

# HSA Connection

AUGUST 2008 A Monthly Newsletter for the Employees of San Diego County Health & Human Services Agency

*Mindy Ripley Wins Prestigious National Kathy Angel Award*

## An Angel in Our Midst

According to the Juvenile Arthritis Alliance, **Mindy Ripley**, Analyst II, has “retired” after more than 15 years of working on behalf of the Juvenile Arthritis Committee San Diego Area Chapter. Retired is in quotations, because it’s not really true.

In her “retirement,” Ripley has continued to raise money for the Alliance and served on the 2008 Juvenile Arthritis Conference committee. In recognition of her years of dedication, Ripley and Linda Rausis, her San Diego co-chair, were honored with the Kathy Angel Award for Parent Leadership at the National Juvenile Arthritis Conference held in Costa Mesa.



*Mindy Ripley*

According to the Alliance, the award is presented to the parent(s) who have shown exceptional courage and strength, within their personal family, of living with rheumatic disease; established effective working relationships with local related organizations and professionals; and have generously shared their time and talents by serving in parent leadership roles within the Arthritis Foundation and medical community.

Ripley began her involvement as a parent volunteer and has been a tireless fundraiser. One of her fundraising efforts involved leading a brigade of parents in selling hot dogs at a Padres game, raising over \$15,000. She was instrumental in developing a strong partnership with the pediatric rheumatology team at Rady Children’s Hospital, where she volunteered as a parent consultant for the parent-to-parent telephone network. She was co-chair of the national conference when it was held here in San Diego in 2004.

This year, she was the co-chair for children’s activities at the national conference. There were approximately 300 children in attendance, and she had to plan activities for two and a half days so parents could participate in the workshops. “That was a lot of preparation and work but the fun outweighs the work,” Ripley said. “I came home with lots of temporary tattoos put on by a 4 year old.”

## What Makes a Great Leader?

Send your answers to editor Tom Christensen, [Thomas.christensen@sdcounty.ca.gov](mailto:Thomas.christensen@sdcounty.ca.gov) by Thursday, Aug. 21st. Answers will be printed in the September Connection.

## Agency Staff Bridge Transitions

Service providers from San Diego County gathered at Mission Bay for the 2008 Finding Common Ground Conference. The conference was a collaborative effort between the Agency’s Public Health and Behavioral Health Services, including: Alcohol Drug Services; HIV, STD and Hepatitis Branch; Mental Health Services; and TB Control and Refugee Health Branch.

The theme for the conference was strengthening transitions. Many of the clients the Agency serves are dealing with a complex array of conditions. That issue was addressed by keynote speaker Neva Chauppette who spoke about helping clients with multiple conditions navigate between the various County services they need. She also touched on issues of staff burn-out and self care.

There were several educational speakers and provider-hosted resource tables. There was also a poster contest.

Attendees were able to network through a “Passport to Integrated Services” scavenger hunt. Afternoon activities included a panel with service recipients and providers. The day concluded with the poster contest winners and gift basket giveaways.

The conference exceeded expectations on many levels. At the end of the day many provider relationships were formed and existing relationships strengthened, which will result in more access to services for our clients and more resources for Agency staff.



*The Finding Common Ground conference planning committee (left to right); Shannon Hansen, Jamie Beam, Lori Jones, Rose-mari Ochoa, Angela Simoneau (not shown: Louise Lecklitner, Tanya Roome)*



## *From the Director's Desk* *Nick Macchione*

### Dealing With the Speed of Change

In a recent editorial, Mike Leavitt, secretary of the federal Department of Health and Human Services reflected on the concept of change in the workplace. He said, "In a global market, there are three ways to approach change. You can fight it and fail; you can accept it and survive; or you can lead it and prosper."

It's clear that we work in one of the most rapidly changing sectors of the marketplace. From the speed of new discoveries in medicine to advances in information technology to changing clinical and social service practice guidelines, we live in an environment of constant change. Our Agency is a perfect example of an organization that has successfully adapted to change. During the past ten years we have created one of the most effective health and human services agencies in the country. How? By changing our attitudes towards integrated service delivery we embarked on numerous business process reengineering initiatives to improve customer service. We know that working for the Agency and County assures one inescapable guarantee – we're constantly looking to improve in becoming the best service organization that we can possibly become. Our success hinges on our ability as a team to generate, drive, anticipate and adapt to changing circumstances.



*Nick Macchione*

We're also witnessing some of the most significant transformations in our nation and world. Change is heralded in the dialogue of our nation's presidential campaigns. Change is imminent within the state as we brace ourselves for significant budget cuts and a progressively faltering economy. We see change – for the worse – almost every day at the gas pump or reading about global warming and its effect on our environment, while we facilitate change – for the better – in the lives of the people we serve everyday whether it's in our office lobbies, clinic exam rooms, customers' homes, schools or on street corners.

Today, I encourage you to evaluate your thoughts and attitude about change. Is change something you approach with fear and anxiety? Or, do you see it as an opportunity to create something new, something better for yourself and our customers? I have always found opportunities to be present in the midst of crises...the challenge is being proactive in seeking out the opportunities to innovate meaningful solutions.

So, where do we go from here? Well, following an incredible decade of excellence, we will continue to create change together in the next decade. Soon, you will be hearing a lot more about our new strategic thinking framework for the County...it's referred to as the General Management System (GMS 2.0). It's our County "recipe" that helps guide us to success. This new model is guaranteed to stimulate our thinking about how we currently operate in light of the changes taking place in our respective environments. It will help us further strengthen existing and new connections within the Agency and across County departments, as well as, enhance our performance-based partnerships throughout the region, state and nation. We will increase our investment in the knowledge, training and expertise of our MOST VALUABLE Agency asset, namely YOU - our committed and talented employees. We will seek out innovative solutions through our mobile remote workforce strategy which improves services to our customers while improving staff satisfaction. And very importantly, we will continue to provide high quality customer service in all our programs. Your continued dedication, flexibility and creativity are paramount to our collective success.

Beginning next month, you will notice a "change" in your newsletter, as well. Each month, I will focus on a topic that reflects on one of our Agency's core values or tenets of operational excellence. Next month, the topic will be **leadership**. An example can be seen on the front page of this newsletter where Mindy Ripley is bestowed "Angel" status for her extraordinary volunteer work in the fight against Juvenile Arthritis.

**If you have an interesting and compelling story about an employee who has demonstrated outstanding leadership in the workplace and/or in the community, please email a short description to Tom Christensen, [Thomas.christensen@sdcounty.ca.gov](mailto:Thomas.christensen@sdcounty.ca.gov). The September edition of the Connection will feature several of your best stories that illustrate how our 5,700 strong practice leadership in our everyday activities.**

One last thing, regarding Secretary Leavitt's reflection on change, our Agency does the third – WE LEAD THE WAY TO SUCCESS!



## Hand Brings 30 Years Experience

**Donna Hand** has been appointed the Regional General Manager of the Agency's North Regions.

"Donna Hand is a respected and proven leader in the health arena," said Agency Director **Nick Macchione**. "She will play an integral role in advancing the Agency's core mission to make people's lives safer, healthier and self-sufficient by managing essential services."

Hand will be responsible for leading 1,400 employees and managing an annual budget of \$200 million.

She has more than 30 years of professional experience in the planning, management, and delivery of health and human services in the County of San Diego. She has extensive background working with the major public assistance programs and additional experience working in the Policy, Strategy and Program Division.

"I am looking forward to serving the residents of San Diego County in this role," said Hand. "My goal is to continue creating a customer-focused health and human service delivery system that is results-driven and responsive to community needs."

## What Adult Vaccines Do I Need?

We hear a lot about children's vaccines, but adults need vaccines too! Our immunity may wane over time (like for whooping cough) and there are new vaccines you may have missed.

Here's a list of adult vaccines – check with your doctor to see which ones are appropriate for you:

**Tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis (Td/Tdap):** A dose of Td ("tetanus booster") is needed every 10 years. The new recommendation is to substitute a Tdap for one Td booster dose, for those under 65, to protect against whooping cough (pertussis).

**Influenza:** Get a flu shot every year!

**Pneumococcal Pneumonia:** For adults 65 or older.

**Shingles:** For adults over 60 (may not be appropriate for all).

**Human Papilloma Virus (HPV):** For women 26 or younger.

**MMR (Measles, Mumps, Rubella):** For adults born after 1957 unless you can show that you've had the diseases or the vaccines.

**Hepatitis A:** May be recommended based on health status, occupation, travel requirements, and other factors.

**Hepatitis B:** May be recommended depending on your health status, occupation and other factors.

**Meningococcal:** First year college students living in dorms, military recruits, some international travelers, and people with certain medical conditions should get a meningococcal vaccine.

Remember, vaccines are not just for kids; adults need them too! For more information, go to [www.sdiz.org](http://www.sdiz.org).

## Big Band Bash Back

It's time once again to swing to the classic melodies of "yesteryear." Gather the family, put on your dancing shoes and join the fun at the 12th annual Big Band Bash by the Beach on Saturday, September 27, 12-7 p.m. This year's concert features seven hours of continuous music from three bands on two stages at the Oceanside Pier Plaza Amphitheater. The \$5 ticket price includes the concert, a meal, and an opportunity drawing.

This year's event is a benefit concert for health and human service nonprofit organizations serving residents in North County. Thanks to the generous sponsorship of County Supervisor **Bill Horn**, 100% of the ticket proceeds will go to the numerous participating community agencies who serve children and families.

Health and Human Services Agency ticket sale proceeds will benefit Children In Need, Inc., a nonprofit charitable corporation organized by Agency employees that provides financial support to assist disadvantaged children participating in sports, arts and other enrichment activities. To purchase tickets, contact a Children In Need representative:

- North Coastal: **Mindy Ripley**, 760-967-4541
- Oceanside Welfare-to-Work: **Esther Daniels**, 760-754-5827
- North Inland: **Tom Cooney**, 760-740-4061
- Balboa Office: **Carol Kozik-Sproule**, 858-616-5856
- Levant Street Building: **Sue Coffman**, 858-694-5275
- Northeast Family Resource Center: **Mike Kveen**, 619-589-4502
- Central/Mid-city: **George Jones**, 619-557-3320
- Mills Building: **Angelina Thomas**, 619-338-2522

For more information about the concert, please visit the Big Band Bash web site [www.bigbandbash.org](http://www.bigbandbash.org), which will be activated on August 6. For more information about Children In Need, please visit [www.childreninneed.org](http://www.childreninneed.org).



The annual Big Band Bash in North County has been a blast from the past - and a successful fundraiser - for more than a decade.



## Employee Spotlight

**Shahla A-Sepah** is making a positive difference in the Central Region – one Health and Human Services Agency client at a time. And she wouldn't have it any other way.



*Shahla A-Sepah*

Shahla is a Public Health Nurse III who has been at the Central Region Public Health Center for 10 years and with the Agency for 15. She is a Health Link Nurse working with school age children. She received her master's degree from the University of Liverpool in England in 1976, and speaks several foreign languages and American Sign Language.

"My philosophy is people are not an empty glass," she said. "You can't just add whatever you want to them, you have to learn from them and what their foundation is and then you can add to that knowledge."

Her outlook, coupled with an engaging smile and friendly, calming demeanor make Shahla a well-respected individual in the extremely diverse central heart of the city. She has been known to meet families on her daily walk in Colinas Park and bring them to the public health center to assist them in getting services.

"Every culture is unique and every community is unique," said Shahla. "The beauty of public health nursing is you see the patients in their environment."

The neighborhood is very ethnically diverse and the median household income according to the US Census in 2000 is around \$25,000. "This community is very diverse and beautiful," said Shahla. "I call it the mini-United Nations."

She often uses the challenges in her own life to relate to her clients. Shahla immigrated to the United States as an adult. "When I hear from patients in the neighborhood about challenges, I use my example," she said.

Outside of work, Shahla is extremely proud of her children. Her oldest son, who is deaf from childhood meningococcal disease, recently graduated from the Rochester Institute of Technology with a master's degree in business administration. Her youngest son is a graduate of Yale with a master's degree and is attending UCLA for his doctorate.

## Graduating for Two

Behavioral Health Services recently honored a group of courageous young women with a graduation celebration. This group of women, when faced with a life-changing situation, decided to put themselves and their future babies first.

Pregnant youth at risk for substance abuse receive education and guidance toward a healthy lifestyle at the San Diego Youth and Community Services Teen Options program. The day treatment program emphasizes recovery, parenting and child development for pregnant/parenting teens, as well as academic education, life skills training, alcohol, tobacco, and drug education. The program serves females, ages 12-17.

A highlight of the graduation ceremony was the reading of poems written by the teens. Here is an excerpt from one of the poems:

### *Strength*

Graduations: all about cap and gowns  
Dressed up underneath  
Family sitting in the hot sun  
Wading through a long sea of names  
Wading, waiting, until they get to mine  
Most of the long, long speeches, a waste of time.  
They speak about being proud of themselves  
And all their accomplishments  
They speak about freedom and past roles  
Stories about their lives and future goals  
All their strengths and their ups and downs  
while we sit around and roast in caps and gowns  
They talk about their supportive families ...

And now I hold a tiny baby in my belly  
I'm going to my favorite cousin's graduation tonight  
I used to know those kids  
I used to party with them  
I went to school with them  
I should be on that stage  
Graduating with them.

But my life is different.  
And the baby in my belly saved my life.  
If it wasn't for her,  
I would still be out there  
partying with them.  
And know that struggles only make strength.



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