

COUNTY NEWS



PUBLISHED FOR EMPLOYEES OF THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

July 2008

She's the Queen of Customer Service

In a drawer behind the Human Resources front desk where Jeanne Peoples sits, there's a stack of certificates and pins wrapped in plastic. They're her awards for customer service, but she hasn't had time to read through them. She's been busy helping all her customers.

Peoples, who next month will celebrate 11 years with the County, has won 36 Customer Service Hero awards, more than any other County employee since the program began in January. HR Director Carlos Arauz told her she was the "Queen of Customer Service."

Peoples has a smile for every customer and a bottomless reservoir of patience. She loves this job.

"I knew the day I came in here that this was where I wanted to be so bad," Peoples said of the day of her interview.

But she was convinced she had been awful, had talked too much and turned off her prospective boss. Crestfallen, she cried the whole way home. She was surprised when she received a call from Patricia Coughlin, the woman who interviewed her, inviting her back for another chat. There was another position that might be better suited to Peoples, Coughlin told her.

"She had the perfect personality to be at the front counter," said Coughlin, a human resources analyst and Peoples' supervisor.

"She came at the right time. It was the



Human Resources Assistant Jeanne Peoples has received 36 Customer Service Hero awards since the program began in January.

perfect match."

Said Peoples: "I was the luckiest person in the world when I got this job."

Before coming to the County, Peoples worked at the front desk of a veterinary hospital. She said she had the same attitude about her job then that she has now.

"I wanted customers to feel they got more than what they came for," she said.

She maintains the job postings on the wall and in the binders; knows what positions are open and the skills they require; gives directions to other County offices to countless people who wander in lost; provides on-the-spot tutorials on navigating the County's employment application process online; and serves as a career coach, too.

"Sometimes I get vibes from people," Peoples said. *(Continued on Page 4)*

San Diego County Leads National Awards

From record-keeping to gardens, creek restoration to fire relief, the County of San Diego's wide variety of services has once again earned more recognition than any other American county by the National Association of Counties.

"We continuously strive to deliver superior services to the public in the most efficient manner and receiving these awards from an outside, independent organization is validation that we are one of the best-run counties in the nation," said Board of Supervisors Chairman Greg Cox.

The County received 39 Achievement Awards, which are given to county programs that are innovative and successful, and save time and money. Begun in 1970, the awards program was created as part of the Association's "New County, USA" campaign, which sought to modernize and streamline county government.

Other award winners with high totals were Los Angeles County, which earned 23 awards, and Maricopa County in Arizona, which won 17. San Diego County's award-winning programs represent each of the County's five major branches: Community Services; Finance & General Government; Health & Human Services; Land Use & Environment; and Public Safety.

This was the fourth straight year that the County was the top award winner.

Among the County initiatives honored were its Work Readiness Program for young men at the Camp Barrett residential facility for juvenile offenders; the Specialty and Small Business Job Order Contracting Program, which provides opportunities to smaller, local contractors; Problem Gambling Counselor Training; and the Low Impact Development Handbook, which serves as a guide for reducing the environmental impacts of development projects.

Several programs that addressed challenges presented by the 2007 wildfires were also recognized, including the Assessor's Relief for Fire Victims; Firestorm 2007 Rapid Community Response, Rebuilding Workshops and Erosion Control; the Farm & Home Advisor's Wildfire Zone Web site; and the County's Continuity of Operations Plan.

For a complete list of awards, visit:
<http://www.naco.org>



Seventy years ago, on July 16, 1938, President Franklin D. Roosevelt addressed a crowd of 25,000 people gathered at the CAC - then the Civic Center - for its dedication. Roosevelt said he especially liked the sentiment engraved on the building's western side: The noblest motive is the public good. "I think if we all carry that motto in our hearts, in every city and community in the land," Roosevelt said, "there is no question but the proper thing. American democracy, will survive."

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New La Mesa Library Branch Now Open

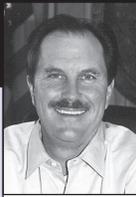
The La Mesa branch of the County Library system has reopened in a new building with 2,100 more square feet than its previous location. Its 10,000 total square feet now house two Express Checkout stations, a teen area, a comfortable seating area, a story time alcove in the expanded Children's Room and a bookstore for the Friends of the Library. New furniture and shelving, an area for historical display and free wireless Internet access round out the features of the new facility, which is in the same civic complex as the previous location.

Functional Threading Fuels New "Food for Thought" Partnership

County Libraries, partnering with Aging & Independence Services (AIS) and the Department of Parks and Recreation, launched its second "Food for Thought" program at the Lakeside Community Center on May 6. With twice-monthly gentle yoga sessions for older adults, followed by a gourmet boxed lunch provided by the Senior Nutrition Services, the program promotes healthy activity, good nutrition, social interaction and use of the library's resources.

The Lakeside Community Center is adjacent to the County Library branch within Lindo Lake County Park. The new program is patterned after a successful partnership with AIS at the Vista Library, which won a prestigious 2007 award from the National Area Agencies on Aging.

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In Walt's Words

Preparing for the next big fire

Beautiful weather we've been having. These are the sort of days we Southern Californians live for – warm and clear with a nice breeze.

But if you're like me, these days aren't totally blissful. There's always that nagging thought. You know the one.

Fire. Who doesn't think, on a warm summer day, of the possibility of fire? It's become part of our collective consciousness, made so much more real by the firestorms last fall and in 2003.

Experts tell us this season doesn't look good. It will be hot and dry and there are still a lot of dead and dying trees, and homes built precariously on the edge of wild land. And we, as a region, do not have all the resources we need to battle a catastrophic wildfire.

But we're trying to change that. Just in the last month, the County made some significant progress in becoming better prepared for wildfires.

Eight new, four-wheel drive fire engines bought by the County for \$3 million are now protecting San Diego County's most rural and mountainous – and therefore, vulnerable – unincorporated communities.

And by the fall, historically our re-

gion's peak time for wildfires, we may be able to attack fires from the air at night. During the 2003 and 2007 wildfires, Cal Fire, which is responsible for fighting most major wildfires, and the U.S. Forest Service ground helicopters after dark for safety reasons.

Last month, the Board of Supervisors unanimously voted to support lifting the ban on night flying. And Cal Fire's aviation chief said afterward that by October the City of San Diego's helicopters would be making water drops after dark.

The Board also approved a \$3 million plan to lease two water bombers and a command plane, which are expected to arrive in the fall.

Perhaps most important is the step we've taken toward consolidating many of the small firefighting departments that protect the county's unincorporated areas.

San Diego County is the most populous county in the state without a centralized county fire department. For years there has been talk of consolidation. Earlier this year, the Board asked our staff to take a closer look at the idea, and map out how it would be done, taking into consideration a

(In Walt's Words continued on Page 3)



Active members

Retired members

Deferred members

Retirement contribution rates increase this month

County employees may notice a slight increase in the amount going toward their retirement savings, beginning with the July 11 paycheck.

The rate of increase will vary, depending on employees' age when they became SDCERA members and their membership classification and tier. All increases are less than half a percent – ranging from .08 percent to .47 percent.

Why the increase? A recent actuarial study found that SDCERA's General members were retiring earlier than expected, while Safety members were living longer than expected. That's good news for retirees, but it means that SDCERA must pay benefits longer. So raising the contribution rates is a way to account

for those trends.

The County's contributions are changing, too. Employer contributions for normal costs – this year's costs of projected benefits for the current members – will rise from 13.38 percent to 13.82 percent. The County's contribution to cover unfunded liability will decrease, from 9.89 percent to 6.76 percent, due to SDCERA's strong investment returns.

Employee and employer contributions fund only 20 to 25 percent of pension benefits. The rest comes from investment earnings.

To figure the amount of the new biweekly contribution, use SDCERA's online calculator, at <http://www.sdcera.org>.

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In Walt's Words
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proposal for reorganization drafted by the San Diego Local Agency Formation Commission, which we call LAFCO for short.

Here's what our fire experts at DPLU came up with: A "Hybrid Plan Proposal," which takes the LAFCO plan and tailors it to the needs of the volunteer and County Service Area fire agencies. Under the plan, a dozen fire agencies in an area encompassing 1.56 million acres will be merged together. This process will start as soon as possible, and continue over the course of the next couple of years.

Consolidating will cost the County \$15.5 million a year, paid for out of the General Fund. No new taxes or fees will be needed. Eventually, a regional fire authority could include municipal fire departments. But right

now, we're focused on the smaller, volunteer agencies.

The goal here is to have improved regional leadership while maintaining local operational control.

Late last month, the Board approved the plan. Now, we'll start initiating contracts with the fire districts and volunteers to provide improved coverage at certain fire stations and funding for administrative support for administrative oversight, contract management, training and volunteer recruitment. Recruitment for these positions will happen in the coming months.

We don't have a lot of time until fire season, and this warm weather reminds me every day of that looming threat. But with each passing day, we are becoming better prepared than we were before.



Walt Ekard
Chief Administrative Officer

County's AlertSanDiego Emergency Alert System Wins Golden Watchdog Honor

The County's AlertSanDiego system, used to send emergency notifications to nearly 175,000 households during the 2007 wildfires, has received the San Diego Taxpayers Association's highest honor for saving tax dollars as well as lives.

The system, described by Chairman of the Board of Supervisors Greg Cox as "one of the County's best investments," has received national recognition for its role in helping to safely evacuate 515,000 households in October. It is capable of reaching every household in San Diego County in less than three hours with potentially lifesaving information.

"We continuously strive to deliver superior services to the public in the most efficient manner," Supervisor Cox said. "Receiving this award from an outside, independent organization is validation of the great work everyone does here at the County of San Diego."

During the 2007 wildfires, the majority of mandatory evacuation calls were delivered using the Sheriff's Department's Reverse 911 system, but there were "overlapping requests to deliver more calls than any one system could handle," according to Sheriff's Capt. Kirby Beyer. As a result, the newly acquired AlertSanDiego system was implemented by the Office of Emergency Services (OES) to assist with 172,000 calls for evacuation. A total of half a million households received evacuation calls.

Supervisor Cox noted that while the Reverse 911 system had proven to be effective in the past, AlertSanDiego's implementation "brought us next generation technology. It allows us to reach more people, more quickly. The system is cheaper, better and faster than Reverse 911. But by having both systems, the County has backup communications systems that are so critical during an emergency." (Continued on Page 7)

General Services Completes Fuel System Upgrade

The Fleet Management division of General Services has completed the installation of a new state-of-the-art automated fuel system at the County's 21 fuel sites. The system is designed to provide a completely seamless transaction at the fuel island for County drivers via wireless technology.

When fully implemented, a County driver will simply approach the fuel island, put fuel in their vehicle and leave. In addition to being easier for drivers to use, the new system controls and records all fuel issued to County vehicles.

Drug Endangered Children's Program Celebrates 10-Year Milestone

The President's federal "Drug Czar" John P. Walters joined Vice Chairwoman of the Board of Supervisors Dianne Jacob at a press conference on May 22 to celebrate the 10-year anniversary of the successful Drug Endangered Children's (DEC) Program. The program, which started as a pilot in North County, uses a multi-disciplinary approach to ensure that children are safely removed from drug-infested homes and are properly screened for medical problems.

The DEC team includes law enforcement officers, a Child Protective Services worker, a prosecutor and medical professionals. The program is now operational in all regions of the county. Since its inception, the program has handled referrals for approximately 2,200 children and screened nearly 1,700 for drug exposure.

Sheriff Opens Doors to Regional Forensic Training Center

The Sheriff's Department recently marked the opening of the San Diego Regional Forensic Training Center (RFTC), located at the Sheriff's Crime Laboratory. The Honorary Deputy Sheriff's Association gave a donation of \$110,000 to the Sheriff's Department to help create the Forensic Center, which was established in response to emerging needs in law enforcement. Training field deputies, patrol officers and investigators on how to collect DNA evidence at crime scenes was the Department's primary goal in the completion of the RFTC. (News Briefs continued on Page 5)

She's the Queen of Customer Service

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"I tell them getting into government isn't the easiest thing to do, but it's worth every second. But if they need a job yesterday, then I tell them about this," she said, reaching for a list of job lines and Web sites.

"They're all good jobs, they're all civil service."

Peoples compiled the list, and also put together a booklet of job and career resources, which includes information on where to go for resume help, interviewing practice and free time on the computer.

"I give them this because a lot of times they just got laid off and they're lost. And these places can help them."

She also directs some to the San Diego County Office of Education Regional Occupation Program, which provides free training and just might help someone get a foot in the door.

"I spend a lot of time showing people how to use (the system) on the computer. It's time consuming, but in the end it saves a lot of time for them and for us."

As if on cue, a woman approached the counter and asked Peoples how she could check the status of her application online.

Peoples turned her computer screen so the woman could see.

"Let me take you into the system," Peoples said.

A few minutes later, a man came in search of a job, but he wasn't quite sure what he was looking for.

Peoples cocked her head, smiled and asked what he'd done in the past.

"Well," the man said, "Me and my dad had a landscaping business. Oh, and I went to barber college."

"Well, that's good experience to have," Peoples said. "But I don't think we have any barbers." They laughed.

The man went on to tell Peoples he was one of nine children. He started to reminiscence about his family, and Peoples gently steered him back to the matter at hand.

"What I'm thinking is park maintenance," she said. The man nodded. "I'm not sure anything's open right now, but let's check."

Nothing was open, so Peoples showed the man how to register his interest online, and she gave him the list of free classes. Then she called him back to the counter when he'd forgotten his bag.

In just a couple hours it would be quitting time.

And Peoples would be reminded again why she loves her job.

"Just knowing when you leave at night you've done a good job and the next day is going to be wonderful again."

What They're Saying About Jeanne

"Ms. Peoples is the perfect person for her job. She is thorough, friendly, courteous and knowledgeable, and reflects an excellent image of her department. She is a great asset and she has my utmost respect. She is to be commended for her outstanding qualities."

- Dr. Sami Jihad, customer

"Jeanne was great and spent lots of time explaining to me how to use the site to get employment with the County."

- Karemah Alhark, customer

"Jeanne was very professional. She gave me a wonderful amount of information. She really helped me with the Web site and gave me the ability to feel confident in using the Web site. I really appreciate her time."

- Grace Limon, customer

"Jeanne goes beyond the norm to assist others in their quest with the County of San Diego. She is to be commended and congratulated!"

- Richard Taylor, customer

County Buys Eight Fire Engines for Backcountry

It will be another dry summer and fall, and San Diego County will once again contend with the ever-present threat of wildfire. This year, eight new, four-wheel drive fire engines will help protect the county's most rural and mountainous unincorporated areas.

"These trucks are proof positive of the County's aggressive efforts to make our region the best prepared it can be for fire and other disasters," said Board of Supervisors Vice Chairwoman Dianne Jacob.

"Whether it's dead tree removal, upgrades to important communications equipment, additional choppers and planes or the reorganization of the many fractured fire districts in our rural areas, important changes have taken place and will continue to take place," Jacob said.

The new engines, bought by the County of San Diego through its County Fire Enhancement Program, cost \$3 million, and were paid for using money from the County's General Fund and Community Development Block Grant funds.

"These new fire engines are critical to the safety of this County," said Supervisor Bill Horn. "They couldn't have come at a better time. The engines, along with our helicopters and soon-to-arrive air tankers, are vitally important to increasing our first strike capability during the Santa Ana wind season."

On June 11, at the County Operations Center Annex, Jacob, Horn and Eric Gibson, Acting Director of the County's Department of Planning and Land Use, released the engines to volunteer fire agencies that protect backcountry communities.

The news media covered the event, and filmed the volunteer fire chiefs and engineers getting into their new engines and driving off. Augie Ghio, president of the Fire Chiefs Association, told the media that when it came to improving fire protection, the County was putting its money where its mouth was.

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Board of Supervisors
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County News is published for the 17,000 employees of the County of San Diego. The newsletter is available online at www.sdcounty.ca.gov/dmpr (click on "Employee Newsletter") or via the County's Intranet at CWW. This information is available upon request in alternative formats for persons with disabilities.

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 Volume 30, No. 7 - July 2008

County Buys Eight Fire Engines

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The gleaming red engines went to the Julian Fire Protection District; Ocotillo Wells Volunteer Fire Company; Rural Fire Protection District; Ranchita Volunteer Fire Company; and Shelter Valley Volunteer Fire Company. The eighth, a County reserve engine, is being used by Cal Fire in Warner Springs.

The engines are replacing an aging fire fleet, providing agencies a reliable vehicle for structural and wild land fire protection, as well as medical aid calls and traffic accidents.



DPLU Acting Director Eric Gibson speaks to the news media; Board Vice Chairwoman Dianne Jacob, Supervisor Bill Horn and members of the fire service look on.

For County Employees, Great Day at the Polls Far From an Impossible Mission

How would you like to get out into the neighborhood, have some friendly laughs with local citizens and serve your country for a day -- and be paid for it?

If that sounds good, then working the polls during November's General Election is something to consider.

This year, County employees have twice already helped make the Registrar of Voters' "Mission: Possible" a reality. Nearly 800 employees served as poll workers for the February election; 691 County employees reported for duty in June. More than two-thirds of the June employees were returning poll workers, having worked in February's election.

Why do hundreds of County employees enjoy being poll workers?

According to County Poll Worker Coordinator Jean Vukotich, "The real reward, aside from being paid, is getting to do something different for a

day, being out in the community and meeting neighbors."

Four HHSA employees couldn't agree more. Arnold DeGuzman, Jennifer Mallory, Anabele Poole and Leslie Ridgeway signed up to work the June polls together and were one of five precinct teams comprised entirely of County employees.

"Because we had worked together through our positions with the County, we were easily able to coordinate our work at the polls," explained Poole, a Health Planning & Program Specialist.

The team touts the merits of working the polls with fellow colleagues. Ridgeway, a Media & Public Relations Specialist, explained that "When we needed to take a break for some sunshine or to use the restroom, we didn't feel as though we had to 'run it by' someone, or worry about who

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Public Defender Improves Customer Service via Expungement Web Page

The Public Defender's Office has launched a new "expungement" Web page, which allows clients to communicate the status of fines and restitution payments in support of their requests for expungement of conviction records and/or reduction of felony charges to misdemeanor charges. The new page offers more information about the expungement process and includes helpful online services. Clients can more easily download and submit assistance requests online, get detailed answers to their questions and access research tools necessary to provide staff with more complete information about their court cases. The Web page is expected to provide faster service for clients while reducing staff workload.

Go Green @ Your Library!

The County Library has launched its environmentally-themed adult summer reading program in all 33 branches and two mobile libraries. After reading three books (or listening to three audio books), participants earn a bookmark made from recycled U.S. currency. After six books, adults can choose to receive a logo tote bag or a toxin-free logo water bottle. After six books, as well as for each book review written, readers are entered into their branch's grand prize drawing for a basket filled with donated items from the San Diego Zoo, Kyocera, Save the Earth, the Old Globe Theatre and County Departments, among other organizations. Each library branch is also hosting themed learning events in support of the reading program.

Summer is just around the corner....

As the weather warms up and summer begins, many people start making plans for gatherings with family and friends. San Diego is a prime location for enjoying the sunshine and water. Surfing and swimming at the beach, fishing or boating at a local lake or reservoir, and outdoor picnics near the water are just a few examples of the recreational opportunities that San Diegans and tourists enjoy.

Although it doesn't rain much in the summer, urban runoff can carry pollutants downstream.

(Summer is just around the corner... continued on Page 6)

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Summer is just around the corner....
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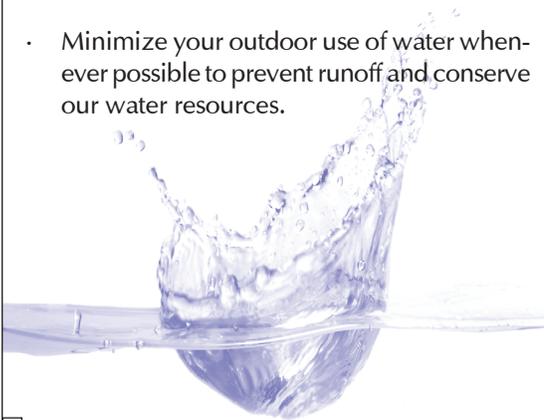
Every day, water flows over the land from rain, car-washing or lawn-watering. That water can pick up oil, sediment and trash from roadways, fertilizers and pesticides from landscaping, and chlorine or other chemicals from pools as they are emptied and cleaned. This runoff eventually makes its way to a storm drain or flows directly into a waterway without being treated, filtered or otherwise cleaned.

The majority of the watersheds in San Diego drain toward the west and eventually to the ocean. This means that runoff and pollutants from as far away as Julian eventually make their way into the ocean through rivers, lakes and streams. We all contribute to water pollution, and we are all responsible for preventing it.

Report pollution and problems which may impact our waterways to the Regional Storm-water Hotline: 1-888-846-0800. To learn more, visit www.projectcleanwater.org

Clean Water Tips

- Use fertilizers and pesticides sparingly; consider using natural pest controls.
- Sweep your driveway, sidewalk, or patio instead of using a hose.
- Wash your car on a grassy or gravel surface or take it to a car wash to prevent runoff.
- Fix leaking vehicles to keep our roadways clean.
- Pick up after your pet(s) and throw the waste in the trash.
- Minimize your outdoor use of water whenever possible to prevent runoff and conserve our water resources.



Great Day at the Polls
(continued from page 5)

would cover for us. One of us went out to pick up lunch for the whole team. Little things like that made the day very comfortable, flowing with easy transitions and teamwork.”

Other benefits stemmed from the flexibility of working with colleagues. For example, three members of the team showed up early to the polling site, while Administrative Analyst Mallory was able to show up a bit later -- with coffee and donuts for the team -- so as not to disrupt her morning daycare drop-off routine.

The team worked at Kearny High School in San Diego, where they had worked in February. By June, the team felt as though they were among friends.

“People remembered us from last time. They would come in asking if their children or spouses had come in to vote yet that day, or if we had seen their neighbors,” said DeGuzman.

Other County employees decided to get their children in on the Election Day action. Kim Forrester, an HHSA Assistant Deputy Director, signed up to work an Encinitas precinct with her 18-year-old son, who was home from college for the summer.

Forrester highly recommends that parents volunteer with their teens.

“You get to see just how grown-up your child can be,” she said with a smile.

Another satisfied County poll worker is Margaret Wischstadt, who has worked the polls 22 times.

“The first time I volunteered was

way back in the 1970s,” Wischstadt said. At that time, the County had not instituted its poll worker program, so Wischstadt and other dedicated County poll workers used their own vacation time on Election Day.

“Its my way of giving something back, doing something that I believe is of value,” she explained. “I’ve had a long held belief that if you don’t vote you have no right to criticize the way the country is run, and I’m not afraid to ask people when they gripe: ‘Did you vote?’ If not, then keep quiet – and next time, vote!”

Employees can begin submitting poll worker applications next month, and will receive information via e-mail. Vukotich says that the ROV tries its best to accommodate requests to work with other County employees and specific poll workers.

“The best way to help ensure that you get to work with who you want, and to work closest to home, is by submitting your application early!” she said.

Each precinct team consists of a Precinct Inspector (paid \$150), an Assistant Inspector (paid \$125), a Touchscreen Inspector (paid \$125) and a Clerk (paid \$75). All workers except for Clerks must attend four hours of training; Clerks who voluntarily attend the training receive an additional \$20. Poll workers who are fluent in Filipino, Spanish or Vietnamese receive an extra \$15 for their service.

For more information on becoming a poll worker, please visit www.sdvote.com or call (858) 565-5800.



(Left to Right) Health & Human Services employees Arnold De Guzman, Leslie Ridgeway, Anabel Poole and Jennifer Mallory work together as poll workers.

News Makers

Wisdom of the Ages

The 2008 Aging Summit, hosted by the County's Aging & Independence Services, was bigger and better than ever this year.

More than 2,500 older adults gathered last month to explore the benefits of "Lifelong Learning," tripling last year's attendance.

They were there to hear from program professionals offering a variety of free wellness programs; a renowned neuropsychologist explaining the positive biological effects of lifelong learning; and astronaut, inventor, author and space tourism advocate Buzz Aldrin, who shared his thoughts on staying engaged throughout one's lifetime.

In addition to lessons learned from Aldrin, attendees enjoyed the wisdom of three centenarians.

Below, some advice for the ages:

"Lifelong learning is something we can elect to participate in, or we can just sort of watch the world go by. The key is to participate in life, not just to observe it."

~Buzz Aldrin, 78 years old.

"My head doesn't hurt. My hands don't hurt. My legs don't hurt. Nothing hurts. Life has taught me the ways of the world and the ways I have to live, share and get along with everyone around me...Now, what I would like is to get an accordion. Even if it is a used one. That be amazing. Because I really like the accordion."

~Rene Alfonso Thiel, who arrived in the U.S. at the age of 80 years old.

"It's best to slow down long enough to know what nature tells you to do. Your mind is like a tree. Imagine a tree with no water: the leaves fall right off. The same goes for your brain, without continued education and new experiences and new opportunities...If you say you don't have an opportunity, I say you didn't look."

~Bill Gilmore, 100 years old.

"What you do with your own strength is all that matters. I don't have to look at my life anymore and wonder what its purpose is: I'm living it."

~Laura Simon, 102 years old.

AlertSanDiego

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AlertSanDiego is Internet-based, rather than hardware-based, which has several advantages according to OES Director Ron Lane. The County did not have to purchase a server, additional phone lines, hardware or maintenance to support the system. As a result, the County's cost was a fraction of the price of many mass notification systems: just \$200,000 put AlertSanDiego into action. In addition, evacuation calls can be placed regardless of an electricity outage in the County during an emergency. If needed, OES personnel can ask the system's vendor, TwentyFirst Century Communications, to place emergency calls from its base location outside the County.

AlertSanDiego allows residents to register their cell phones, VoIP lines, and e-mail addresses to receive information during an emergency. "We

encourage every County employee to go to www.AlertSanDiego.com and register all of their family's cell phones. It is a very easy step to ensure your family is contacted in times of a crisis, even if your landline phones are not working," said Lane.

The County Department of Parks and Recreation has received the San Diego Taxpayers Association's "It's About Time" Award for its online camping reservation system.

Campers can view photos and get detailed information about individual campsites, make reservations up to a year in advance and complete the payment process online. The Taxpayers Association lauded the site for saving \$3,000 a year in operating costs and \$110,000 in server maintenance.

Two from Purchasing & Contracting Lead Workshop at National Convention

Winston McColl, the Department of Purchasing & Contracting Director, and Purchasing Manager Ken Carstens presented a workshop on "The P-Card Fraud Trilogy: Prevention, Detection & Controls" to more than 200 government and industry procurement professionals from around the country at the National Association of P-Card Professionals' annual conference in San Antonio.

There was enthusiastic interest in the topic, and the workshop may be repeated at next year's conference.

County Annual Report Selected for Communicators Award

The County's 2007 Annual Report received a Silver Communicator Award of Distinction in the Government category from the International Academy of the Visual Arts in May.

The report, produced annually for County residents by the Department of Media & Public Relations, highlights major activities carried out each year and lets residents know how the County is using their tax dollars.

With over 9,000 entries received this year from across the U.S. and worldwide, the Communicator Award is the largest and most competitive awards program honoring creative excellence for communications professionals. The Academy, which sponsors and judges the competition, is an invitation-only body of leading communication professionals. The annual report is posted on the County Web site at www.sdcounty.ca.gov/cao/docs/annualreport.pdf.

Fire Recovery Efforts Recognized

Clay Westling, Senior Structural Engineer in the Department of Planning and Land Use, was recognized in the "The Journal of Light Construction" publication. Westling's hard work and dedication to the fire recovery efforts were highlighted in the article, titled "Surviving a Wildfire."

In addition, as a key DPLU staff member involved in the fire recovery efforts, Westling has devoted time to helping fire victims by holding a workshop for the Dulzura Community on "Fire Resistant Building Techniques", as well as holding fire rebuild presentations for the Joint Fire Prevention Task Force.

(News Makers continued on Page 8)

San Pasqual Academy Receives National Praise

On June 5, the San Pasqual Academy Neighbors (SPAN) intergenerational mentoring program was officially honored as the recipient of the first Intergenerational Shared Site Best Practices Award from Generations United and the MetLife Foundation. Along with a certificate, the SPAN program received a \$2,500 cash award and will be highlighted in a report to be released at the National Press Club in Washington D.C.

The application was a joint venture between the SPAN Program, Aging and Independence Services and Child Welfare Services. The SPAN program has 13 grandparents who give their time and energy to the youth at the Academy. The grandparents impact the lives of the youth by sharing their interests and expertise with the kids.

Department of General Services (DGS)

Fleet Management staff attended and presented the keynote address on disaster preparedness at the Maximus Users Conference in Orlando, Fla. Over 700 participants from around the world were in attendance.

DGS Fleet Management hosted the first Government Fleet Exposition and Conference, sponsored by Government Fleet Magazine and various corporate organizations, from June 8-10. The conference was directed at government fleet managers and dealt with challenges faced in today's fleet environment. Presentations and training sessions on various topics, including grant writing, professional certifications and environmental regulations, were conducted.

John Clements, Chief, DGS Fleet Management and 2007 Public Sector Fleet Manager of the Year, presented a keynote address and toured 100 fleet professionals through Fleet Management's facility at the County Operations Center.

Community Services' Departments Provide Leadership – Regional & Beyond

The Department of Animal Services (DAS) has provided speakers at several state and national conferences on the topic of "Animals in Disasters."

In April, Deputy Director John Carlson spoke at the California Emergency Services Association about the lessons learned and the success DAS had in the evacuation and sheltering of thousands of animals during the wildfires of 2007.

Also in April, Lt. Dan DeSousa traveled to the San Francisco Bay area and gave a similar presentation to staff from the County of Santa Clara and the cities of Cupertino and San Jose. The attendees were impressed by the County's "Strike Team" approach as well as our collaborative efforts with the San Diego Humane Society. A representative from the State Office of Emergency Services has expressed interest in the Department speaking to their organization in the future.

DAS, along with the San Diego Humane Society and the Sheriff's Department, manned a Disaster Preparedness booth for three weekends in April and May during the Del Mar Horse

Show. Officers were on hand to educate the public on how to develop a disaster plan and prepare for an evacuation.

County Television Network Wins Six Emmys

Quick: what do you think when someone says "government television?" If you're not yawning, then you're probably thinking meetings, meetings and more meetings.

But you'd be wrong. The County of San Diego's TV channel, CTN, has all sorts of original programming, from cooking and gardening to features on local musicians, and a regular magazine program on San Diego County people, news and events.

Recently CTN won six Emmys during the National Academy of Arts & Sciences' 34th Annual Pacific Southwest Emmy Awards, held at the La Costa Resort and Spa in Carlsbad.

CTN, competing against traditional and government stations from Santa Barbara to Las Vegas, took home Emmys in the following categories:

- Visual and Performing Arts: Java Jams - The Wrong Trousers, Andy Tolley
- Program Feature Segment: The Muralist, Joe Solazzo
- Public/Current/Community Affairs: County Chronicles Nov. 2007, Michael Russo
- Advanced Media – Public/Current/Community Affairs: How To Manage Manure, Suzanne Bartole Owen
- Documentary – Topical: Conflict, Unity and Love: The TKF Story, Kenneth KenBow (CTN grant recipient)
- Advanced Media – Informational/Instructional: General Management System, Michael Russo, Suzanne Bartole Owen

CTN is an award-winning network that provides a wide array of government and public interest programming 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Cox subscribers can find CTN on Channel 19 in the north and Channel 24 in the south. Time-Warner viewers in the city of San Diego can find CTN on Digital Cable channel 124. For non-Digital Cable subscribers, CTN is now on Channel 24, but must share the channel with other government jurisdictions.



Andy Tolley, Jackie Collins, Joe Solazzo and Suzanne Owen attended the 2008 Emmy Awards in La Costa on June 14th.

Bruce Gardner and Paul Cadena (Agriculture, Weights & Measures) really impressed an employee from the Department of Public Works with their “professionalism and quick work.”

“Your guys showed up on time and took care of a nasty bee hive like it was nothing. I was really impressed how efficiently they took care of the problem.”

Divina Go (Health and Human Services Agency) was commended for being “a wonderful, caring person who is always willing to help you in any way.”

“She has wonderful customer service and I would love her to get some sort of praise for the exceptional job that she performs.”

Michael Dollete (ARCC/Realty) received a kudo that said volumes.

“Michael Dollete is the sharpest and most direct and kind young man we have ever met in the business world.”

Paloma Montemayor (Housing and Community Development) received a note of gratitude for helping a client obtain financial assistance.

“It is tremendously helpful in light of too many things of which to account. It feels very rewarding to be the one saying ‘Thanks’. I hope I shall continue to work with you and your office.”

Latiasha Alexander (Health and Human Services Agency) so impressed a customer with the quality of her service that the client said “She is a blessing to all of us.”

“Mrs. Alexander has been very courteous and professional and I could sense that she takes pride in being of service to people in need. May God bless her and her family.”

Patty McWilliams (County Library) was complimented for her kindness while helping a man who was not able to read or write very well with a job application.

“When they finished, I heard her tell him about a place he could go for help with reading and writing, but she actually helped him first. It would have been very easy to pass him along to someone else, but to actually help and then give him options for the future was truly amazing.”

Pat Nolan (Agriculture, Weights & Measures) was thanked by one of the Farm & Home Advisors for “taking the time and effort to make this the most successful IPM (Integrated Pest Management) for Landscapers meeting we have ever had.”

“Your talk went over quite well to the 200+ people that attended. I have just started going over the meeting evaluations and they consistently ranked your presentation very high.”

Felipe Murillo and the Rental Assistance Clerical Unit (Housing and Community Development) were praised by a fellow County employee from HHSA for the “information provided and the manner in which it was given.”

“Thank you for helping me understand your program better. Your clerks, the ones that have the first contact with the public, should be commended. They are pleasant, informative and very helpful.”

Andrea Brown (Health and Human Services Agency) helped “inspire a positive outlook at an extremely difficult time.”

“During this trying time in my life she was very polite and respectful. I did not know what to expect and she took the time to explain and answer all my questions.”

Kesone Luangvannasy (Housing and Community Development) “always goes out of her way to help” and her client wanted her supervisor to know “how special she had been.”

“I’m disabled and I stutter when I talk. She takes the time to listen to me even when it takes me longer to get the words out. I probably caused her more work than other clients but she doesn’t seem to care...”

Lisa Caldwell (ARCC/Realty) was thanked for her “excellent service” and for “being extremely thorough” in processing an application for a tax exemption.

“Ms. Caldwell’s professionalism made us feel like a valued customer. We really enjoyed working with her!”

The Department of Animal Services received “a big THANK YOU for all you guys do for the animals in San Diego.”

“I just called in to have an opossum picked up (at 10 p.m.) that was hit by a car. My first thought was ‘of course they are not going to come and pick up an opossum.’ When I saw the officer pull up it was very assuring to know that with all the legal things your staff does for the job, you still care about the little guys as well.”

Suzanne Huber (ARCC/Recorder/County Clerk) provided such great customer service that the client wrote her boss, Greg Smith, to say “Your office did it again!!!”

“Ms. Suzanne Huber assisted me. It was quite a pleasant experience as she guided me step by step in a patient, professional manner. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.”

Mike Nguyen (Housing and Community Development) was called “an example of how a representative should be.”

“Please be advised and document Mr. Nguyen’s excellent service. He is patient, consistent and kind.”

Tim Gallagher and Denise Pelletier (Auditor & Controller) were praised for being “instrumental in helping SDCERA develop their new retirement system.”

“Thank you for your help with SDCERA’s new pension system! Your commitment and the valuable knowledge and creative solutions will make a tremendous difference in the success of this project.”

Theresa Drager (Health and Human Services Agency) received a letter from a grateful client who thanked her for “helping me to see just how strong I can be.”

“I want you to know that without your help, support and kind words through our difficult times I wouldn’t know what I would do. You have helped us more than you know.”

Jessica Cruz (ARCC/Realty) assisted a workplace productivity instructor who said she teaches employees to do “exactly as Jessica did, which is provide customer service.”

“Jessica is a delight and she delivered great customer service.”

Tim Jordan and his Building Maintenance crew, Margarito Gomez, James Casey and Donald Noblitt (General Services) were thanked for “the great service” they provided on the “ominous task of refurbishing the underground tunnel used to walk inmates to and from the jail and courts in Vista, where ground water and poor lighting threatened to impact safety.”

“Your staff quickly and efficiently arranged for mold testing and light fixture repairs. Today, the tunnel is well lit and clean.”

Pamela Ouellette (ARCC/Realty) was called “a great credit to the County Assessor’s Office.”

“I found her to be extremely helpful, knowledgeable, patient and professional. I am more than pleased with the assistance she was able to provide.”

Bob Spanbauer (District 2, Board of Supervisors), Bruce Chastain and Ernie Comagon (Public Works/Road Division) were praised for being “exceptionally professional and courteous” in expediting the removal of “Tree #17 for Dolly.”

“This tree was the last major obstacle to moving forward with post-Cedar Fire work at this property and we thank you from the bottom of our hearts.”

The County Library earned praise from a customer at the Vista Branch for the ‘Circuit’ system that allows any customer to borrow books from four major SD County universities.

“The main reason I use the library is the exceptional advantage of using the new ‘Circuit’ with local colleges...Books which are sometimes not available for months I have gotten from the Circuit in two or three days.”

Michael Begovich (Public Defender) received a letter of gratitude for “all of his effort and hard work” on behalf of a client’s granddaughter.

“I truly thought you went all the way...You made me feel you were in her corner protecting her present as well as fighting to give her the best shot at a future that would be closest to normal as possible. I can’t begin to tell you how much you mean to our family and how thankful we all are.”

Officer Curtis Butts (Probation/Work Project Program) impressed a client “with the way he promoted a positive work environment and encouraged a good work ethic and teamwork.”

“He made an unsavory task at least somewhat enjoyable and helped us feel a sense of accomplishment at the end of the day.”

Felecia Mack (Housing and Community Development) was acknowledged for her “patience” and also for her “great personality.”

“Felecia made sure that everything in my case was done in a timely manner. She also made a great effort to have all my questions answered. I really respect her professionalism in the way she handled my case.”

Officers Ventura Rivera, Craig Underdown and Chris Balan (Probation/Work Project Program) and the crews that they supervise were complimented by the City of La Mesa for doing a “great job.”

“Have I mentioned how pleasant it is to work with Craig and Chris? One or the other always gets back to me with my requests in a timely manner.”

“This note is about the wonderful job that Officer Rivera and his crew did on the roadside last week. I was so pleased but it wasn’t expected – the crews really work well for him.”

The County Line

Your questions answered

Q: Walking to lunch I noticed the wires between the branches of a large tree on the east side of the CAC. Why are the wires there?

-- Wondering in the West Wing

A: Isidoro Alvendia, facilities superintendent with the County’s Facilities Services, tells us that those large trees you pass on the East Plaza of the CAC are called Podocarpus gracilior. They’re Fern Pines, originally from East Africa.

They can reach heights of 60 feet with an equal spread of branches. Besides providing some nice shade, these trees can tolerate drought conditions, coastal exposure and air pollution.

The wires, installed in two of these trees, are there to reinforce and hold the branches, Alvendia explained. Tree trimming is done every three years or whenever it’s required for safety reasons.

Have a question, need some advice? Write to: CountyNews@sdcounty.ca.gov



Planning for home ownership is not as difficult as you may think. This step-by-step planning guide will assist you through the process.

Step 1 – Get Prepared

The first step in buying a home is determining your budget and how much you can afford. Knowing how much you can afford in mortgage payments will help determine which homes are in your price range.

Step 2 – Get Pre-Qualified or Pre-Approved

Pre-qualification is an informal agreement between you and your lender. The lender gives their opinion on how much they think they will be able to lend to you based on information that you have provided to them. There is no charge to do this and you are under no obligation to get a mortgage with this lender if you find a better deal later. 2) Pre-approval is more serious. The lender will check your credit history, employment information, assets and liabilities. If you are concerned that you might not qualify for a mortgage, it is highly recommended that you get Pre-Approved.

Step 3 – Hire a Realtor

It is optional to hire a realtor, but there are definitely advantages to having one. Look for someone who is familiar with the area you prefer.

Step 4 – Decide what you need in a home

Make a list before you go house hunting of the features that are important to you.

Step 5 – Make an offer

Once you've located the home you want, make an offer. Work with your realtor to determine a fair offer. A serious offer typically requires a deposit of initial funds (usually a few thousand dollars that goes toward the overall down payment) given to "open escrow." This represents a show of good faith that you are serious about the deal. You will also complete a purchase and sale agreement, which explains the terms of your offer and any contingencies. The lender will require an appraisal and title search to ensure there are no outstanding liens.

Step 6 – Get a home inspection

This will uncover any major repairs that need to be fixed before you buy.

Step 7 – Shop for Homeowners Insurance

You can save money on homeowners insurance a number of ways. Discounts from your insurance company are available for a wide variety of reasons, ranging from the type of building material used to build your home to how close you live to a fire station. These discounts will vary by state and insurance company.

Step 8 – Sign the papers

When the offer is accepted by the seller, it's time to close the loan. You will meet with your lender in person and you are responsible for three things – the down payment, closing costs and signing documents.

If you have any questions about the process or are interested in purchasing a home, please call San Diego County Credit Union toll-free at (877) 732-2848, online at sdccu.com or by visiting one of our convenient branch locations.

Service Awards

30 Years

Estalita D. Jones (Facilities Management)

25 Years

Victoria A. Bookhammer (Health & Human Services)

Josefina V. Bularan (Health & Human Services)

Bolitha J. Laws (Sheriff)

Jacqueline Moriel (District Attorney)

Kathleen Ann O'Connell (District Attorney)

Maria E. Ramirez (Sheriff)

Yolanda Sanchez (Health & Human Services)

20 Years

Rebecca R. Alignay (Assessor/Recorder/County Clerk)

Jane M. Bailey-Sease (Sheriff)

M. Dawn Beebee (Public Defender)

Richard D. Benavides (Sheriff)

Steven R. Binder (Public Defender)

Kevin D. Bombard (Sheriff)

Linda R. Brown (Public Defender)

Mary Carolyn Bumer (Public Defender)

Sandra Coine (Health & Human Services)

Rosa-maria S. Cortez (Sheriff)

Joseph Cristarella (Probation)

Susan F. Daley (Public Defender)

Elizabeth A. Delgado (Sheriff)

Antonio Espejo (Sheriff)

Almaz F. Fesseha (Public Works)

Rebeca Fregoso (Assessor/Recorder/County Clerk)

Jannette Fuentes (Health & Human Services)

Cecilia Garcia (Health & Human Services)

Lidia A. Garcia (Public Defender)

Martha A. Garcia (Health & Human Services)

Diane F. Gland (Child Support)

Scott J. Gould (County Counsel)

Patti Groulx (Health & Human Services)

20 Years continued

Yolanda J. Herlich (Health & Human Services)

Mario Hernandez (Public Defender)

Jack A. Hochman (Public Defender)

Phyllis House-Cepeda (Health & Human Services)

Andrew C. Huelskamp (District Attorney)

Stanley T. Jones (Public Defender)

W. Mark Kirkness (Public Defender)

Raymond Lugo (Health & Human Services)

Deborah L. Macdougall (Health & Human Services)

Kevin L. Manning (Health & Human Services)

Elizabeth Elsie Marohn (Housing & Community Development)

Jerry McWilliams (Sheriff)

Sondra R. Miller-Shegog (Health & Human Services)

Jose Nieves (Sheriff)

Denise A. Quarles (Health & Human Services)

Jeffrey M. Reilly (Public Defender)

Miranda F. Richardson (Sheriff)

Daniel D. Roberts (Probation)

Susan E. Rustin (Sheriff)

John D. Sano (Library)

Mary J. Schwarze (Health & Human Services)

Samuel Sheppard (Sheriff)

Barbara Silvia (Health & Human Services)

Mark R. Silvia (Health & Human Services)

Win T. Singleton (Facilities Management)

Anthony Stanley (Public Works)

John A. Thomas III (Public Defender)

Michael R. Villalobos (Sheriff)

Mary E. Wallace (Sheriff)

Harold Wasserman (Health & Human Services)

Angela Wastrack (Health & Human Services)

Mary Ann Way (District Attorney)

Kathleen Wheeler (Health & Human Services)

Retirements

Joseph R. Alkire (Probation)	James C. H. Lamon (Health & Human Services Agency)
Andre L. Barnes (Auditor & Controller)	Richard G. Lines, Sr. (District Attorney)
Wendy J. Bauer (Child Support)	Melissa L. Lowrey (Parks & Recreation)
Anthony G. Bento (District Attorney)	Kirk D. McKay (Auditor & Controller)
Elizabeth M. Biolley (Health & Human Services Agency)	Constance L. McMahon (Health & Human Services Agency)
Juan J. Briones (District Attorney)	John A. Mercer (Sheriff)
Norma C. Castrence (Health & Human Services Agency)	Jean A. Michalewicz (Health & Human Services Agency)
Linda S. Cheyney (Superior Court)	Patricia A. Murrin (Health & Human Services Agency)
Michael C. Clegg (Public Works)	Stephen G. Nystrom (Health & Human Services Agency)
Leoncio S. Corpus (Sheriff)	Benjamin L. Orallo (Facilities Management)
Gloria E. Cota (Child Support)	Patricia K. Riddle (Health & Human Services Agency)
Thomas R. Covert (Health & Human Services Agency)	Lori S. Schary (Superior Court)
Philip H. Dulin (Health & Human Services Agency)	Erlinda E. Sison (Housing & Community Development)
Ernesto F. Galindo (Probation)	Evita D. Tabilin (Sheriff)
Marjorie A. Johnson (Superior Court)	Zenaida Tambongco (Sheriff)
Kathleen C. Jones (Public Works)	Salvatore Tarantino (Public Defender)
Mark R. Kausch (Health & Human Services Agency)	Barbara A. Turnage (Superior Court)
Lawrence M. Klisura (Public Works)	Jacqueline G. Wilhelm (Superior Court)
Dottie M. Kuehni (Sheriff)	Lydia S. Yousif (Sheriff)

In Memoriam

Irene B. Albert (HHSA, 1990)	4/08	Donald F. Houston (Sheriff, 1978)	4/08
Maria J. Arena (Library, 1999)	4/08	Brenda Kilgore (HHSA, 2006)	3/08
Elliott C. Binley (Probation, 1995)	4/08	Alvin R. Leonard (HHSA, 1984)	4/08
Dana D. Bostwick (Auditor & Controller, 1991)	4/08	Mildred E. McCullough (Library, 1978)	5/08
Edward R. Carroll (Public Works, 2000)	5/08	Kenneth H. Mendoza (HHSA, 2004)	4/08
Clare J. Chandler (Library, 1989)	4/08	Margaret A. Mitchell (Registrar of Voters, 1995)	5/08
Lois M. Companiotte (Clerk of the Board, 1985)	4/08	Margaret M. O'Donnell (HHSA, 1987)	4/08
Norma Conner (HHSA, 1992)	4/08	Heidi-Lore Peters (HHSA, 1999)	2/08
Roald G. Dandy (Public Works, 1982)	4/08	Dolores S. Porrazzo (HHSA, 1977)	4/08
Darwin A. Drake (Sanitation Control, 1980)	4/08	Elizabeth A. Pudas (Probation, 1981)	4/08
Joanne Engle (HHSA, 2003)	4/08	Marjorie B. Riggs (HHSA, 1984)	4/08
Paul W. Fordem (Board of Supervisors, 1985)	4/08	Margaret E. Shields (County Medical Hospital, 1973)	4/08
Palme Gudmundson (Public Works, 1976)	4/08	Louis J. Short (County Engineering, 1975)	4/08
Luther V. Harp (Public Works, 1976)	5/08	Randi L. Stadheim (County Medical Hospital, 1978)	4/08
Frank K. Higgins (Public Works, 1981)	4/08	Marion C. Stock (Municipal Court, 1986)	4/08
Donna J. Hill (HHSA, 2002)	4/08	Harold R. Wells (Probation, 1992)	4/08

"Our thoughts and prayers are with the family and friends of active County employees Susan K. Conrad, Health & Human Services (3/08), Lois D. Korhonen, Health & Human Services (2/08) and Roxanne M. Pike, Environmental Health (4/08)."