



# The HHSA Connection

MARCH 2006

SAFE, HEALTHY AND THRIVING COMMUNITIES

Ensuring Operational Excellence!

## HHSA Salutes Social Workers

*Social Workers Month is a Perfect Time to Say Thanks*

**M**arch is National Professional Social Work Month, when social workers around the nation are recognized for their efforts to help vulnerable populations, such as children, families, seniors and more.

In the Agency, more than one thousand social workers touch a wide variety of people in San Diego County. In Aging and Independence Services, for example, social workers do everything from assessing the need for in-home care for seniors and those with disabilities, to working in the Call Center, and assessing needs for social services of the 165 patients at Edgemoor.

Child Welfare Services employs Social Workers and Protective Services Workers (PSW), Protective Services Supervisors (PSS) throughout the Agency's regions, who investigate reports of suspected child abuse and neglect and intervene where necessary.

Mental Health Services has Licensed Mental Health Clinicians and Senior Psychiatric Social Workers who do everything from psychotherapy to disaster response. They provided mental health services following the 2003 firestorms and Hurricane Katrina. Social workers also work in administrative functions throughout the Agency, including Regional Program Support Division and Alcohol and Drug Services.

This month, when you see an HHSA social worker, let them know how much you appreciate all they do.



CLASSY CLASSIFICATIONS: PROGRAM MANAGER

### Up to the Challenge

*Dedicated to Mental Health*

**W**orking with the seriously mentally ill is a challenge, and **Kathleen Sherber** has been up to that challenge for more than 20 years.

Sherber is a program manager for Adult Mental Health Case Management at the Broadway clinic in El Cajon. She manages 12 case managers who work with mentally ill clients, helping them find needed services and ensuring that they get the treatment they need.

"It's rewarding to help people who have chronic mental illness survive, hopefully get better, and move on with their lives," she said.

A licensed clinical social worker who also has a master's degree in social work, Sherber says the case managers she manages help clients find medical and dental treatment, provide supportive counseling, and help them find places to live.

She credits her staff for their commitment to clients and each other: "They're a good group of people."



Sherber manages to help.

### A Message from Jean Shepard Agency Director

**I** am very pleased to announce the appointment of **Diana Francis** to the position of Deputy Director, Agency Contract Support (ACS).

Diana, formerly Assistant Deputy Director with Regional Program Support, is a great example of growing with the County. She has a wealth of experience and knowledge from working more than 30 years with both social service programs and internal security. Diana has held various positions within the County, including Eligibility Worker, Supervisor, Automation Coordinator and Internal Security Manager. She understands the need for ACS to have the role of oversight and accountability for all Agency contracts. Therefore, if you have contracts, you will be fortunate to be working with Diana.

Diana started her new role on February 27. Please join me in welcoming her to our Executive Team.



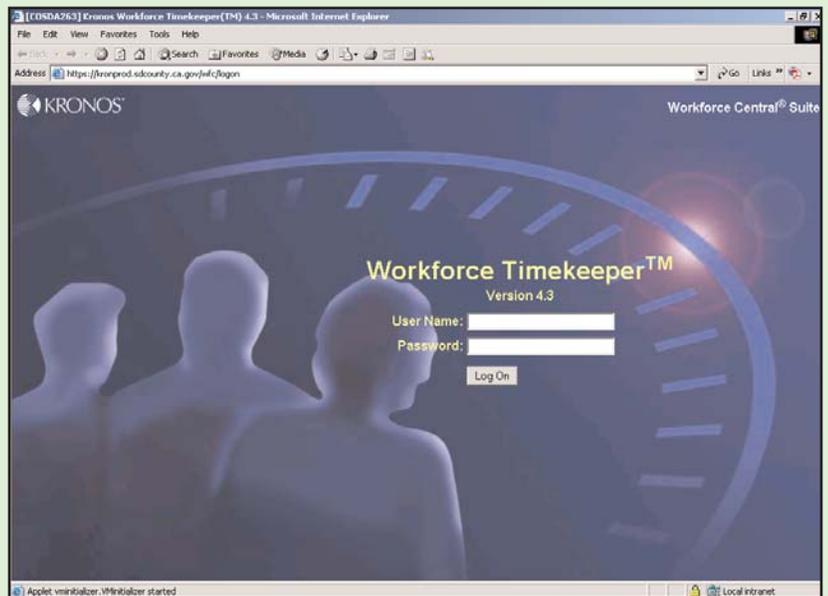
*Jean M. Shepard*

## Take Your Time

### *Pay Attention to the Details*

In Kronos, the various components of County comp time are tracked separately since some elements have expiration dates. The separate components or "buckets" are Birthday Holiday, Holiday Accrual (floating holiday credit for employees not scheduled to work on the day on which the holiday falls), Admissions Day, Personal Leave Day (Social Workers), Columbus Day and Lincoln's Birthday. To check current balances in each bucket, click on the Accruals tab in the lower left section of the Kronos timecard. The Birthday Holiday and the Holiday Accrual (for floating holiday) balances do not have a time expiration. They will remain in the bucket provided comp time accrual limits are not exceeded. Balances in the other county comp buckets listed above expire at the end of the fiscal year.

Employees who have balances under Admissions Day, Personal Leave Day, and Columbus Day must use them prior to the end of the fiscal year (June 22, 2006). ERL (Employee Recognition Leave) awards are good for 12 months from the date granted.



# Child Welfare Services

## There is Always Hope

### *Making a Difference Through Adoption*

Sometimes hope can be stunted. There are many disappointments in the Juvenile Dependency system. Despite the fact that the majority of children who are taken into custody reunify with their parents, there are still many children who end up in need of adoptive homes. Janet was one such child. She became a dependent in 1998. When she was unable to safely return to biological parents or relatives, Janet was in need of a permanent home. San Diego County Adoption social workers attempted to recruit an adoptive home for Janet and none was found.

Janet spent five years as a foster child not having a family to call her own. Fortunately someone saw in Janet what others failed to recognize. Janet developed a relationship with a nurse who worked at her school. That nurse believed that Janet deserved a family and she eventually made the decision to become a foster parent for Janet. That belief in Janet's need for a loving foster home turned into a desire to provide Janet a permanent relationship. Today Janet is 16 years old and is being adopted by the nurse whose commitment is only exceeded by her love for this young woman. There is always hope...



For more information, visit:

- [Steps to Becoming a Foster Parent](#)
- [Adoptions Overview](#)

Or call **1 (877) I ADOPT U** to speak to a duty social worker.

And, be sure to visit the *Heart Gallery* to view photos of waiting children:  
[www.IADOPTU.org](http://www.IADOPTU.org)

## Breaking the Silence

### *Deaf Group Home Needs a Place to Live*

**D**eaf youth constitute one of our most vulnerable and exploited populations. They are abused and neglected at significantly higher rates than hearing children. They are literally "silent" victims. If they do become known to the child welfare system, options have been extremely limited. Currently, there is no residential facility in the San Diego area with the cultural and linguistic capacity to meet the needs of deaf children. Many are sent to placements in Northern California, New Mexico or Wyoming - which can be extremely costly. This issue was identified by the North Regions' Strategic Initiative on Safer Living Environments as a critical area of need.

Toward this end, the Agency is working to establish a deaf group home within San Diego County that will provide a home, health and social services, and enrichment activities in a culturally-affirming, home-like environment for up to six deaf youth. Just a few expected outcomes include reduced length of time in, and out, of home placement and an option for parents to provide a safe, supportive home environment for their deaf child. Bringing this venture to fruition is the San Diego Deaf Group Home Collaboration whose major community partners include: San Diego Youth & Community Services (SDYCS), San Diego Deaf Mental Health Services, and Deaf Community Services.

Tremendous progress has been made to bring the group home into reality. Some accomplishments include: SDYCS agreeing to serve as fiscal agent; Alliance Healthcare Foundation awarding a \$20,000 development grant; and First District Supervisor Greg Cox embracing the project and awarding a \$60,000 Challenge Grant to be used as a partial down payment on a house. The next main step is finding a suitable home to purchase and raising additional funds. The Collaborative hopes to open the San Diego Deaf Group Home later this year.



Opening the door to a deaf child in need calls for special planning.

# Public Health

## Health Statistics - Heart Health

### *Your Heart Needs Attention Year 'Round*

**I**n San Diego County, 6.6% of adults, ages 18 and up, have been diagnosed with heart disease.<sup>1</sup> The primary cause of death among San Diego County residents is heart diseases, with 16,158 deaths from 2001-2003, or 27% of all deaths in the County.<sup>2</sup>

Taking care of your heart is not a temporary trend. It is a habit for life. For more information about Heart Health, visit [www.americanheart.org](http://www.americanheart.org).

1. California Health Interview Survey, 2003, Los Angeles, CA: UCLA Center for Health Policy Research.

2. State of California, Death Statistical Master File-Prepared by Community Epidemiology County of San Diego, Health & Human Services Agency.



Take care of your precious gift of life.

### County's Community Health Statistics Unit

Access data - health behaviors, diseases and injuries for specific populations, health trends and comparisons to national targets.

**Request statistics:** (619) 285-6479

**Access the latest data** (including the 2004 Core Public Health Indicator document): [www.sdhealthstatistics.com](http://www.sdhealthstatistics.com)

This section, featuring stories direct from the front lines, meets Quality First goals for Child Welfare Services, the Regional Program Support Division, and the Regions.

## From North Coastal Region

### *New Beginnings for Child, Family*

A history of domestic violence, an interfering mother-in-law and a newborn baby could spell potential disaster for a couple trying to cope in today's world. But thanks to the efforts of a passionate and dedicated Protective Services Worker, this young family has set off on the right path.

After receiving a referral from the child abuse hotline, alleging a one-day-old newborn child was at substantial risk of abuse, Protective Services Worker **Joan Wicks** from North Coastal Child Welfare Services responded. Her investigation revealed the parents had a history of domestic violence, with the conflict in their relationship revolving around the maternal grandmother's intrusive involvement in their lives and her attempts to sabotage the relationship, including prohibiting the father from being present for the birth of his child or having his name on the birth certificate.

Wicks worked extensively with the parents and the maternal grandmother, individually and jointly, to set boundaries and develop a productive and supportive relationship so the child would have the benefit of a healthy relationship with the parents as well as the grandmother. She assisted the parents in enrolling in domestic violence counseling and receiving an assessment and treatment for depression. Wicks did not just provide them referrals and tell them to go. She stayed involved and followed up to ensure they received the needed services.

Since that time there have been no new child abuse referrals for this family. Although a few months may seem like a relatively short time frame, when you consider the history of domestic violence incidents, the added stresses of a newborn infant for first time parents, and the prior antagonistic relationship with the maternal grandmother - no new referrals in a few short months is an indicator of success for this young child and family.

## From North Central Region

### *Career Club Success Story - It Only Takes One "Yes!"*

CalWORKs customer Michelle's story is one of perseverance, determination, and setting a goal. Michelle has a special gift of working with the elderly, their caretakers and families. So, she clearly defined a goal of securing a receptionist position within a skilled nursing facility. She regularly attended Catholic Charities\* Career Club where she perfected her resume, cover letter, thank you letters and practiced her interviewing skills. She worked hard every day diligently answering ads and making a major effort to contact employers who had not advertised for positions. She faithfully sent follow-up letters and calls to each potential employer. She went on many interviews but either was told they found someone else or they simply didn't get back to her. When her four weeks of job searching came to an end, she became very discouraged - but she still pressed on. Due to her tremendous effort, her Employment Case Manager (ECM) extended her job search for two additional weeks, but with no results. She was in the process of being given a Work Experience assignment when Michelle said, "You can stop right there!!! I GOT A JOB!" She started the very next day. Michelle now works part-time for a busy skilled nursing facility where her excellent skills with the elderly make a difference every day. Michelle looks forward to taking the next step, from welfare to work, in her journey to complete self-sufficiency.

\* North Central Region's Welfare to Work contractor

Did you know you can search the HHSA Web pages by key word?  
[Have a look at the many topics from which you can select.](#)

## Safety in the Agency

Promoting Safe and Livable Communities  
Working for Prevention & Protection!

This section, featuring tips direct from the Safety Committees, meets Quality First goals for all groups.

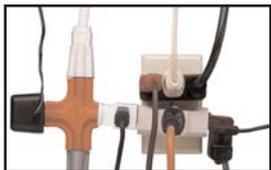
### From Financial Services and Support Division - Be Flexible

Stretch and flex during your workday! Reduce workplace injuries, improve your safety culture, change safety attitudes, and lower Worker's Compensation costs.



### From the Executive Office - Be Proactive

When was the last time you corrected a safety hazard or reported one to your supervisor?



We all have an obligation to protect ourselves and those around us. Work safe, work smart!

### From East Region: Child Welfare Services (CWS) - Be Secure

Proper use of car seats can reduce the risk of death of young children. "Safe Ridin Kidz" educates staff on the importance of car seat safety training and annual evaluation. Contact **Bessie Geilenfeldt** at (619) 303-2029.



### From Human Resources - Be Fit

90 percent of Human Resources staff are improving their health with weekly events including lunch and break walks, group salad lunches, ergonomic work station reviews, etc.



## North Central Region

Improving Outcomes for Kids -  
Working for Treatment & Care!

### Gardening Therapy Flowers Bloom with California Children Services

On February 10, the *Home and Gardening Television* (HGTV) network filmed California Children Services Occupational Therapist **Randall Taylor** with his 12-year old client, Laura, as she received occupational and physical therapy through a gardening program at the Lindberg-Schweitzer Elementary School in the North Central Region.

Last year, Randall wanted to engage Laura in her therapy and asked her what she liked to do. It turns out that they were both interested in gardening and the school's garden made it possible.

"I am thrilled we found an 'occupation' that is 'embedded' with therapy," said Randall. The lifting, watering, walking, and digging help with Laura's strength and fine motor coordination (she has a degenerative muscular condition).

HGTV requested filming at the school through the Master Gardeners program (which was working with the school) for a segment on their program, "Gardening by the Yard." When asked what the gardening therapy has meant to her, Laura brought the interviewer to tears by saying, "Gardening makes therapy fun, and it makes me feel like a normal kid and forget that I have a disability." A six-minute segment on the school's garden plus the therapy program will air on HGTV sometime this fall.

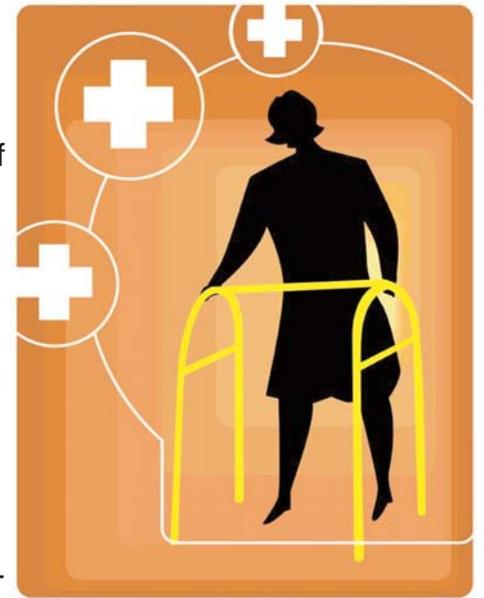


Laura, who's blooming along with her flowers, pictured with Occupational Therapist Randall Taylor.

## A Job Well Done

### Agency Staff Shine at Making a Real Difference

In January, the Southeast Family Resource Center received a listing from the State of California that identified 34 elderly/disabled clients that were in jeopardy of losing their Medi-Cal eligibility by the end of the month. These clients had been transitioned into the Medi-Cal program as a result of the New Model Plus Waiver Program. This new program required all clients in receipt of In-Home Support Services (IHSS) be evaluated and determined eligible for Medi-Cal benefits via the County. **Mary Ann Gonzales**, Supervising Human Services Specialist, quickly identified the cases listed. She worked hand-in-hand with **Mary Lou Hernandez**, Medi-Cal Eligibility Database System (MEDS) operator to activate eligibility for all listed. The Southeast staff closely monitored each case to ensure that eligibility was established. This process called for daily updates and continuous communication with Medi-Cal Program staff and the State, to identify and resolve barriers to enrollment. As a result of Gonzales' and Hernandez' efforts, these elderly and fragile clients continued to receive services without interruption.



**HHSA Events Calendar - Check it out! And, remember to advise your Web contact to post events.**

**Director's Call-In**  
 Share your ideas and concerns with HHSA Director **Jean Shepard**, or Director of Operations **Paula Landau-Cox**, at **(619) 515-6555**.  
 • **First Friday of each month, 8:00 a.m. - noon**

**Compliance Office:**  
**(619) 515-4244**  
**Toll-Free Hotline: (866) 549-0004**  
*An ethical workplace is your right...and your responsibility.*

**Send in kudos!**  
 Proud of a coworker? Send text (and photos): [Jennifer.Mallory@sdcounty.ca.gov](mailto:Jennifer.Mallory@sdcounty.ca.gov) - or contact your section editor, listed in the box to the right.

**Did you know...**The HHSA Web Site provides information about the different regions within our County. You can search by community or zip code and see what services and facilities are available there.

**Is Your Swimming Pool Green?**  
 It may still be too cold to swim, but that doesn't mean you should neglect your pool. Mosquitoes are already starting to breed, and they may breed in your pool. Learn about how you can [combat West Nile Virus](#).



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 Health and Human Services Agency

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The HHSA Connection is produced by the Agency's Office of Media and Public Affairs.

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