

HHSA Connection

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

Camp Connect West: A Lifetime of Memories

“The funny thing is I think this weekend was just as good for me. In addition to having a great time hanging out and playing with the kids, I realized I was also reminded of why I do what I do.”

- Claudia Bell, Protective Services Supervisor

The Agency's Child Welfare Services (CWS) partnered with the United Way of San Diego County and the Childhood Abuse Prevention Foundation to create a lifetime of memories for more than 60 youths in foster care earlier this month at Camp Connect West. The camp in Julian allowed siblings, who are unfortunately placed apart in foster care, to spend a weekend together reconnecting and strengthening family bonds.

Led by CWS Executive Assistant Margo Fudge, more than 40 volunteers, including more than 20 from CWS, spent the weekend helping children 6 to 17 years of age rock climb, swim, hike, roast marshmallows, make a family portrait scrapbook and other fun activities.

“Without the dedication and leadership of Margo Fudge, we would not have been able to make this a reality and provide lifetime memories for so many children,” said Mary Harris, CWS Director. “I am really proud of the initiative she showed in pulling all the volunteers, community partners and logistics together to make this happen.”

“Camp Connect is a wonderful opportunity for these foster youth to spend time with their siblings, to make memories and just be sisters or brothers,” said Dianne Jacob, Vice-Chairwoman, County of San Diego Board of Supervisors.

“This is just a tremendous partnership between CWS and our community partners,” said HHSA Director Nick Macchione. “I am proud that we as an Agency can provide this opportunity for our foster youth.”

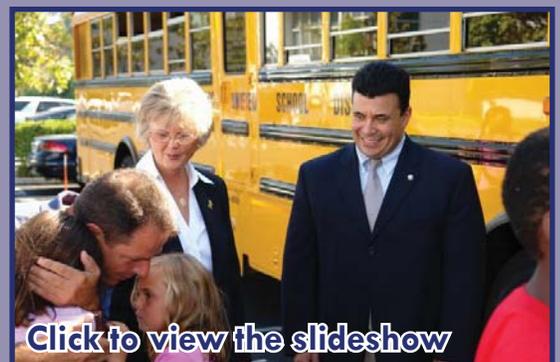
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VIDEO



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PHOTOS



Click to view the slideshow

EXCEPTIONAL CUSTOMER SERVICE

From the Director's Desk, Nick Macchione

Customer Service Matters

Who are the people who walk through your office doors every day to receive services? Do you refer to them as clients, patients, recipients, consumers, residents or "people on aid?" I submit to you that these individuals are our customers. The word customer denotes a certain expectation of the level of service a person should receive when he or she visits our offices. Customers generally feel entitled to a pleasant, respectful and meaningful experience. Meeting their needs and exceeding their expectations are among our Agency's key values.



Nick Macchione

In the coming months and years we expect to receive less state and federal money to deliver essential services to residents struggling in these tough economic times. While the County is receiving fewer resources, the demand for services is increasing substantially. As the number of people in our lobbies grows and their wait times increase, I am confident of our commitment, now more than ever, to serve the residents of our community with care, respect and efficiency.

According to the results of a new countywide customer satisfaction survey, 95% of customers reported that HHSA employees are courteous, knowledgeable and easy to understand. The customer rating for receiving the information they needed or being referred to someone who could help them was 94%, while being assisted in a timely manner scored 90%. Lastly, ratings for clean facilities averaged 92% and the lowest score was regarding whether the facility had adequate parking (82%). These statistics give us reason to celebrate, but we can also strive to reach the next level of service – ensuring that every customer is satisfied with the level of service they have received.

An unknown author once said about customer service, "It starts with

respect. If you respect the customer as a human being, and truly honor their right to be treated fairly and honestly, everything else is much easier." We deliver outstanding customer service every day by demonstrating empathy. Providing exceptional service means constantly evaluating, "How would I want to be treated, if I were sitting on the other side of this desk?"

"To my customer: I may not have the answer, but I'll find it. I may not have the time, but I'll make it."

- Unknown

Customers often visit HHSA facilities because they're in need of critical assistance, and asking for help is not always easy or comfortable. Residents sometimes come to the County as a resource of last resort. That's why a simple act of kindness and acknowledgement from Agency staff can go a long way.

While we cannot control the volume of customers waiting to receive services, we can certainly greet each customer warmly and clearly articulate what they can expect from their visit. We can also maintain clean, presentable waiting rooms and public areas. I encourage you to evaluate your work environment and ask, "Are there simple and inexpensive changes we can make to better serve our customers?" Discuss your ideas with your colleagues and your supervisor.

In this issue of the Connection, you will read about an exciting new partnership that fosters outstanding customer service in the City of Vista. North Regions and the San Diego County Library teamed up to allow Public Health nurses to provide free blood pressure checks, immunization record assessments, healthcare referrals, and information on health coverage options at two bookmobile locations. Let's work together to find more opportunities like this one – by continuing to pursue new, innovative ways to deliver valuable services to our community. Remember, every customer counts and every customer encounter is an opportunity to exceed expectations.

Employee Spotlight

Bridget Ikpomswwosa found out early in her job as a protective services worker that good customer service skills makes things easier for both her and her clients. She's gotten so good at it, that a client who was causing a lot of grief for her and other workers turned around and nominated Ikpomswwosa for customer service recognition. Why the turnaround?

"I realized she was acting out because she's hurting and her three kids were taken from her," Ikpomswwosa said. "She wasn't used to the structure (of the process), so I put myself in her shoes and explained to her that if I'm asking you to do this - this is why, and it's to your benefit.

"It takes a lot of patience and empathy," she said. "I tell them they have the power to get their kids back and it engages them. You have to allow them to express their anger and let them talk without interrupting them," she added.

"I'm here to work with them and not judge them."

Ikpomswwosa said you always have "that moment" with a client where you notice a turning point. Many times, it's when the client gains employment. "One client came in and said 'Bridget, guess what? I got a job!'"

It's important to acknowledge their progress and achievements. Ikpomswwosa sent the client a congratulations letter.

She also stressed the importance of teamwork in delivering excellent customer service. "There is no way any protective social worker can do this job without a team. Teamwork is important."



Bridget Ikpomswwosa



EXCEPTIONAL CUSTOMER SERVICE

A Shining Example

By **Terry Hogan**
Executive Finance Director

The Agency and the County of San Diego highly value customer service. As we enter into the 'knowledge worker' age of faster paced-change, serving everyone with excellence assumes even greater importance.

Numerous influences shape our customers' worlds and needs. In order to provide the services our customers require, we need to listen to customer goals, problems and needs. We need to know our customers intimately so we can anticipate their requirements, keep pace with rapid changes and meet (or exceed) expectations consistently. We also need to provide services in a timely and respectful manner. As technology becomes more prevalent, human interaction through customer service rises in importance.

While many examples of outstanding customer service exist throughout HHS, I would like to highlight one within the Financial and Support Services Division: The Facilities Maintenance unit, un-

der the supervision of **John Peterson**, includes **Romeo Samala, Jr;** **Antonio Loo;** **Jeffrey Hemus;** and **Ernesto Lonzon**. These workers provide a variety of facilities maintenance services for Agency divisions and regions that are outside services offered by the Department of General Services.

Every time the team provides a service, they leave a satisfaction survey to be completed by the customer. In reviewing surveys from the last week, here are how some of their customers responded to the question "What was good about our service?":

- "As usual, everything"
- "A team of workers dedicated to solving problems and making necessary repairs and more when needed"
- "Prompt and efficient"
- "Friendly, willing to help"
- "Always timely, very helpful and willing to go the extra mile – what a joy to work with"

The surveys typically rate the facilities maintenance team at the highest level in all categories. These workers epitomize excellent customer service.

Effective Communication

How do you know what's going on in the Agency or your department? Do you have an effective or innovative way you communicate? Send your stories to editor Tom Christensen, Thomas.christensen@sdcounty.ca.gov by Friday, Oct. 24th. Effective Communication is the theme for the November Connection.

'Polympics' Event ELECTRIFIES Polinsky

Mirroring the spirit of the XXIX Beijing Olympics, Polinsky Children's Center held its second 'Polympics' event in August. The campus was decorated with colorful banners created by the children, creating an electric atmosphere.

During the opening day ceremony the campus was decorated with 'Polympic' banners extolling the virtues of team determination, goal attainment, sportsmanship, and striving for excellence. The presentation of the torch led the parade of children into the gymnasium wearing different colored t-shirts.

When the games officially opened, the spirit of Olympic-like competition was everywhere in the gymnasium. The older children watched and cheered on the toddlers and younger children as they competed in tricycle races, shark tag, hula hoops sprint laps and relay races. The junior and teen youth competed in track and field, sit-ups, pushups, arm wrestling, basketball, soccer, and swimming events.

In honor of the games there were special evening meals throughout the week. During the closing ceremonies, every toddler and young child proudly received a medal with rib-



Two of the competitors in the second annual 'Polympics' battle for arm wrestling supremacy. The Polinsky Children's Center held the event to coincide with the Olympics in Beijing.

bon, while the older participants received medals, or individual and/or team first, second, or third place trophies for their efforts.

The week of events ended with an evening barbecue and a coed dance for the teens. The 'Polympics' was an outstanding, fun-filled event that brought the XXIX Beijing Olympics spirit to life for the youth at Polinsky.

"I am sorry... Thank you"

It took Kim Shively several attempts at treatment before she finally kicked her meth addiction. She then turned to alcohol, but gave it up, using the steps she learned while in treatment. She's been clean from meth for nine years and from alcohol for the past 18 months. Given her drug addiction and her problems with the law she could not take care of her daughter Cassie. Like her mother, Cassie turned to drugs and dropped out of treatment twice. However, on the third try she stuck with it.

The mother and daughter told their stories during the Sept. 10th unveiling of the "I am sorry... Thank you" art exhibit, showcasing the artwork of treatment patients from throughout the county.

Through art, former users apologize to friends and families for the pain their addiction has caused. They also thank people that provided support and helped them kick their addictions.

"Addiction does not simply affect the individual addict. It affects children and families, and ultimately impacts entire communities," said County Board of Supervisor Vice-Chairwoman Dianne Jacob.

"Overcoming an addiction takes perseverance and determination even when things seem to be going from bad to worse," said Agency Director Nick Macchione.

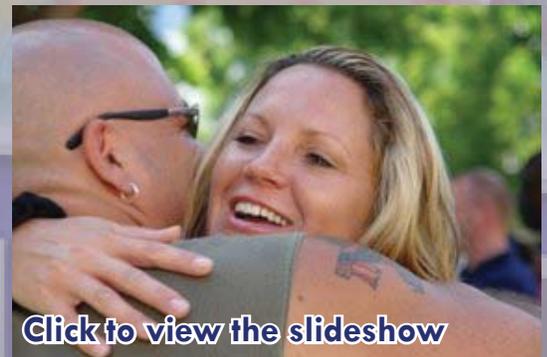
During 2007, more than 13,000 people entered treatment programs funded by the Agency's Alcohol and Drug Services division.

The exhibit was created to commemorate National Drug and Addiction Recovery Month and was displayed at the County Administration Center during September. It will now be displayed at treatment centers throughout the region.

HHSA Multimedia VIDEO



PHOTOS



**San Diego County
Access and Crisis Line
(800) 479-3339**

The Buzz: West Nile virus



Are you protected against West Nile virus (WNV)? To date in 2008 there have been 23 human cases of West Nile virus reported in San Diego County. Mosquitoes pass the virus to humans after biting infected birds. HHSA's Public Health Services warns that WNV can result in

serious and lasting neurological symptoms to one in 150 people who contract it.

To report dead birds and green pools, call 1-800-551-4636. For more information on WNV and symptoms, go to the County Vector Control "Fight the Bite" website at www.SDFightTheBite.com.

"Fight the Bite" with the following tips:

- Prevent mosquito bites by using insect repellent containing DEET, oil of lemon eucalyptus, Picaridin, or IR3535
- Wear long sleeves and pants when outside, especially at dawn and dusk, when mosquitoes are most active
- Ensure screens fit tightly and repair holes
- Check your property weekly for sources of mosquito breeding water such as bird baths and pet dishes
- Report green pools in your neighborhood to County Vector Control



Local Family Named Angels in Adoption

Have you seen the adorable family that appears in public service announcements for County Adoptions? They were honored recently by Congressman Bob Filner, who named Julian and Lourdes Martinez of Chula Vista as the recipients of his 2008 Angels in Adoption Award, sponsored by the Congressional Coalition on Adoption Institute.

The Martinez family adopted three siblings - April, Angel and Alejandro - and then proudly told their story to raise awareness of the need for adults willing to adopt siblings. In order to care for their new family, they closed their family business. Julian took a job that allows him to spend time with his children and Lourdes became a stay-at-home mother.

“Julian and Lourdes are enthusiastically working to send out the message about the importance of adoption. They volunteered their time to appear in a public service announcement on Univision, a local San Diego TV station and on radio,” said Filner.

Three Year Integration Complete for Behavioral Health Services

Alcohol and Drug Services, Adult/Older Adult Mental Health Services and Children’s Mental Health Services merged three years ago and became Behavioral Health Services (BHS), with a focus on service coordination and meeting needs of clients with co-occurring disorders. The three-year strategic integration plan was recently completed.

With a strong emphasis on community input and improving coordination among providers, BHS developed a service delivery approach meeting the multiple needs of clients and families.

The plan includes critical strategies to ensure comprehensive care that include: education, outreach, prevention, early intervention, screening, assessment, treatment, case management, after care, and peer-run services that will promote wellness and recovery. The plan also addresses the inevitable barriers, including funding stream limitations, system capacity, and internal resistance to change.

HEALTH NEWS

Put Some ‘Teeth’ Into Your Health Plan

Did you know?

- 1) Dental disease is infectious.
- 2) Dental bacteria is passed from person to person through saliva transfer.
- 3) Dental disease is the #1 chronic disease of children.
- 4) Tooth decay can be reversed if caught early.
- 5) Children are required to have an oral evaluation before entering kindergarten.
- 6) Most adults have some signs of gum disease.
- 7) Gum disease can impact diabetes, heart disease, birth outcomes, lung disease and other systemic diseases.
- 8) Oral cancer kills over 8,000 people each year.
- 9) Every time you eat or drink, bacteria produce acid.
- 10) Acid in foods and beverages can dissolve your teeth.
- 11) Less than 50% of people with dental insurance use it.

Your best defense:

- 1) Visit the dentist annually.
- 2) Ask a dental professional how to brush and floss.
- 3) Avoid tobacco products.
- 4) Limit acidic foods and avoid continuous snacking.
- 5) Read labels.
- 6) Chew gum with xylitol sweetener.

For more information on oral health, visit the [Share the Care Dental Health Initiative web site by clicking here.](#)

Get the Lead Out!

Get the lead out! National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week takes place Oct. 19 – 25, and HHSA’s Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program (CLPPP) hopes to increase awareness of lead poisoning among the public with activities during the week.

CLPPP will send teams to libraries and Public Health Centers starting Oct. 21. Parents can get their children’s blood tested for lead exposure and pick up educational materials. For more information on where the events will take place, [click here.](#)

Children can be exposed to lead through a variety of ordinary items including candy, ceramicware, toys, toy jewelry and some folk medicine remedies. Living in a home built prior to 1979 presents the greatest risk. For more information on common sources that may contain lead and simple steps to protect your child from lead poisoning [click here.](#)



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Check Out and Check Up

North Inland and North Coastal Regions, Libraries Team Up

Eager fourth-graders snaked their way through the County Library's North Bookmobile before eagerly grouping around a demonstration table filled with juices, sugar, dye and measuring spoons and cups. **Lupe Flores**, Public Health Nurse, stood ready to show the children about the differences between 100% fruit juice and other juice drinks that contain added sugars, dyes and chemicals.

The outreach is part of the collaboration between the Agency's North Regions and the County Library to provide education and information on valuable health and social service programs to North County residents. Community members can now get health information on a variety of topics, as well as learn about important services offered in their neighborhoods, when they visit the North Bookmobile at two sites in Vista.

On the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month, North Coastal and North Inland Public Health Nurses (PHNs) offer free blood pressure checks, immunization record assessments and healthcare referrals, and distribute information such as health care coverage options.

The County launched the pilot partnership with plans to expand to other sites in North County and perhaps countywide. "The goal of the partnership is to increase awareness of various health, social and library services to residents of North County," said HHSA Director **Nick Macchione**.

Additional partnership activities include promoting nutrition services and the Food Stamps Program by incorporating educational materials with the County Library's Books by Mail Program. Important program information will be distributed to over one thousand homebound customers. In addition, HHSA customers will now have books to read while they wait for appointments in targeted North Regions' office lobbies.

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VIDEO



PHOTOS



North Regions are 'Buzzing' About the Bee

The North Regions has a new program that people are "buzzing" about: The North Regions WSSH Bee Award Program.



The North Regions WSSH Bee Award is a tool to help achieve Quality First goals and OIP objectives for developing a safer and healthier workforce. The purpose of the program is to raise awareness of the importance of completing the WSSH monthly training early and to significantly reduce the number of employees who do not complete the WSSH

assignment by the end of the month.

The program has simple rules:

- Teams that complete their WSSH training on or by the 15th of the month are eligible to participate.
- When a team's completion of training is verified by human resources staff, each member receives a certificate of recognition.
- Teams with the most certificates on July 1, 2009 will win the annual North Regions WSSH Bee Recognition Trophy and the envy of their colleagues!

The concept comes from the North Re-

gions' Strategic Initiative "Continuous Improvement of Internal Efficiency & Customer Service". The strategic initiative focuses on strengthening staff satisfaction and work efficiency.

The program is coordinated by the North Regions' Departmental Human Resource Officers (DHRO), who serve as co-chairs for the committee overseeing the program. Committee members range from managers to line staff.

For more information about the program, contact DHRO **Jon Bowman** at jon.bowman@sdcounty.ca.gov.