

CIVIC SUCCESSES

PUBLIC SERVICE AT ITS BEST

INTRODUCTION

In the course of its investigations and site visits, the San Diego County Grand Jury often finds agencies that are doing an outstanding job or providing noteworthy community services. Those actions deserve commendation. This report highlights six instances where the 2011/2012 San Diego County Grand Jury found exceptional public agency performance:

- Escondido Youth Court
- Renewable Energy and Conservation
- Fallbrook Library
- Library System
- San Diego Superior Court—Behavioral Court
- Veterans Services

PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

The Grand Jury ordinarily reports the results of its investigations together with recommendations and/or commendations to the public entities or special districts studied. However, the Grand Jury sometimes evaluates a complaint and determines that the public agency's actions were satisfactory. In the past, such Grand Jury investigations were simply closed with no public announcement of the outcome. The Grand Jury concluded that the subjects of these investigations should know that their performance in this particular instance was found to be appropriate and in compliance with applicable policies and procedures.

The Grand Jury's goal in providing positive feedback to the subjects of this report is to further an atmosphere of cooperation in the effort to improve the delivery of government services to the community.

PROCEDURES

In the course of its studies, the Grand Jury conducts interviews with representatives of the entity under investigation and others with knowledge about the issues, actions and circumstances involved. The Grand Jury may also collect documentary information relevant to the study from all available sources. Site visits are made when appropriate. All information gathered is carefully weighed by the Grand Jury.

DISCUSSION

Escondido Youth Court

The City of Escondido's Youth Court is a successful juvenile diversion program. It provides appropriate services and meaningful consequences to first-time offenders ages 12-20. A goal is to prevent future involvement in the juvenile justice system. Since the program began in 2008, 228 youth offenders have participated and 194 have completed it successfully – an 85% success rate.

Escondido Youth Court is a joint project between the Escondido Police Department and Escondido Education COMPACT.¹ This non-profit organization has been providing workforce development for at-risk youth in North San Diego County for over 25 years. Grand Jury members attended a Youth Court session, and interviewed administrators about program structure and funding and parent involvement.

When juveniles are cited for a minor offense, they typically are sent home. The police report is then sent to a police department diversion coordinator, who determines whether the offender would be a good candidate for Youth Court. Criteria include no prior offenses or gang affiliation, and a positive attitude of offenders and their parents. If the diversion coordinator recommends the program and the offender and family agree, the offender must admit guilt and will then appear in Youth Court. Youth Court convenes two evenings a month in the Escondido City Council chambers.

Kids help kids. At Youth Court, the offender is assigned a youth “defense attorney.” A volunteer attorney acts as judge. A youth “prosecutor” presents the case to a jury comprised of high school students. A parent may be called as a witness. The jury determines the sentence. It can include any combination of:

- letters of apology to parents, the victim, and/or the school,
- serving as a Youth Court juror for a given number of sessions,
- an essay/research paper (1000 word minimum),
- curfew,
- community service,
- monetary fine, and/or
- drug testing.

The sentence is converted to a contract signed by offenders and their parents. It must be fulfilled within 90 days. Offenders are matched with a volunteer adult compliance monitor who mentors them through the process. If offenders do not meet the contract terms within 90 days, they are required to appear in San Diego Juvenile Court.

¹ COMPACT is an acronym for Creating Opportunities Making Partnerships And Connecting Teens.

Escondido Youth Court staff consists of three Escondido Police officers and four COMPACT personnel. Funding comes from a State CalGRIP (gang intervention) grant, Escondido CARE Youth Project, San Diego Workforce Partnership, City of Escondido, Escondido Rotary Club, Escondido Police Department and Escondido Education COMPACT.

The Grand Jury commends the Escondido Police Department and Escondido Education COMPACT staff for developing and administering a successful program. Peer pressure, parent involvement and community support are key to its success. It should serve as a model for other communities.

Renewable Energy and Conservation Local Communities Shine

San Diego area local governments are leaders in renewable energy projects. Wastewater treatment plants and landfills produce methane gas that generates enough electricity to power the facilities and sell excess to the grid. Excess methane is sent via pipeline to power fuel cells at other facilities. The Miramar Landfill produces gas to power the North City Water Reclamation Plant, and sells enough methane to the Miramar Marine Corps Air Station to supply about half of the base's energy needs.² The Point Loma Wastewater Treatment Plant not only uses methane produced onsite to generate electricity, it also operates a 1,350 kilowatt hydroelectric plant driven by its treated wastewater dropping 90 feet in a 12-foot diameter pipe to the ocean. There are solar panels on county, municipal and special district parking lots, water and wastewater treatment plants, city halls, fire and police stations, jails, schools, transit facilities, parks, libraries and recreation centers.

San Diego ranks first among communities statewide in solar electricity generation capacity at residential, commercial and government buildings (nearly 37 Megawatts). San Diego also ranks first in the number of photovoltaic systems with 4,500 projects. Solar panels in the city produce more than \$9 million worth of electricity annually. The communities of Escondido, El Cajon, Poway and Chula Vista rank among the top 50 statewide for either projects or capacity.³ San Diego County as a whole ranks second among the state's 58 counties in installed solar capacity (112.5 Megawatts).⁴

The City of San Diego generates around 20 Megawatts of renewable energy at municipal facilities – 50 percent of City facilities' total electric use. The County's goal is for renewable energy to provide 2.5 percent of all new building energy use; they currently

² http://www.nctimes.com/news/local/military/article_0cfd0a12-1a42-5efa-b36b-278cf911cba3.html

³ Davis et al, California's Solar Cities 2012, Leaders in the Race Toward a Clean Energy Future, Environment California Research & Policy Center (January 2012).

⁴ http://www.californiasolarstatistics.ca.gov/reports/locale_stats/

are at two percent with solar energy. All new County buildings include photovoltaic-ready systems as part of their design and construction.

Local governments also are leaders in energy conservation. In the past ten years, the County has reduced energy use at their facilities by 16 percent. Since 1997, the City of San Diego has saved 150 million kilowatt-hours annually through building retrofits and other measures. The Ridgehaven “Green Building,” home to the City of San Diego’s Environmental Services Department, realizes around \$100,000 annual savings through energy and water conservation. In 1999, Ridgehaven received the U.S. Department of Energy and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s first [Energy Star Label](#) for Buildings. Ridgehaven’s energy consumption is 28 percent better than the California Energy Code (2005), and the building uses half the water of a comparable commercial facility.⁵ The County has received five Energy All-Star Awards for its buildings.

Numerous local government buildings have won Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification. Developed by the U.S. Green Building Council, LEED rates buildings for sustainable site development, water savings, energy efficiency, materials selection and indoor environmental quality.⁶ The City of San Diego currently has six LEED buildings and the County has over 15 built or planned. Most local governments require all new and significantly remodeled government buildings to be LEED certified. Many offer incentives such as expedited building permits for private construction that meets LEED standards.

The Grand Jury commends all local governments and special districts in San Diego County for their efforts toward renewable energy and conservation. They promote energy independence, reduce air pollution and the carbon footprint, and provide jobs for the local economy.

FALLBROOK LIBRARY

The Fallbrook Library is a community’s vision made real. The vision began in 2000, when Fallbrook’s population outgrew their existing library. The Friends of the Fallbrook Library organized people known for their fundraising skills. They brought in the County Library Department, which agreed it was time for a new facility. And, they engaged the community residents, and asked them what they wanted their library to be. The community’s response was that it wanted their new library to be everything everyone in the community wanted.

⁵ <http://www.sandiego.gov/environmental-services/geninfo/ridgehaven/index.shtml>

⁶ <http://www.usgbc.org/DisplayPage.aspx?CMSPageID=1988>

When the San Diego County Library Department posted the Request for Proposals for the Fallbrook branch, ten companies responded. Their scale models were displayed for the community to consider and vote on. The model with the most votes won the contract. Even the design-build contract was special – it was the first in the San Diego County Library system. Under design-build, architects and contractors bid and work as a team, providing continual feedback to each other from design to completion. In the case of the Fallbrook Library, the design-build team included county officials, architects, and contractors as well as community members.

Design-build allowed more community input, better communication at all stages of the project, an expedited project time line, and effective cost controls. So the Fallbrook Library was built on time and within budget, with the Friends of the Library contributing over \$2 million to the total cost. Other community groups contributed as well. Local teen-agers developed their wish list, and the Rotary Club donated \$100,000 to grant the teens' wishes. The Pala Band of Mission Indians donated \$200,000 for books in the Kids & Family section. The Fallbrook Healthcare District donated funds for an expanded health and well-being collection. Rally for Children provided funding for children's books. The Fallbrook Garden Club sponsored gardening-related materials.

The community as a whole got a library with the expected book, video and music collections, but they got much more:

- A community center with flexible space – indoors and out – for meetings, concerts, adult education, and networking;
- A sound-controlled teen center with a flat screen TV and video games, graphic novels, and other targeted collections;
- A special children's area, with rotating kid's art, whimsical bug and book sculptures that kids can crawl through, soft and climbable fabric art furniture, and kid-friendly computers;
- A family homework center, with volunteer tutors available after school and on Saturdays;
- A “living room” where magazines and newspapers are displayed, with a central, modern gas fireplace;
- Outdoor reading gardens and patios;
- A computer room, plus free Wi-Fi throughout; and
- Ten permanent art installations designed by local artists that are woven into the building's design as gates, fences, walls, trellises, furniture and more, and that celebrate the community's heritage and, culture and the library's volunteers and donors.

The Fallbrook Library is also a “green” building. It has a green roof – a 3,500 square-foot quilt of 500 planted trays with varying colors and textures. The plants provide

insulation against heat, conserve energy, help manage rainwater and extend the roof's life. The regular landscaping emphasizes native, drought-tolerant plants that reduce irrigation, fertilizer and maintenance needs. The building materials and design strive for over 20 percent greater energy efficiency than required by code. All these factors contributed to the Library's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) silver rating.

The Library and its design-build team have won seven awards (so far), beginning with a distinguished "Magic of Design-Build" award from the Design-Build Institute of America. Other awards include: the People's Choice Orchid from the San Diego Architectural Foundation; Build San Diego Merit from Associated General Contractors, San Diego Chapter; Green Trailblazer from South Coast Resource Conservation and Development Council; Excellence in Construction from Associated Builders and Contractors, San Diego Chapter; Design Award of Merit from California Council of Society of American Registered Architects; and Civic Project Award from San Diego International Chapter, American Concrete Institute.

The Community of Fallbrook has a long history of support for their library. In 1912, when the San Diego County Board of Supervisors adopted a resolution establishing the county library system, the Fallbrook Library was the first. It was founded in 1913 by the Saturday Afternoon Club, the predecessor of the Fallbrook Women's Club. It was located in a corner of Hardy's Drug Store, with the proprietor serving as librarian. Since then, the Fallbrook Library has moved eight times, occupying portions of various stores and the local County Building.

The Grand Jury toured the new building and commends the community and the entire design-build team for creating a center that is not just a library but a celebration of Fallbrook's cultural identity.

SAN DIEGO LIBRARIES

NEW FRONTIERS FOR RESEARCH, EDUCATION AND FUN!

The San Diego County Library System, the City of San Diego's Central Library, and the San Diego County Law Library are representative samples of a resource many take for granted – and not just a few believe are out-dated. Following are three library successes in San Diego County that illustrate the riches available to everyone. These libraries are treated as a community hub for learning, literacy, and education.

The information was gathered by the Grand Jury through interviews with key administrators, by making site visits, and reading media reports.

SAN DIEGO COUNTY LIBRARY SYSTEM

Many think that libraries are becoming obsolete. In this age of the computer, the internet, iBooks, iPads, smart phones, etc., who needs a library? It turns out the people in Jacumba, Jamul and Julian do; to name a few of the communities that are served by the San Diego County Library System. Libraries have evolved from the dark “quiet please” stacks and racks of dusty books, to modern, well-lit, green, electronic and virtual data centers. The traditional hardback book is checked out through a state of the art electric scanning device.

The San Diego County Library system (County Library) is one hundred years old. It originated in 1912 by a Board of Supervisors Resolution. The first branch was opened in Fallbrook on May 5, 1913. In 2010, nearly six million people visited the thirty-three county libraries. They checked out 13 million items, conducted 1.5 million e-mail sessions, and attended 25,000 free programs. Two bookmobiles rolled into outlying communities and served over one million people. This impressive service has been provided in the face of a 32 percent budget reduction over the past three years.

The Director of the County Library, in a presentation to the Grand Jury, reported that he has not been able to hire additional personnel in the past five years. In the face of these cuts in personnel and budgets, most of the branches have been able to maintain their regular schedule and provide the same quality of service to more and more daily users. Rather than becoming obsolete, the County Library has changed with the times, giving new and varied service to ever increasing numbers of users. The primary use is still in borrowing books, magazines, movies and CDs and reading newspapers from other parts of the country. However, there has been a significant increase in electronic and media data usage and job search tools. In difficult economic times, people look to the library for entertainment needs, renting books and movies in ever increasing numbers. Job seekers have also used the library in greater numbers. Internet services are vital to those who do not have a personal computer; they look for advertised jobs and for library-sponsored job search programs.

The County Library is proud of the 32 Friends of The Library groups, comprising nearly fifty-five hundred volunteers, who have united to become the Library Foundation of San Diego County. Severe budget reductions have caused the County Library to look to the Library Foundation for greater financial assistance. The Friends of the Library groups collected \$3.5 million in contributions to help fund the new Fallbrook and Ramona Libraries. These libraries, completed in 2010 and 2011, are a tribute to community involvement, ingenuity and creativity. The Fallbrook Library has won many prestigious design awards.

The Fallbrook Library has a Teen Room, funded by the Rotary Club and designed by the teen community in collaboration with local architect teams. It is the most popular teen “hang out” in town.

The new Ramona Library is proud of its family friendly atmosphere with a Family Homework program, a tutoring center, and a living room complete with a fireplace. Moveable partitions make the outdoor Poet's Patio, community room, and meeting/study rooms more flexible to address developing needs.

The County Library Department remains optimistic that they will be able to go forward with their building and expansion programs in Imperial Beach and Alpine.

We commend the San Diego County Library System for its creativity, vision and commitment in the face of adversity; a job well done.

SAN DIEGO PUBLIC LIBRARY

Don your hard hat and come along. The new Central Public Library (Central Library) is well under construction. It will be a tremendous asset to the East Village and will be an iconic landmark on the San Diego skyline. It is scheduled for completion in fall of 2013.

The Central Library supporters are justifiably proud of the largely privately-funded building program. It will be a new neighbor to Petco Park and the Convention Center. People will look up to read the quotes etched in the walls, and down to see the pools. They will attend functions in the auditorium and choose from 1.2 million items to look through, borrow, and enjoy. Library patrons will meet their friends in the café, and while their day away in the reading room.

The library's amazing employees and volunteers do today what has been done for 127 years, check out books. This will be done by more people than ever before at all 35 branches. On Wednesday October 3, 2010, "a day in the life of the library" (considered to be an average day) 25,000 people came to check out or renew 28,000 items; 6,000 of them used a computer, and another 1,500 attended free programs.

Like its sister the County Library, the San Diego City's Public Library (Public Library) has found that in challenging economic times communities recognize the great value and contribution of libraries. In fiscal year 2009, the Public Library circulation reached an all-time high of seven million items borrowed. In 2010 that figure was dwarfed by nearly eight million items taken out, and 2.5 million items used in the library. In addition to the hardbacks, paperbacks, e-books and audio visuals, the library has over 3,000 periodicals, and houses nearly two million government documents.

A Charter High School calls the Central Library its campus, and has been promised a home in the new building. One of the Central Library's signature programs is 'Read San Diego' – the adult literacy program.

Whether you come to borrow a book, rent a movie, look for a job, go to school, use the internet or listen to a stimulating talk, more San Diegans will do that this year than will attend the Padres and Chargers games combined.

These economic times have affected the Public Library; budget cuts have been dramatic. As a result, libraries depend more and more on volunteers. In fiscal year 2011, volunteers gave 150,000 hours to San Diego Public Libraries, for a value to the community of over \$3 million.

The Public Library and its staff have gone above and beyond the call of duty to provide services to the San Diego Community – truly a civic success.

THE SAN DIEGO COUNTY LAW LIBRARY

San Diego County's Law Library (Law Library) is one of the best kept secrets in town. Most people do not know that it is open to the public, or that it has a yoga class meeting on the 5th floor of the downtown branch. Individuals may use the law books to solve their own legal problems at a self-help center. Anyone may use the Library; however one must be a member to check items out.

The Library's budget for books, computers and personnel, are supported by the Law Library Trust Fund. This income derives primarily from civil court filing fees and from funds that the Library itself generates. The Law Library's Board of Trustees administers the Trust Fund. The building, maintenance, custodial service, and telecommunications are provided by the County of San Diego from its General Fund, which is supported by tax dollars.

The renovation of the downtown facility, completed in February 2012, has bright, airy, high-tech meeting rooms, a lounge complete with chess board, self-help center and much more. Services are also offered at branches in the South Bay, North County and East County. A complete description with addresses and hours is available at the Law Library's web site: www.sandiegolawlibrary.org.

Anyone can access the Law Library's services for research, educational programs, legal clinics, practical guidance and support – all in a relaxed and welcoming environment. All the branches are community centers where users can meet and interact with others interested in legal matters. Internet access, comfortable reading areas, private meeting rooms and event space facilitate a gateway to research and education regarding the law. The Grand Jury's tour of the Law Library offered an opportunity to see the contrast between the old stacks (which are still used to archive historical information) and the newly renovated airy rooms which provide comprehensive and up-to-date services for county residents. The downtown Law Library branch is well worth a visit – its directors have done an impressive job in renovating a much out-dated facility.

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH COURT

In an effort to break the cycle of incarceration for San Diego's mentally ill, the San Diego Superior Court now provides Behavioral Health Court (BHC) services. The goal of BHC

is to promote public safety and assist in the recovery of eligible mentally ill offenders by providing high-intensity, individualized treatment, supervision, and custody alternatives. BHC is available to those who meet qualifying criteria including being eligible for probation and diagnosed with a serious mental illness.

The program has been in development for more than three years. It is a collaborative effort with other government agencies, including the District Attorney's Office, Public Defender's Office, Sheriff's Department, Probation Department, City of San Diego and County Mental Health Services.

This program is primarily directed toward public safety. Participants are carefully screened for eligibility. Qualifying factors are residency, citizenship, over eighteen, probation eligible, mentally competent, and diagnosis of a mental illness as outlined in Title 9.⁷ Instead of incarcerating someone with a mental illness and sending them back out into society, this program offers eligible defendants medical treatment and, in some cases, job training which helps them rejoin society as law-abiding, productive members.

BHC sessions are currently held in the Presiding Department at the downtown County Courthouse. The goal is to offer the program throughout the county.

Designees from each of the partner agencies and the Judge meet prior to each court date to:

- Review candidates for the program (acceptance is determined by a unanimous decision from all designees with final approval by the Judge),
- Develop a treatment plan,
- Review the offenders' progress and provide rewards for positive progress or sanctions for poor progress, and
- Determine advancement and graduation.

The BHC is an 18-month program comprised of four performance-based phases. The offenders are required to meet specific performance goals in order to advance through the program and ultimately be eligible for graduation. Throughout the program, offenders meet regularly with a multi-disciplinary team and receive intensive case management. Probation officers are responsible for monitoring offenders to ensure compliance with terms and conditions of probation; these can include sobriety and drug testing as appropriate.

Key to the success of the program is an appropriate treatment plan, close supervision by the case worker and probation officer, and monthly meetings with the Judge. It is very important to the offender to have the personal attention and respect of the Judge. A significant element of the program is an atmosphere of respect and responsibility.

⁷ San Diego Co. Behavioral Health & Human Svcs. Agency, Behavioral Health Court Calendar, Dec. 23, 2009

Participants who have successfully completed all of their monthly goals are eligible for a reward lottery. This lottery is eagerly anticipated by all of the participants in the program. Upon successful completion of all four phases, participants of the program are eligible for early termination of probation and dismissal of charges.

The success of the program is measured in the savings to the community as a result of this population becoming self-sufficient and increasing their level of functioning in the community as a whole. The results to date are:

- Fewer hospitalizations due to mental health issues,
- 70 percent fewer calls on emergency psychiatric services,
- 50 percent enrollment in educational and vocational activities,
- The recidivism rate for this program in San Diego county is 10 percent⁸, in contrast to 64 percent of mentally ill offenders nationally.⁹
- 100 percent of participants have been assisted with primary healthcare and 70 percent have received Social Security benefits, and
- The intensive time spent among all partners, has significantly reduced the time and resources required in the individual agencies.

The BHC program not only accomplishes its goal of providing for public safety, it successfully fills the gap that has existed regarding mentally ill offenders. It is truly a win/win situation for everyone, and the Grand Jury encourages the San Diego Superior Court's efforts to make the program more widely available. The Behavioral Health Program is truly a civic success!

VETERANS AND ACTIVE DUTY MILITARY SERVICES A SAN DIEGO SUCCESS STORY

INTRODUCTION

The Grand Jury's evaluation of the performance and effectiveness of veterans' services, focused on two of the most outstanding military service agencies: the San Diego Armed Services YMCA (ASYMCA), and Veterans Village of San Diego (VVSD).

The Grand Jury interviewed key management staff at each agency, toured sites and reviewed media reports to find the exemplary services being provided to veterans and active duty military in the San Diego area.

⁸ 2011 CSAC Challenge Awards Executive Summary, County of San Diego: Behavioral Health Court Calendar

⁹ Lovell, D., Gagliardi, G., Peterson, P. (2002). Recidivism and the use of services among persons with mental illness after release from prison. *Psychiatric Services*, 53(10).

SAN DIEGO ARMED SERVICES YMCA

You cannot lift weights, have a sauna, or spend the night at the Armed Services YMCA. The Grand Jury learned that this is the most common misconception of the agency. It is not a physical health club; it is a club which provides a wide array of services to enlisted military members and their families.

The Armed Services YMCA dates from the Civil War and was established by a decree from President Lincoln. There are sixteen branches throughout the country. The San Diego Armed Services YMCA (ASYMCA) was established in 1920. Their motto is "Making Military Life Easier". The focus is on active duty enlisted military members and their families.

All of the services are free. The agency employs seven social workers who make 300 home visits per month. There are 40 programs and 12 special events. In addition to public support, the local ASYMCA is funded largely through grants and private contributions.

The programs include individual and family counseling, family bonding, youth development, and social networking. The special events include "Christmas in June" and "Super Shopper Sunday". Last year these programs provided "Christmas" for 1,400 families with toys and Christmas trees for all. Application was made online and when it was discovered that 1,400 families had registered, it was obvious that available funding would not accommodate that number. Re-emphasizing that San Diego is a Navy friendly town, ASYMCA was given free media coverage of the issue. That coverage yielded a donor who contributed \$10,000 for that year and has every year since.

The San Diego agency remains the largest ASYMCA chapter to offer counseling services, and is the oldest and largest non-profit social services organization in San Diego – solely devoted to helping military personnel and their families. The San Diego ASYMCA is a vital part of the social safety net for our military families and the Grand Jury salutes the efforts of its staff and volunteers.

VETERANS VILLAGE OF SAN DIEGO

Vietnam veterans, who were struggling with the lack of services to deal with traumas of war, founded Veterans Village of San Diego in 1981. At the time, they were looking to enhance Veterans Administration (VA) services and were in a group counseling session, talking seriously about mounting a combat assault on the VA to protest the lack of access to services. They knew they would probably be arrested, but were desperate to shine a spotlight on the lack of medical and psychological care for Vietnam veterans. The facilitator of the counseling session made a suggestion to the group. "Why don't you take this energy and do something that will really make a difference?" The group took the suggestion to heart and formed Vietnam Veterans of San Diego to help their comrades who were sleeping on the streets, under bridges and in parks.

VVSD has evolved over the past three decades into a nationally-recognized, non-governmental organization known for delivering innovative services to veterans. In 2005, the organization's name was changed to Veterans Village of San Diego. A two-year scientific study by San Diego State University of VVSD's Rehabilitation Center concluded, "The social model program offered by VVSD is more effective than other known and tested treatments for this (veteran) population."¹⁰

In 1988 VVSD founded "Operation Stand Down"¹¹ which served more than 650 homeless veterans. Today, more than 200 Stand Downs take place across the country every year, based on VVSD's model. The same year, "Dust Off", an 18-bed transitional housing facility opened on 5th Avenue in downtown San Diego.

VVSD moved to its current headquarters and home of the Veterans Rehabilitation Center at 4141 Pacific Highway in 1990. During the next two years, VVSD raised nearly \$1 million to remodel the facility into an 80-bed licensed alcohol and drug treatment center.

With five locations throughout San Diego County, including centers in North and South County, VVSD is the only program of its kind in the United States. Each year VVSD provides services to more than 2,000 military veterans, men and women, who have served and sacrificed for our country. VVSD provides a continuum of care with a full range of comprehensive and innovative services to military veterans, which include prevention, intervention, treatment, and aftercare. The VVSD service extends to veterans and their families by providing substance abuse recovery, mental health counseling, job training, job search assistance, housing, food, clothing, and legal services.

The VVSD staff described significant demographics in their population. They have three generations of veterans, the majority of whom are non-combat veterans. The average age of their population is 46 years. There is an increasing demand for services for female veterans who require different services than do male veterans. Future plans include construction of a facility to house female veterans.

The staff emphasized that they could not exist without the support of the Federal Veterans Administration and the San Diego County VA Medical Center. The United States Director of VA Homeless Programs complemented the agency saying, "There is no finer program for homeless veterans in America than VVSD." The former Secretary of

¹⁰ Veterans Village of San Diego website, History, <http://www.vvsd.net/history.htm>

¹¹ What is a Stand Down? (visit <http://www.vvsd.net> for more information) In times of war, exhausted combat units requiring time to rest and recover were removed from the battlefields to a place of relative security and safety. Today, Stand Down refers to a community-based intervention program designed to help the nation's estimated 200,000 homeless veterans "combat" life on the streets. Stand Down's philosophy is a hand up, not a hand out. The hand up is made possible each year by the dedication of thousands of volunteers and numerous sponsors.

Veterans Affairs said, "VVSD sets the bar," and is the "gold standard of transitional veteran housing."¹²

The Grand Jury is impressed that such a fine example of service for our veterans is operating here in San Diego. The dedicated staff and the community of supporters who make it possible are commended for the creation and on-going operation of such an exemplary service.

¹² Veterans Village of San Diego Web site, History, <http://www.vvsd.net/history.htm>