



# The **H H S A** Connection

THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

DECEMBER 2006

## 'Twas the Night Before the Holidays

'Twas the night before the holidays, and all through Askew,  
HHSA employees were stirring, headed home right on cue;  
The holiday food handling guidelines were all posted with care,  
In hopes no one would get sick from here to there;  
The intermediate clerks were nestled all snug in their chairs,  
Jean Shepard and Paula Landau-Cox were also in theirs;



When out on the lawn there arose such a clatter,  
They sprung from their desks to see what was the matter.  
Away to the windows they flew like a flash,  
It was only Nick Macchione, making another big splash.  
"HHSA won another award," said North Regions' Nick,  
When it comes to honors, the Agency's always in the thick.  
He was joined by Public Health nurses and IT folks,  
All happy and jolly and full of great jokes.  
From the South and the Central they also came,  
Rene Santiago and crew were here to proclaim,

"Childhood obesity we're working to decrease,  
You can read all about it in our great OMPA press release!"  
Taking charge of the situation Jean Shepard called out,  
"Let's hear it for HHSA, but wait the East Region's still en route."  
There they were on the horizon, led by Pam Smith,  
"We were busy with AIS projects, but we're here forthwith."  
With all the troops gathered, all here in one place,  
It was time to call roll, with a warm Agency embrace:  
"Now Epi! Now ADS! Now Compliance and Mental Health!  
On CWS! On Contract Support! On PA/PG and Financial, the ones with the wealth!"



"To the top of the building and over the wall,  
Now dash away! Dash away! Dash away all!  
Past the toy workshop where Human Resources was busy,  
Right past Legislative Affairs and SPOS working 'til they're all dizzy.  
Off to spend holidays with family, not a work duty in sight,  
Jean Shepard had a wish for the Agency she delivered with might;  
"Enjoy your families and have a safe and happy holiday season,  
You work for HHSA, you can be proud with great reason!"

Central Region: Mid-City and Mills CWS

# A Happy Halloween for Foster Children

Many Central Region foster children spent their Halloween doing more than trick-or-treating. Staff at the Mills and Mid-City Child Welfare Services (CWS) offices provided a way for their foster children to celebrate Halloween while their foster parents benefited from an evening of respite.

More than 30 children enjoyed a fun-filled night at the Pearson Ford Ecological Center, while their parents were given dinner vouchers to Kous Kous, a popular Moroccan restaurant in Hillcrest. With the help of the Mid-City Rotary Club, Mid-City and Mills CWS staff teamed up to give children an unforgettable evening.

Upon arrival, those children who didn't have costumes were provided with them, while others were led straight to the maze room, in which children ran, crawled, and snuck up on one another, screaming and giggling in typical Halloween fashion. Children then indulged in an indoor pizza picnic while Giggles the Clown provided the 'trick-or-treating;' she handed out balloon toys and candy and performed a magic show.

For the finale, children headed to the auditorium to watch an animated movie on the 'big screen.' Before they left, children were given goody bags that included both candy and toothbrushes. The success of the event was clearly illustrated as children exclaimed that this was the best Halloween they'd ever had.



Mid-City Rotary Volunteers

## A Message from Jean M. Shepard Health and Human Services Agency Director

As we approach the holiday season, I would like to wish everyone a peaceful, happy and joyous holiday!



This is the time of the year to spend with your families, friends and loved ones - enjoying all that the season has to offer.

Thank you for all you have done during the past year. Your time, talent and dedication on behalf of the Agency makes San Diego County a better place to live.

As you are out in the community during the holiday season and see a smiling child, senior or family, you can also smile - knowing you have made a difference in their lives and made their futures brighter through your work.

I wish you and yours a happy and healthy holiday season.

*Jean M. Shepard*

## Cool Zones Program Picks Up National Honor

Aging and Independence Services' Cool Zones program has been named one of only six national winners of the American Society on Aging-Pfizer 2007 Healthcare and Aging Award.



The presentation will take place on March 8 in Chicago. Congratulations!

## FSSD: Behind the Scenes of the Support Services Road Show

“Armed” with new patches proudly identifying them as Agency personnel, HHSA Support Services employees have embarked on an educational campaign to help Agency employees who utilize their services.

Officially titled “HHSA Support Services Facilities Road Show,” Facilities Management has been taking their message directly to the various Agency Managers, Analysts, and Site Coordinators about facilities requests and the role of Facilities Management in fulfilling them.

The Road Show is continually updated and is presented by **George Gonzales** and **John Peterson**. Peterson tells attendees about Facilities Management, explains how to submit a work order, and talks about facility issues that may arise and how to deal with them. Gonzales discusses property disposal, inventory, security requests and security incident reports. Facilities Management’s NaCO award-winning Facility Database is another highlighted feature of the Road Show.

This is all part of a broader campaign to end any confusion about who Facilities Management works for. The misconception is that they work for General Services, when in fact both Facilities Management and the Building Maintenance Engineers who work for Support Services are actually part of the Agency. To emphasize that, those who work for Agency Support Services have recently had patches sewn on their uniforms that identify them as Agency personnel.

The Road Show is highly recommended for any Agency staff who deal with facility issues, whether the facility is owned or leased by the County.



Facilities Management

### UPCOMING ROAD SHOWS

Tuesday, Dec. 12

9:00 - 11:00 a.m.

Health Services Complex  
Coronado Room  
3851 Rosecrans Street

Thursday, Dec. 21

9:00 - 11:00 a.m.

North Central Regional Center  
Conference Room 1A  
8965 Balboa Avenue

[HHSA Events Calendar](#) - Check out what's happening, or, advise your Web contact to post events.

### Gift Policy Reminder

During this time of holiday celebration, remember that HHSA Policy M-1.2, "Code of Conduct and Statement of Incompatible Activities" prohibits employees from accepting benefits from contractors, clients, or entities seeking to do business with the County.

"Benefits" as defined by Policy M-1.2 include, but are not limited to, "...meals, gifts, refreshments, transportation, entertainment, or any other item of monetary value provided or received in connection with assigned duties as an HHSA employee." While the intent of the giver is almost always innocent in these situations, the acceptance of any of these benefits could result in a real or perceived conflict of interest on the part of the giver or on the part of the citizens of the County of San Diego.

If you have any questions regarding these policies, or regarding a particular situation, please contact your immediate supervisor, your manager, or the Compliance Office for guidance.

## East Region: Overrun by “Homerun Hunnies”

Neighborhoods for Kids is about being part of the community. It's “our” turf, friends, teachers, and neighbors. The County's East Region Child Welfare Services Neighborhoods for Kids employees along with community partners are taking it to their community turf after hours on the softball diamond.

The Homerun Hunnies are hitting it out of the park in a softball league sponsored by El Cajon Parks and Recreation. The game is all about building relationships and community, getting exercise, reducing stress and having fun - win or lose. Runs may come in slowly, but the positive attitude is infectious.



“The Monday morning conversations about the game are in no way, shape or form a replica of what happened, but it becomes all about playing together to build the concept of team, where everyone's a winner,” said Debbie Comstock of Little House Family Services.

Working on the field, in the classroom or in the home, together we're doing whatever it takes to keep kids connected to their school, friends and neighborhood.

## South Region: CWS Ready at a Moment's Notice

When you see a “drug bust” on television, you likely have not thought about the dozens of people involved in that raid, many of whom are County Child Welfare Services (CWS) and Public Health Center (PHC) staff. While the focus is typically on the criminals making and/or selling narcotics, few people think about the children who are unwilling spectators to such crimes.

CWS staff may have only a moment's notice before they need to develop a plan for an often undetermined number of Drug Endangered Children (DEC), oftentimes needing to flex their schedules to accommodate raid times chosen by law enforcement. CWS staff work arduously to be present for the children when a “drug bust” occurs. The goal is to reduce the psychological impact of witnessing a parent arrest and to find a safe, best placement within the child's community.

Since Jan. 2006, South Region Child Welfare Services staff have worked with over 130 endangered children. These children need to be physically examined for harmful drug exposure, signs of abuse and neglect and other potential health problems. A South Region Public Health nurse practitioner and licensed vocational nurse rearrange busy clinic schedules to immediately accommodate these children. The CWS/PH collaboration has provided physical exams, with follow-up case management, to over 75 children in South, East, Central and North Central Public Health Centers in the past year.

The DEC Program has resulted in vulnerable children receiving support and compassionate care at a critical time in their lives. It has also allowed children to remain within a familiar community and school setting, increasing much needed stability and enhancing their ability to grow up and lead productive, healthy lives.

## East Region and AIS: Annual Fall Festival

Every year East Region and Aging and Independence Services come together for their annual Fall Festival located at Edgemoor Hospital. It's a time to celebrate the year's accomplishments, learn about resources within the County and enjoy a barbecue prepared by the Edgemoor staff.

This year, around 600 employees enjoyed hamburgers and hot dogs while learning about different County services from representatives of four of our five County departments. With over 40 programs highlighted, County staff got a rare chance to see the diverse type of work that their peers perform. Staff was able to gather resources for their personal wellness as well as tools and referrals for clients and friends.

East Region and Aging and Independence Services General Manager **Pam Smith** spoke about the accomplishments to date and highlighted collaborations with community groups that enhance and strengthen great public service.



Above, SDCERA employees talk with County staff at the East Region and Aging & Independence Services All Staff Fall Festival. Below, **Rosalinda Gaspar** (left), **Cecelia Fernandez** and **Juanito Ruiz Amor Jr.** represent the Registrar of Voters office.

Have you submitted a [D.I.B.B.S.](#) lately?

### Director's Call-In

Share your ideas and concerns with

HHSA Director  
Jean M. Shepard

Director of Operations  
Paula Landau-Cox

First Friday of each month • 8 a.m. - noon  
(619) 515-6555



### Emergency Survival Program

There's been a lot of talk about disasters lately. Is *your* family prepared? There are many resources available to help you. For example, the [County's Office of Emergency Services](#) offers an Emergency Survival Program (ESP) with monthly tips to increase emergency preparedness at home, in the community, at work and at school.

The December theme is "Lend a Hand," learning about community resources and participating.

[The County's emergency page](#) will provide valuable information in the event of a disaster.

## South Region: Pilot Program Aids "Parent Peers"

South Region Child Welfare Services (CWS) has implemented a cutting-edge pilot project, the Parent Peer Support Group (PPSG), to assist parents whose children are part of the juvenile dependency system.

The program is the first of its kind in San Diego County and works to decrease children's time in foster care and expedite reunification by including "Parent Peers" who have been through the process of reunification themselves helping parents. A total of 26 parents participated in the pilot project during the first few months and it has been so successful that another PPSG began last month and will continue throughout the year.

In addition to the regular education of parents about CWS and support services available, these Parent Peers have proven indispensable, offering a judgment-free environment in which participants may ask questions of people with whom they can more readily identify.

The program also provides a forum where participants solicit support and feedback from their peers and obtain information regarding assistance possibilities. The program is a partnership between HHS A and several community agencies, including South Bay Community Services, the Youth and Family Roundtable, and the Academy for Professional Excellence.

## By the Numbers



San Diego County Immunization Branch conducts an annual random digit dialing telephone survey of the county's residents. One of the surveys conducted this year was of 1,155 healthcare workers (defined as someone who had direct or face-to-face contact with patients as part of their routine work). The healthcare worker survey focused primarily on attitudes and behaviors related to influenza immunization.<sup>1</sup>

Here are some results from that survey:

- 20% of the healthcare workers (HCWs) surveyed reported never receiving a flu vaccine.
- 44% of the HCWs surveyed reported that they worked in a hospital.
- 73% of the HCWs got the vaccine to protect themselves; 10% to protect their patients; 7% to protect their family.
- 44% of the HCWs did not agree with the statement, "I think the flu can be severe (headache, fever, chills for up to a week)."
- 33% of the HCWs did not agree with the statement, "I think the flu can make you sick enough to go to a hospital."<sup>2</sup>

1. RDD Telephone Survey, County of San Diego HHS A Immunization Branch, 2006.

2. Ibid.

To request additional health statistics describing health behaviors, diseases and injuries for specific populations, health trends and comparisons to national targets, please call the County's Community Health Statistics Unit at (619) 285-6479.

To access the latest data and data links, including the Community Profiles and 2004 Core Public Health Indicator document, go to [www.sdhealthstatistics.com](http://www.sdhealthstatistics.com).

**Compliance Office: (619) 515-4244**  
**Toll-Free Compliance Hotline: (866) 549-0004**

*An ethical workplace is your right... and your responsibility...*

### Send in kudos!

Proud of a coworker? Send text (and photos): [thomas.christensen@sdcounty.ca.gov](mailto:thomas.christensen@sdcounty.ca.gov) - or contact your section editor, listed on page 9.

## North Regions:

### Students Get a Lesson in Understanding Differences

In a day dedicated to understanding physical impairments, kindergarten and fourth grade students at Del Mar Heights Elementary School participated in interactive experiences designed to help them appreciate the difficulties encountered by people with disabilities.

Physical Impairments Day, held on Nov. 6, was hosted by the Agency's California Children Services program, in collaboration with Del Mar Heights Elementary school staff, and parent volunteers. Over 120 students participated in simulation stations that focused on fine motor, gross motor, and ambulation activities.



*Randall Taylor works on fine motor skills with a student wearing gloves.*

Some examples included turning pages of a book while wearing gloves, performing activities using one side of their body only, and using a wheelchair to navigate a course.

Instrumental to coordinating the physical impairments event was parent volunteer Gale Graybill, who also assisted in the previous year's event. When asked why she wanted to help at this year's event, she said, "The simulations are so impressive and there is such an enthusiastic reaction by the kids. Coordinating the event was really a group effort - it makes you feel closer to your community."

Other "understanding" days dedicated to visual and auditory disabilities took place during the same week.

"Understanding Differences" is a program conceived by Rady Children's Hospital and Healthcare Center neurologist Dr. Jenni Freedom. It engages all grade levels in a two-month curriculum during the fall.



*CCS Staff (left to right): Bottom row - Trish Santos (Physical Therapist), Judith Garces (PT), Randall Taylor (Senior Occupational Therapist), Karly Ackerman (OT). Middle row - Anotai Goyal (Senior PT), Judy Rockland (Supervising Therapist), Amy Nakatsuchi (PT). Top row - Bree Bailey (OT), Parvin Bagheri (PT), Dan Cicchelli (PT)*



*A student participates in a gross motor skills demonstration with physical therapist Amy Nakatsuchi.*

## Behavioral Health Services: Accent the Positive to Avoid Holiday Stress

Many people get into the holiday spirit with parties, gift exchanges, and decorating, but others don't have the time, energy, or finances to do everything they would like in order to create the "perfect holiday." To some, holidays bring increased feelings of isolation, anxiety, or depression and they cope in unhealthy ways, such as using alcohol or drugs.

Consider making a list of things that would be nice to do and all the preparations needed. When you have a plan to follow, the stress will be reduced and you will gain satisfaction as you check off items you have prioritized on your to-do list and experience enjoyment from all of the activities you have done.

The Agency's Behavioral Health Services recommends the following steps to cope with holiday stress:

- Be positive and joyful: See the magic of the holidays through the eyes of a child; Count your blessings.
- Get involved with others: Spend time with people who are supportive and who care about you; Make new friends by joining groups; Get to know your neighbors; Invite friends to share your holiday activities.
- Look for opportunities to express kindness: Volunteer at a nursing home, church, or shelter; Help a disabled or elderly neighbor with decorations and errands; Make holiday decorations with co-workers, or friends, for a hospital or convalescent center.
- Exercise: Walk around your neighborhood - meet and greet your neighbors; Laugh a lot - it's a great aerobic exercise!
- Practice moderation; Attend an alcohol-free holiday event; If you are feeling depressed, seek help from a friend, doctor, religious organization, or contact one of these resources:
  - County Access and Crisis Line: (800) 479-3339
  - Countywide HHSA Information and Referral: dial 211
  - Alcoholics Anonymous: (619) 265-8762 [www.aasandiego.org](http://www.aasandiego.org)
  - Narcotics Anonymous: (800) 479-0062 [www.sandiegona.org](http://www.sandiegona.org)
  - Mental Health web site: [www.sandiego.networkofcare.org/mh](http://www.sandiego.networkofcare.org/mh)

## You Never Know What You Might Find...

### Check out a PA/PG Auction

Every two months, the Public Administrator/Public Guardian (PA/PG) sells personal property from estates they have been managing. Take a peek at the latest treasures available - on the [PA/PG auction Web page](#). Items featured at estate sales include: vehicles, furniture, appliances, electronics, computer equipment, jewelry, artwork, antiques, coins, and other collectibles.

The next auction will be held in January at 5201 Ruffin Road in Kearny Mesa. Find more details on the Agency's on-line [event calendar](#).

**REMINDER:** All Agency employees are required to complete annual compliance training by Jan. 31, 2007. To access the training from your desktop computer, please log on to: <http://10.32.14.63/default.asp>. **Remember, the training must be completed by Jan. 31, 2007.**

## **AIS: IHSS Home Care Workers Recognized**

The In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS)/Public Authority hosted its first annual Home Care Worker Recognition Event on Nov. 15 as part of National Home Care Month. The California Legislature has also made the second week of November In-Home Supportive Services Home Care Recognition Week. Over 450 In-Home Supportive Services workers came from areas throughout San Diego County to attend the event, held at the IHSS/Public Authority offices located in South Bay.

During the course of the event, home care workers were treated to light refreshments along with recognition awards for assisting IHSS consumers to live high quality lives in their own homes. Participants were able to interact with and receive information from Public Authority staff members regarding signing up for the Provider Registry, and request additional work hours and information regarding the various home care worker training opportunities that are available through the Public Authority. The United Domestic Workers of America union were also in attendance and were available to answer questions related to their organization.

"We had a very successful Home Care Worker Recognition Event and a number of the home care workers in attendance expressed their gratitude," said Public Authority Executive Director Bud Sayles, who also noted that the celebration "recognizes and commends the contribution of IHSS home care workers who give their time, patience, care, and support to consumers and the entire community."

The Public Authority is looking forward to another spectacular event next year and the opportunity to thank home care workers for the wonderful job they do for the residents of San Diego County.



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**Health and Human Services Agency Director** - Jean M. Shepard

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## Public Health: ARIES Project Nets Two Statewide Awards

The AIDS Regional Information and Evaluation System (ARIES) Project that has been a collaboration among the State of California, the State of Texas, Riverside/San Bernardino County and San Diego County has won the Best of California award in both the categories it was nominated for. The Project won for Demonstrated Leadership in Solving Business and Policy Problems through Technology and Best Application Serving Multiple Jurisdictions or Organizations within a Jurisdiction.

ARIES is a web-based, centralized HIV/AIDS client management system that provides a single point of entry for clients, allows for coordination of client services among providers, meets both HRSA and California care and treatment reporting requirements and provides comprehensive data for program monitoring and scientific evaluations. ARIES enhances services for clients with HIV by helping providers automate, plan, manage and report on client data.

All clients in San Diego County receiving services paid for by Ryan White CARE Act (RWCA) funding will be registered in ARIES. Once a client is in the system, all services provided to the client will be entered into ARIES by the contracted service providers.

The San Diego County HIV Health Services Planning Council and the grantee (the HIV, STD and Hepatitis Branch of Public Health Services) have been partners in this from the beginning of the planning for ARIES.

## Extreme Home Makeover

The Gonzagas, a foster family with La Cuna Foster Family Agency, won a KGTV Channel 10 Extreme Home Makeover.

The show aired in November featuring the remodeling of the family's condo. They are currently the parents of a foster daughter.

## County to Improve Latino/Hispanic Access to Mental Health Services

San Diego County Mental Health Services (MHS) is working with community stakeholders to improve access to care for Latinos, including those who only speak Spanish.

Surveys were taken of 1,176 newly enrolled Spanish-speaking San Diego County Medi-Cal beneficiaries to determine the obstacles keeping them from seeking mental health services. Study results indicate that Latinos are unserved or underserved in MHS.

Most of the individuals did not know about mental health services and had not used them in the past. Forty-eight percent of those surveyed did not know that they had a right to receive mental health services. Of the 52% who were aware of their benefit, over 53% did not know how to receive a referral to mental health services.

Latino/Hispanic individuals with psychiatric and substance abuse disorders in San Diego County were already recognized as a population with many treatment access barriers and poor retention in treatment. Barriers include language, cost and transportation, childcare, convenient hours and wait times for appointments.

Stigma has been identified as the most prevalent barrier to access for Latinos. A study revealed that Latinos are typically more concerned about their family's, friend's and community's opinion of them.

San Diego County's Mental Health Plan will promote culturally competent services to all Latino/Hispanic age groups by addressing the identified barriers and increasing the awareness of Latino/Hispanic rights to access mental health services.



## TUNE IN!

San Pasqual Academy will be featured on "California Connected," seen locally on KPBS on Friday, Dec. 22 at 9:00 p.m.

# KUDOS ♦ KUDOS

Thanks to Agency employees **Cathi Palatella, Mindy Ripley, Chrissie Burness, and Carey Riccitelli**, the holidays will come early for twin four-year-old adopted boys, their parents and their seven new siblings.

These agency employees went above and beyond to help the family make the little twins' dream come true and provide them with a trip to Legoland.

The boys' journey through life has not been easy. They have been in foster care since birth and their foster family, who had agreed to adopt them, changed their minds. Burness called over 70 families to find a permanent home for the twins, finally finding a family in New York.

The time has finally come to make the adoption final, and the family will journey to San Diego for the Dec. 7 finalization. The County provided plane tickets for the parents and the twins. The family was able to scrape together enough money for plane tickets for the rest of the children, hotel rooms and rental vehicles.

There was no way they could afford the trip to Legoland for the family, so the County employees sprung into action and through some diligent networking, Palatella was able to get Volvo Corporate to donate the 11 admission tickets, as well as parking and food discounts.

Now, not only will the twins finally have their family, they will also get their dream trip to Legoland.

## B-4!



*BINGO! was one of the featured events at the FSSD/ Executive Office Employee Recognition Event held Oct. 27.*

## HHSA Employees Walk the Distance for Suicide Prevention

Led by **Alfredo Aguirre**, the Behavioral Health team walked three miles in Balboa Park for suicide prevention in the "Out of Darkness" Community Walk.

A total of 250 community members walked Oct. 29th to raise \$25,000 for the second annual campaign for suicide prevention.



*Kate Martin, left, from Alcohol and Drug Services, and Alfredo Aguirre, right, of Mental Health Services took part in the "Out of Darkness" community walk.*



## TUNE IN!

San Diego children awaiting adoption will be featured on the annual A Home for the Holidays special on KFMB 8 (CBS) from 8 to 9 p.m. on Dec. 22. Alexya, one of our waiting children, was selected to go on stage with Cedric the Entertainer to introduce Katharine McPhee from American Idol.

One of our success stories will be featured in the show as one of the finalized family segments. Alex and Angel were featured on last year's show. This year, they are flourishing in the adoptive home of Gloria and Richard Arguilez. The couple had wanted to adopt one toddler, but through working with the Agency, the family decided to adopt both Alex and Angel. They have made remarkable gains since their placement in January. This story will reflect the profound effort that a loving, committed adoptive family can have on a child. San Diego County Adoptions continues to make great progress finding homes for its waiting children.