved County taxpayers nine million dollars.**



*Fleet Welder Mike Hoag repairs a County plow that has come off its hinges.*

Fleet's bid won, and staff immediately got to work implementing its proposals.

Over the past decade, Fleet's revitalization has saved County taxpayers nine million dollars. This accomplishment is immense, especially considering that today, Fleet services nearly 1,000 more vehicles than it did in 1997 with two fewer repair facilities, four fewer refueling stations and nearly 40 percent fewer technicians.

"We're all about doing more with less,"

says Simmons proudly. "We have become a model organization for other fleets."

There are several reasons why Fleet is such a winner. Staff was reduced 25 percent without any layoffs through employee retirements, voluntary reassignment and eliminating unfilled vacancies. This, coupled with closing non-essential service centers, enabled Fleet to reduce duplicate chains of command and supervision.

Then, Fleet asked its maintenance technicians to work towards earning Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) certification, to help ensure the quality of their work on County vehicles.

Fleet shifted the unit's priority from vehicle repairs to preventive maintenance and increased accountability by billing for its services by the hour. Fleet worked towards a goal of turning around 70 percent of vehicles within one day and 90 percent of vehicles within three days. The new performance standards were tied to special bonuses for employees, similar to Quality First, which was initiated across the County the following year.

"We did everything we said we would do in the proposal, and all within one year," says a proud Clements.

But Fleet didn't stop there. In the years since, the Fleet standardized the makes and models of new vehicles purchased. This new approach translated to fewer parts stocked, less repair and diagnostic equipment purchased, and less time in training as employees no longer had to be familiar with a vast array of vehicle models. New vehicles are purchased through reverse auctions, "EBay-style," with specifications listed online. Bidding is opened up to dealerships, and capitalism takes care of the rest.

Because Fleet isn't run by the private sector, it can focus on providing efficient services without the temptation of cutting corners in the name of profit. But after facing the rigors of managed competition, Fleet has proven that running government like a private business can be a win for everyone involved.

## GMS Focus: Improving Service Public Health Nurses Eliminate Errors, Soar in Service

The principles of General Management System have been espoused by County management for 10 years now, but how many employees have seen them close up enough to know what they look like in action?

Public Health Nurses with the Health and Human Services Agency have a better picture now. They've transformed the way they do their work and ended up helping more families faster and better with just the few taps of a special tablet.

Getting there wasn't easy. The North Inland Region served as the test case, starting their project in February 2005. Public Health Nurses had to look at how and what they do in the field through fresh eyes, mapping out each step of the referral process. For example, what happens when a school district refers a pregnant teenager to the County? The answer uncovered a lot of wasted time and mistakes.

"It showed our layers of redundancy," said Gerri Matthiesen, a Supervising Public Health Nurse at the North Inland Public Health Center. "When we asked, 'Why are we doing it this way?' the answer was, 'Because we always have.' That was no longer acceptable."

The group was amazed to find that it took more than 18 steps—and an average of 54 days—for a referral to get to a field nurse, and 98 percent of the referrals were incomplete or inaccurate, frustrating staff and slowing care to those in need. The main problem was paperwork

—everything was entered by hand on forms, leaving room for errors and incomplete answers.

The team evaluated the options for overhauling the system, eventually leading them to provide 13 field nurses in the North

Health and Human Services Agency got involved at many levels, with assistance from the Public Health Services, Human Resources, Information Technology and Budget offices. The County's Human Resources and the County Technology Office also played critical roles.

"IT was very supportive," said Cindy Rouston, Public Health Nurse at the North Inland Public Health Center. "They were physically on-site and worked with us through the entire process."

The result of that support and hard work far exceeded expectations. An independent evaluation by the UCSD School of Medicine showed a complete turnaround—100 percent of the referrals to the public health center are now accurate when they reach a nurse in the field. And nurses are able to see clients less than two weeks after an initial referral, sometimes within the same day.

The pilot project team is proud of those results and the numerous local and national rewards the Mobile Remote Workforce has received. But what may be most important is the motivation that they will help Public Health Nurses in other regions as the programs rolls out countywide.

"The way the rest of the public health nurses are so respectful of what we did has really had a positive impact on our nurses," said Matthiesen.



*Gerri Matthiesen, Supervising Public Health Nurse at the North Inland Public Health Center, uses her electronic tablet during a visit to a pregnant client.*

Inland Region with electronic tablets they could use to receive and transmit data. Referrals were also filed online, and the system wouldn't allow the form to be submitted until it is filled out correctly.

Rolling out the new program, called Mobile Remote Workforce, required the support of many other departments. It wasn't just a matter of buying equipment and training staff on how to use it. Switching to a computer-based system required a culture change within a group that was not used to the hi-tech help.

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(click on "Employee Newsletter") or via the County's Intranet at CWW. This information is available upon request in alternative formats for persons with disabilities.

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# COUNTY NEWS *Extra*

## **GMS Focus: Functional Threading** **Animal Services, Library Unite to Educate and Inspire**

Last year, the County Library set a goal to increase youth participation in its summer reading programs. At about the same time, Animal Services was mapping plans to further educate the public about its shelter pet adoptions.

By working independently, each department would have had a measure of success, but a chance meeting between Librarian Pat Downs and Animal Services Regional Director Laurie Joniaux led to a unique partnership in which the two departments have achieved more than just their individual goals.

Downs and Joniaux met while serving on an advisory committee for the Workforce Academy for Youth (WAY) Program, which places HHSA foster youth in jobs throughout the County. Says Downs of their WAY efforts, "We saw first-hand how beneficial functional threading is, making us all even stronger, working smarter, benefiting more."

After working well together, Joniaux and Downs recognized a new opportunity to thread. They teamed up to create an innovative summer reading program called "Read for a Reason."

In the pilot program last year, Animal Services waived 20 shelter pet adoption fees for families with children in recognition of kids meeting their reading goals. The Library then provided a quality pet care book to each adopting fam-

ily, and posted photos of the happy new pets and owners on the program Web site. Summer readers were able to view firsthand who benefited from their efforts, and took advantage of special site features to track their book goals and link to fun pet ownership resources. Bibliographies of pet care books recommended by Animal Ser-

vice professionals were also highlighted on the Web site, with direct links to request them from the Library catalog. After 159 readers signed up for this alternative summer reading program the first year, the departments decided to continue their partnership annually. This year, registration doubled to 330 kids and teens. The program's success has grown beyond promoting reading and pet adoptions. As part of the program, Iams pet food company has committed to donate one bowl of food to dogs and cats at the Helen Woodward Animal Center for every 125 pages read. Readers logging on to the Library Web site for updates can see how many food bowls have been filled (over 1,000 so far) and also connect to Animal Services information. For every 100 readers, Animal Services will donate a pet-themed book to health clinics already partnering with the Library as part of the "Read Out and Read" program. Twelve health clinics throughout San Diego County currently partner with the Library, promoting family reading and child development by giving books to children during check-ups.

By partnering and cross-promoting their goals, Animal Services and the Library have created a program for County residents that is clearly a hit in just its second year.

"The program has already grown, and we hope for much more in the future," says Joniaux. "Read for a Reason' is one-of-a-kind, not offered anywhere else that we know of," adds Downs.

While this altruistic program may be one-of-a-kind, its spirit of collaboration is not. For more information on functional threading, please see the side bar on page 6. To find out more about the success of the "Read for a Reason" partnership, e-mail **Pat Downs**.



*Animal Services donated pet-themed books that are given to children during their check ups at health clinics as a part of the "Read for a Reason" partnership with the County Library.*

## GMS Focus: Functional Threading Departments Cross Paths in Creating Better Services for County

Functional threading is an important part of the work we do here at the County. It means coordinating across organizational lines—departments and groups—to pursue common goals, solve problems, share information, and leverage resources. Many of these joint projects are also supported by community partners and other government agencies. These are just a few examples of successful threading throughout the County:

- Aging & Independence Services collaborates with the District Attorney's Office to host an annual Consumer Protection Day. The event welcomes 1,200 attendees, mostly seniors, who learn how to protect themselves from becoming victims of fraud and scams.
- Parks and Recreation joined forces with Health & Human Services (HHSA) to host three "It's How We Live!" health and wellness festivals in Spring Valley, Lakeside and Fallbrook. By combining HHSA's health education resources with DPR's recreational opportunities and facilities, the festivals educated more than 3,000 County residents.
- Sheriff's Department Senior Volunteer Patrol Officers read to children at the Vista branch of the County Library on the first Saturday of every month, providing children and their families a positive shared reading experience and increasing Sheriff's Department accessibility within the community.
- The County Veterinarian works with the Department of Environmental Health and HHSA's Public Health Services in the "Fight the Bite" campaign against West Nile Virus. These departments work together to prevent the spread of the virus by educating the public, providing free mosquito fish at various locations (including some County parks) and identifying avian carriers of the disease.
- Faced with complex new state-mandated stormwater requirements, the Department of Public Works brought in expertise from the Department of Planning and Land Use. Together, they have devised a strategy to mitigate the impact of these new state mandates on their customers' wait time for permits.
- The San Diego County Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program is a unique partnership between the Department of Environmental Health and HHSA. Together, an Environmental Health certified lead professional and an HHSA Public Health Nurse visit the home of any child reported by a medical provider to have an elevated level of lead in his or her blood. This joint effort enables a health professional to investigate possible cultural and dietary reasons for the increased blood lead level, while an environmental professional can assess paint, dust, soil or water-related causes until the hazard is corrected.
- Both Animal Services and the County Veterinarian lend their expertise to the Sheriff's Department and the District Attorney's Office to help prosecute animal cruelty cases including dog fighting, cock fighting and other abuse.
- Several departments, including the Department of Human Resources, have worked together to place foster youth in County jobs as part of the Workforce Academy for Youth (WAY) Program. One youth has had the unique experience of working in the Medical Examiner's Office, in addition to several others working throughout the County.
- Community Services Group, HHSA and the Public Safety Group created and jointly fund the SAFE Housing Project. This effort is dedicated to developing housing units to help families of recovering substance abusers reunify, and to expanding housing for emancipating foster youth.
- The District Attorney's Office has partnered with Aging & Independence Services to form the HOPE Team, which provides wraparound services for victims of elder abuse who don't have strong support systems and coping skills.



**Food for Thought  
Sows Success**

A joint effort between Aging & Independence Services and the County Library has received a 2007 Aging Achievement Award from the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging.

The departments were recognized for Food for Thought, an exercise program followed by lunch held at the Vista Branch twice a month. The City of Vista has also been a partner in this project, which regularly attracts 20 to 30 seniors.

Food for Thought is an example of how the Library is expanding its role in the community. This format is a fresh approach at a time when many local nutrition programs have experienced a decline in participation. The success of this program has prompted plans to expand Food for Thought to other County Library branches.

## Decade of GMS

Continued from Page 1

“Like most government institutions, we had plans and management systems stacked up like cord wood in every office,” he says. “But they would all atrophy over time.”

But this time everyone knew it was different. The concept of the GMS was a much-needed solution to help the County manage risk by coming up with strategic initiatives to deal with identifiable problems and implement solutions.

Under the leadership of then Chief Administrative Officer Larry Prior (who was specifically hired by the Board of Supervisors to make the County run more like a business), a lot of things were already being done differently—and succeeding. So, Robinson said he was optimistic that this time things would be different; and that the progress made would not be lost when Walt Ekard was appointed CAO in 1999.

“CAO Ekard has ‘grown up’ with this as we all did,” Robinson says. “He understood what the GMS was attempting to do, and he went right ahead with it.”

The fruit of everyone’s labor, Robinson believes, is the solid status that the County now enjoys: “I can assure you that having tools like this in place are largely responsible for the fact that the County’s reputation has continued to soar.”

Later this month, Ekard will present to the Board of Supervisors “GMS: A Decade of Excellence.” To bring the message home to employees, *County News* dedicated much of this issue to exploring how the GMS has made a difference.

Animal Services Director Dawn Danielson has seen her department achieve success by implementing the functional threading element of the GMS. One such example is Read for a Reason, a program that promotes summer reading for children and educates families about County pet adoptions all at the same time (see page 5). In addition to leveraging resources to achieve shared goals, she says “the children, the community and the animals all win because children learn to care and appreciate animals more.”

Another article features North Inland Region Public Health Nurses and how they overhauled an antiquated process of patient referrals. Health and Human Services Agency Deputy Director Nick Macchione says the GMS “was our guiding force, a sort of compass to that helped guide us along the way.”

It was the use of functional threading that had the greatest impact on the project, Macchione says. While staff were the experts on how the process could be improved, implementing a solution necessitated bringing in experts from other parts of the Agency and the County.

“I give line staff a lot of credit for demonstrating some of the most impressive, courageous creativity that I have seen in the workplace,” he says. “The [Mobile Remote Workforce project] truly paved the way in creating an environment where staff of all levels and from all departments are encouraged to share knowledge, learn from one another, and produce an innovative and successful service delivery system.”

To learn more, visit the [CAO’s Web site](#) and go to the “General Management System Manual” link.

### GMS Focus: Commitment to Valuing Tax Payer Dollars Information Technology Takes Giant Leap From Past to Present

**1997** Mixture of PCs, Macs & terminals of varying ages, refreshed if funds were available  
**2007** 12,000 standardized PCs, all refreshed every 4 years

**1997** Every imaginable desktop configuration & operating system in use  
**2007** 1 single operating system, consistent software & shared tools

**1997** 17 different help desks  
**2007** 1 help desk

**1997** 800 servers spread across 300 sites  
**2007** 520 servers in 2 data centers

**1997** Multiple unprotected data centers with no integrated security systems  
**2007** 1 hardened & protected data center with integrated security monitoring, protection, disaster recovery & business continuity procedures in place

**1997** No viable accounting for software licensing  
**2007** 100% software licensing accuracy & accountability

**1997** No partnership with the community  
**2007** Through the Futures Foundation, approximately 3,000 County computers are now donated each year to schools, outreach centers and other community groups

**1997** No comprehensive disaster recovery strategy  
**2007** Improved disaster recovery strategy, with two remotely-located data centers that house the County’s servers—either of which is capable of supplying the County’s critical needs

**1997** Multi-vendor and out-of-date telephone systems running over a manufactured discontinued microwave communications network that supported over 25,000 various types of telephones  
**2007** 1 modern phone system with 21,000 standardized instruments

## September is National Preparedness Month

### Free Workshop Highlights Preparedness

During September, the Office of Emergency Services is highlighting the importance of emergency preparedness more now than ever. OES staff encourages County employees, and all residents, to take simple steps to prepare for emergencies in their homes, workplaces and schools.

“Disaster 101: Have a Kit. Make a Plan. Be Informed.” is a free workshop being offered throughout the County to help individuals learn about risks and the simple things they can do to protect life and property. According to Public Information Specialist Holly Crawford, “You will leave this workshop with a disaster plan in hand and, perhaps, something even more valuable: peace of mind.”

Workshops take place throughout September (see below). More information about **National Preparedness Month** events is available online.

**Saturday, September 8:** 10:30 a.m. to 12 noon  
Bonita Branch Library  
4375 Bonita Road, Bonita

**Saturday, September 15:** 10:30 a.m. to 12 noon  
Vista Branch Library  
700 Eucalyptus Avenue, Vista

**Thursday, September 20:** 6 to 7:30 p.m.  
Santee Branch Library  
9225 Carlton Hills Boulevard #17, Santee

**Monday, September 24:** 6 to 7:30 p.m.  
El Cajon Branch Library  
201 East Douglas Avenue, El Cajon

### ‘Duck’ Drill Designated

September is National Preparedness Month and as part of the activities this year, there will be a County-wide “Duck, Cover, and Hold” drill on Tuesday, September 25 at 9 a.m. At that time, all employees are asked to duck under a table or desk and hold this position for 5 seconds. The Office of Emergency Services would like to encourage everyone to participate in this exercise, which will help promote a better understanding of what to do during an earthquake.

Please contact the Office of Emergency Services at (858) 565-3490 with any questions.

### Be Aware Campaign Targets Employees

Starting this month, HHSa is partnering with OES to launch a special campaign targeting County employees. “Be Aware, Be Prepared” provides employees with information on how to best prepare themselves and their families for an emergency, and also how to respond professionally in the event of a disaster.

Every County employee is a designated Disaster Service Worker and may be subject to perform duties outside of their regular jobs during an emergency.

The Be Aware, Be Prepared campaign hopes to better educate employees about their important role in protecting and serving the public even during an emergency, while caring for themselves and their families as well. For more information, visit [www.ReadySanDiego.org](http://www.ReadySanDiego.org) and keep an eye out for special updates from the Be Aware, Be Prepared campaign.

## Timely Tips for Spending Surplus Healthcare Flex Bucks

The end of the current benefits plan period is drawing near, and the special three-month plan period is coming up soon. Since Healthcare Flexible Spending Account (FSA) dollars do not roll over to the next plan period, employees must “use it or lose it” by September 30 and December 31, respectively.

Below are just a few ideas to effectively spend surplus funds in an FSA account:

- ❖ Stock up on emergency supplies such as gauze, bandages and ointments for first aid kits in the home and in each family member’s car.
- ❖ With flu season just around the corner, purchasing aspirin and other over-the-counter pain relievers can be a good idea. Flu immunizations are also reimbursable.
- ❖ Gain some peace of mind or early detection of a problem with a body scan. As a diagnostic service, this is eligible for reimbursement.

- ❖ Review the calendar and add up all the mileage incurred by driving to various medical appointments throughout the year. These travels can be submitted for reimbursement at 20 cents per mile.
- ❖ Get a jump start on that 2008 New Year’s resolution by starting a smoking cessation program now. Nicotine gum and patches are qualifying expenses.
- ❖ Soak up the San Diego sunshine in style with prescription sunglasses. Sunscreens with a high level of protection (SPF 30 and above) qualify, as do creams and ointments specifically used to treat sunburn.

Contact the Plan Administrator at (888) 295-5656 or check the **Eligible Expense List** to verify that an expense is eligible before incurring it, and be sure to save receipts or invoices.

For more information, visit the Benefits section on the County’s Intranet (at cww) and [www.creativebenefits.com](http://www.creativebenefits.com).

## [ Ver•ba•tim ]

**Jessica Cruz** (Assessor/Recorder/County Clerk) was called an exceptional employee and an asset to her office.

"I have received fairness, courtesy, efficiency and dignity from Jessica. Her calm, patient manner was a great help to me when my frustration was at an all-time high."

**County Parks and Campgrounds** (Parks and Recreation) are receiving kudos from happy campers and visitors this season.

"We LOVE your parks! They are clean, well-equipped, easy distance for a weekend trip (from the L.A. area), and reasonable in price."

"Last year we had the opportunity to stay two nights at Sweetwater Summit. The rangers and park personnel were incredibly helpful, far beyond what we even expected."

"San Diego park campgrounds are great, as is the reservation system. My kids especially like the playgrounds."

**Gerardo Sahagun** (HNSA/North Coastal Children's Services) was thanked by the Public Defender's office for working so hard to reunify a child with her mother and stepfather.

"I think you are doing a really wonderful job with this case. I feel very fortunate that these kids have you as a social worker."

**Vector Control** (Environmental Health) received an "atta boy" from a customer who said they were doing a great job.

"This summer has been the best with no mosquitoes. We can actually be outside at nighttime without getting eaten to death...I just want to say thank you very, very much..."

**Dr. Nikos Gurfield** (AWM/County Veterinarian) impressed a customer with the caring way in which he handled the tragic poisoning of a beloved pet.

"I want you to know that you have one heck of a doctor working for you. It is the personal touch that meant so much. We will be forever grateful to him and his staff."

**Martha Vazquez** (Assessor/Recorder/County Clerk) was thanked by a customer for her assistance.

"I just want to make a comment about [Martha's] excellent attentiveness and disposition. She was a lot of help and always had a smile."

**Steven Wells** (HNSA, Child Protective Services) recently spoke to a group of foster youth advocates who wished that he "could come back and talk for hours!"

"I felt very discouraged about one of my cases but Steven gave me new insight! Every volunteer should hear him speak; he has such a passion for his kids!"

**Alice Riggs** (County Library) is so helpful to Vista Library patrons that she earned praise as "a researcher's dream come true."

"Alice responded to my e-mail inquires about a source that was difficult to locate so resourcefully that I found what I needed and then some!"

**Norman McGraw** (ARCC, Marriage Room) received a thank you note for making a couple's wedding day memorable.

"Many thanks for the great wedding...The DVD is a wonderful keepsake and we appreciate the special moments you created for us."

**David Lamb** (Public Defender) was praised by the father of a client who said that he would be "forever grateful" for his help.

"For what it is worth, my hat is off to you and your entire office. I believe that you, due to your determination and knowledge, have made a significant positive impact on (my son's) life."

**Vickie Wittmayer** (ARCC) was recognized by a customer for her assistance with a business matter.

"I want to thank you for the excellent service you provided to me today."

Comments from satisfied customers served by County employees.

## Environmental Health Provides Rapid Response in Canned Food Recall

What started off as an overwhelming task for the Food and Housing division of Environmental Health ended up a team effort to protect the residents of San Diego County. From pool inspectors to the hazardous materials crew, on Thursday, August 2 staff from across the department dropped what they were doing to assist in a massive recall effectiveness check to ensure that market shelves were free of the canned meats that were suspected of being contaminated with botulism toxin.

As the recall unfolded, Environmental Health went through the steps it always does, starting with the major distributors and working through associations who can in turn reach their members. According to Robert Venter, Food and Housing program coordinator, the department felt pretty confident that all of those vendors had received the message and removed the product. But next on the list were the independent markets, of which about 1500 could have potentially stocked the product. After a day of sending staff to do spot checks, the results were alarming: about

10 to 20 percent still had the product on the shelves.

"A decision was made that this issue was so serious that we needed to pull all of our critical staff that are Registered Environmental Health Specialists from other positions within the department," says Venter.

In addition to the 35 available Food and Housing division staff, an additional 26 staff from other areas of the department were assigned markets to visit. By pooling resources, over 800 independent markets were checked in a six hour period and Venter says "thousands" of cans of potentially dangerous food were removed from the shelves.

"We felt good that we had used our resources in an effective and efficient way," says Venter.

The feedback from staff was extremely positive—they appreciated the opportunity to be a part of something that ultimately was for the good of the public.

## Service Awards

### 35 years

Marla R. Barlow (Parks & Recreation)  
 Joy K. Kutzke (Civil Service Commission)  
 Josephine Moeller (Library)

### 30 years

Laura Boyd (Probation)  
 Barbara A. Chanson (Health & Human Services)  
 Donna M. Collier (Sheriff)  
 Edna T. Ito (Sheriff)  
 Deborah C. Lee (District Attorney)  
 Dianna F. Ranes (Sheriff)  
 Patricia S. Rasco (Public Works)  
 Pamela L. Swanegan (Sheriff)  
 Peter D. Swenson (Public Works)

### 25 years

Michael J. Finch (District Attorney)  
 Robert S. Guaderrama (District Attorney)  
 Debra L. Jacobsen (Health & Human Services)  
 Anthony L. Jucenas (Sheriff)  
 Scott R. Miller (Sheriff)  
 Charles O. Mitchell (Sheriff)  
 Teresa M. Villa (Health & Human Services)  
 Elaine M. Villalpando (Probation)  
 Gregory A. Young (Sheriff)

### 20 years

Brock A. Arstill (District Attorney)  
 Constance Austin (Health & Human Services)  
 Jean M. Barrs (Health & Human Services)  
 Marian O. Bautista (Treasurer-Tax Collector)  
 Angelina T. Dalmacio (Human Resources)  
 Deborah A. Dyar (Housing & Community Development)  
 Maria L. Galvan (Health & Human Services)  
 Jennifer L. Gianera (District Attorney)  
 Mary E. Hammond (Probation)  
 Bradley F. Hicks (Probation)  
 Perla Y. Hoffman (District Attorney)  
 Florinda L. Johnson (District Attorney)  
 Joseph A. Maggio (District Attorney)  
 Melba P. Mapanao (Health & Human Services)  
 Martin F. Martins (District Attorney)  
 Phyllis S. Morris (Health & Human Services)  
 Theresa Ollivierre (Public Works)  
 David C. Paseman (Sheriff)  
 Judith R. Quinn (Health & Human Services)  
 Steven S. Ravellette (Sheriff)  
 Digna C. Sarmiento (Health & Human Services)  
 Ellen C. Schmeding (Health & Human Services)  
 Barbara J. Ward (Health & Human Services)

## Retirements

Barbara J. Bettencourt (Health & Human Services)  
 Cathy C. Cibit (Planning & Land Use)  
 Charles E. Crabtree (Superior Court)  
 Gail S. Dunford (Sheriff)  
 Jayana D. Emery (Health & Human Services)  
 Carol J. Endter (Superior Court)  
 Evelyn B. Faelnar (Assessor/Recorder/County Clerk)  
 Christine A. Gowan (Health & Human Services)  
 Patrick J. Harn (District Attorney)  
 James T. Kelly (Health & Human Services)  
 Bobbi A. Koala (Health & Human Services)

Anthony R. Leatherman (Sheriff)  
 Sharon L. Logan (County Counsel)  
 Naomi Ortega (Superior Court)  
 Edilma Overell (Health & Human Services)  
 Francis K. Poon (Health & Human Services)  
 Teresa Posadas (Health & Human Services)  
 Virginia M. Potter (Superior Court)  
 Sheryl D. Ringel (Superior Court)  
 Philip L. Rostodha (Planning & Land Use)  
 Barbara J. Schipke (Health & Human Services)

## In Memoriam

Frances R. Brennan (Welfare, 1965)	6/07	Sharon L. Lee (County Clerk, 2003)	6/07
Waldo L. Clark (Public Works, 1990)	6/07	Patricia Martin (Probation, 2002)	6/07
Ina H. Conyers (District Attorney, 1980)	6/07	Pearl C. Peskin (HHSA, 1984)	6/07
Elaine R. Dugan (Social Services, 1985)	6/07	Kenneth L. Pyle (Public Works, 1981)	6/07
Mary C. Fisher (Welfare, 1975)	6/07	Cloyd C. Ross (General Services, 1978)	6/07
Carl E. Ford (Probation, 1978)	6/07	James E. Sandell (HHSA, 1996)	6/07
Alice E. Herron (Edgemoor, 1978)	6/07	Mary E. Stump (Probation, 1974)	4/07
Elizabeth E. Jersak (HHSA, 2006)	6/07	Huies E. Thompson (General Services, 1994)	6/07
Ellen Keane (District Attorney, 1980)	5/07	Howard A. Vachal (Auditor & Controller, 1982)	6/07
Billy Knight (General Services, 1989)	7/07		

Our thoughts and prayers are with the family and friends of active County employee Irene Harvey, Superior Court (7/07).