

HHSA Connection

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



San Diego County Board of Supervisors Chairman Greg Cox helps complete the family puzzle with the addition of children. County families were encouraged to become foster parents or permanent adoptive families.



HHSA Director Nick Macchione speaks about the Agency's commitment to helping foster children find permanent homes. From left, Pam Toohy, a reunited birth parent and foster mother; Marissa, a youth waiting to be adopted; Macchione; Jeanne Schwertfeger, a foster and adoptive mother and County Board of Supervisors Chairman Greg Cox.

Completing the Family Puzzle

There are nearly 5,800 children in out-of-home care in San Diego County. Although many are fortunate enough to be placed with relatives and family friends, there is always a need for more foster and adoptive families.

The Agency's Adoptions and Foster Care Home Licensing were joined by County Board of Supervisors Chairman **Greg Cox**, HHSA Director **Nick Macchione** and adoptive and foster parents at a press conference this month to encourage area residents to become foster families or permanent adoptive families.

"We have many families in our community that are willing to step up and help parent these children," said Cox. "But we still need families to open up their hearts and homes to these children, especially now as the holidays approach."

There are 1,500 licensed foster care families in the County and 80 to 100 foster children waiting to be adopted from foster care into a "forever family."

"As a County and as the Health and Human Services Agency, we are committed to helping these children find a loving, stable and supportive family environment for them to grow and thrive," said Macchione. "We have a need right now for foster parents to care for children ages 0 to 5, sibling groups, teenagers and medically-fragile children," he said.

The County also unveiled a new program called "Kinnections," designed to help maintain family connections for siblings placed apart in foster care. The program is anchored by Camp Connect West, a successful foster sibling camp HHSA launched earlier this year. The County will make the camp an annual event and the program will also include additional activities for foster siblings including a trip to SeaWorld, a night at Boomers and an outing to an area water park.

If you are interested in becoming a foster parent, call 1-877-792-5437. For adoption information, you may call 1-877-423-6788 or visit www.iadoptu.org by clicking here.

HHSA Multimedia VIDEO



EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION

From the Director's Desk

Heroes Among Us

Edna Rodriguez has a gift. As a Protective Services Worker in the Central Region, Edna works to keep at-risk families out of the court system by helping parents get the resources they need for their children.



Nick Macchione

During her three years with the County, Edna has developed a unique ability to motivate teenagers by doing some extraordinary things. She tutored a child who was having difficulty passing math class. On her days off she attended one girl's Physical Education class to motivate the struggling student. Edna rewarded the good performance of a child with behavioral problems by taking him to play sports.

According to Edna's supervisor, **Tatiana Rodriguez**, Edna's supportive and calm presence makes her invaluable to both co-workers and customers. "Most people find working with teens difficult, but not Edna," she said. "If it's a stressful day, Edna does not show signs of it. She smiles and encourages everyone to look at the bright side of the situation." Those around her are inspired by her actions because she approaches her work with a sense of passion and responsibility.

Edna Rodriguez and seven other outstanding HHSA employees were recognized for delivering excellent customer service to fellow employees and San Diego County residents during the Customer Service Superhero breakfast on October 24.



HHSA HEROES

Agency Customer Service Heroes were honored during the recent County Customer Service Superhero breakfast. From left, HHSA Director **Nick Macchione**, **Heidi Bubeck**, **Pamela Jordan**, **Divina Go**, **Gina Cope**, **Lori Newhart**, **Edna Rodriguez**, **Stacy Cox** and **Jynx Bouchell**.

HHSA employee **Lori Newhart** was also recognized during the event. Lori has worked for the County of San Diego for 25 years. She was nominated as a customer service hero by a co-worker who praised her generosity of time and expertise.

Lori works in Adoptions (Guardianship) and was recently asked to participate in a critical meeting with a grandfather whose five grandchildren had been removed from his care. The man primarily speaks Spanish and Lori is bilingual. Lori gave up her afternoon to assist her colleagues – and the family – in creating a safety plan so that the children could return home. Her insight, cultural knowledge and language assistance were instrumental in the reunification of the family. "She is a truly dedicated worker," said her supervisor, **Valesha Bullock**. "For Lori, it's all about helping the kids."

The stories of these two HHSA employees are exceptional, but not uncommon. I am confident I could fill the pages of our newsletter every month with similar accounts of HHSA employees going the extra mile to improve the health and well-being of children and families. Staff throughout the Agency make sacrifices and demonstrate customer service heroism on a daily basis.

During this period of tough economic times when "doom and gloom" talk seems to dominate the public discourse, we must remember the importance of simple acts of recognition. Everyone needs – and deserves – to know they're valued. If you would like to recognize and honor someone in your department, click here to complete a **customer service hero nomination form online**.

Congratulations to all eight HHSA 2008 Customer Service Superhero Award recipients.



EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION

The 'Right' Recognition is Important

By Kim Medeiros


HHS Human Resources Director

Have you ever heard the saying that sometimes the best things in life are free? When we think of employee recognition we often associate it with spending money. That is where we go wrong! Employee recognition is a communication tool that reinforces and rewards the most important outcomes we create within HHS. When we are recognized effectively, such recognition reinforces the actions and behaviors that are worth repeating. An effective employee recognition system is simple, immediate, and powerfully reinforcing. In these tough economic times it also doesn't have to be costly either. I remember when I first started at HHS nine years ago and was successful in a case I was dealing with; my Director left me a donut with a note that said, "Great job—the first of many successes heading your way." I still remember how great I felt that day!

When we look at employee recognition processes, we need to develop recognition that is equally powerful for both the organization and us, the employees. For us to view recognition as motivating and rewarding and important for the success of HHS, recognition must be based on clear criteria. We have to know exactly what performance or contribution constitutes rewardable behavior or actions.

Criteria can include such activities as contributing to HHS success by serving a customer without being asked to help by a supervisor. Each of us, who meets the stated criteria, receives a thank you note, hand-written by the supervisor. The note spells out exactly why we are receiving the recognition.

We also like recognition that is random and that provides an element of surprise. If we get routinely recognized every time we successfully complete the same task on time, gradually that type of recognition becomes a "given" or an entitlement and is no longer rewarding.



Rewards and recognition that help both the employer and the employee get what they need from work are a win-win situation. Make this the year you plan a recognition process that will "wow" everyone with its positive outcomes. Avoid the employee recognition traps that:

- single out a few employees who are mysteriously selected for the recognition;
- sap the morale of the many who failed to understand the criteria enough to compete and win.



I will highlight some innovative and low-cost recognition programs that HHS Regions and Divisions have already adopted. For example, at our own HR division, we have a recognition board in which we have created a space for employees to recognize one another for everyday good deeds. We also highlight an employee every couple of weeks by writing an article about that employee and posting it on our recognition board. This interview gives everyone a chance to discuss interesting tidbits about them. It is a great way to get to know all our employees and recognize them for the uniquely wonderful individuals they are.

When South Region CWS Manager **Lucia Garcia** gets commendation/praises for staff from community, county counsel, the court, etc, she sends an e-mail to the employee recognizing and thanking him/her for the very specific action the employee was commended for, and she sends a copy to the entire office. She then prints the e-mail and adds the employee's picture and posts it on the Kudos Board. This seems to improve morale and keep best practices on the forefront of everyone's mind.

Mission Valley Family Resource Center managers send a copy of the letter of recognition to employees' homes so that it can be shared with family. They also offer reserved VIP seating and premier reserved parking for employees who are recognized.

Public Health Services Immunization program managers have incorporated the "How Full is Your Bucket?" (by Rath and Clifton) concept into their work environment. They have buckets hanging on two bulletin boards along with blank pieces of paper in the shape of water drops. The instruction is, "We all need to hear how we are appreciated. If someone has helped you, inspired you, took time to listen to you, or if you saw them help someone else, or if you have watched them contribute to the success of this program in any way, please put a 'drop' in this bucket for them." They read the "drops" every month at the all staff meeting. The "drops" are given to the employee and copies are given to managers for their files.

Managers who prioritize employee recognition understand the power of recognition. They know that employee recognition is not just a nice thing to do for people. Employee recognition is a communication tool that reinforces and rewards the most important outcomes people create for our services. It may seem simplistic, but people who feel recognized and cared about produce more and better work. How is that for a win-win situation?



Getting it All in One Shot:

East County Mass Vaccination Drill

Nearly 500 East County residents took part in an HHS Point of Dispensation (POD) drill on November 7. More than 90 Agency employees were trained to assume non-medical disaster worker roles. The event took place in El Cajon, as staff tested emergency preparedness plans in a situation that required County employees to provide vaccine or medicine in the event of a disease outbreak or bioterrorism event. The POD, conducted in collaboration with Public Health Services Immunization Branch, Emergency Medical Services and Public Health Nursing, provided free flu vaccines to the public and employees. In total, 460 individuals received the flu vaccine.



The East Region's Point of Dispensation drill was expanded to include children this year.

The drills have been conducted in East Region for the past three years. Each year, the team assesses, learns, and determines adjustments to make future events more effective. This year new experiences were added for staff and the public. In an effort to reach more people, flu vaccine was available for all age groups, including kids, older adults, and pregnant women. All participants were registered using the San Diego Immunization Registry, a computerized database of immunization records, to enable people and their doctors to keep track of their immunizations. Emergency Medical Services was on-site to monitor processes and the time it took residents to progress through the POD. These measures help determine how many people can be served in an actual emergency. Staff were given more responsibility and trained to assume lead roles typically held by the Bioterrorism Public Health Nurses.

The POD exercise also provided a valuable public service. Several families expressed gratitude for receiving a no-cost flu vaccine as part of the drill—particularly during these hard economic times. Several people stated that they otherwise would not have received a flu shot this year.

Retirement and Investment Advice Symposium

San Diego County Treasurer-Tax Collector Dan McAllister is pleased to announce the next Investment & Retirement Symposium presented by the Deferred Compensation Division. The presentation will be held on Wednesday, January 21 at the 4-Points Sheraton from 6 to 9 pm.

There will be several special guest speakers:

- Famed Author Ken Fisher has provided his insight on portfolio and market strategies in Forbes Magazine for more than 20 years. He will speak on "The Eight Mistakes Every Investor Makes".
- Alan Timmerman is with UCSD's Rady School of Management and will speak to market conditions and what to expect going forward.
- The President of Nationwide Retirement Solutions, Matt Riebel, will introduce your new Nationwide team and comment on the current market's relationship to Deferred Compensation .

The cost is \$15 per person or \$25 per couple by January 7. After January 7, the cost is \$20 per person and \$30 per couple. Pre-registration by January 16 is required. Dinner and parking, as well as giveaways, are included with your paid registration.

For registration and information, please call the Deferred Compensation Department at (619) 531-5840 or Lyn Howarth at (619) 531-5454.

Dr. Haynes honored as State Medical Director of the Year

The California Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Authority has named **Dr. Bruce Haynes** the 2008 EMS Medical Director of the Year. Haynes, the San Diego County HHS EMS Medical Director, was honored at the EMS Commission meeting in San Francisco on December 3.



Haynes received the award for his dedicated service to EMS over the past 25 years and his leadership during the 2007 Firestorm. Haynes also formerly served as director of the EMS Authority.

While accepting the award, Dr. Haynes recognized EMS staff who developed the Medical Operations Center after the 2003 fires and who worked in the facility during the 2007 fires.

"This award is well deserved and we are fortunate to have him as our Medical Director," said **Marcy Metz**, Chief, HHS Emergency Medical Services.



Foreshadowing Their Future

When Kendra Duncan signed up for Job Shadow Day, little did she know that she would be learning to walk! That's exactly what happened when she visited California Children Services' (CCS) Escondido Medical Therapy Unit. **Judith Garces**, a physical therapist, strapped Kendra and another high school student onto a treadmill that teaches disabled children how to walk.

A dozen students from four Escondido area high schools participated in the Job Shadow Day on November 6. Coordinated by Escondido Education COM-PACT (Creating Opportunities Making Partnerships and Connecting Teens) this event provides high school students with hands-on exposure to various careers. The "shadow" hosts included staff from North Inland Public Health, Child Welfare Services, CCS's Medical Therapy Unit, and the Family Resource Center.

Students began their day with an orientation that included confidentiality training and introduction to their hosts. Students then shadowed their HHSA hosts for the morning, experiencing "a day in the life" in different careers with the Agency, from social work and nursing to case management and physical therapy.

"I enjoyed hosting the students," said Garces. "I find it motivating to promote my profession as well as the Medical Therapy Program."

Students had the opportunity to share their experiences and ask questions during a lunch discussion with North Regions' Deputy Director **Donna Hand**.

When asked to describe what they learned, the students said things like:

- "It's amazing to see how one person can help so many."
- "I experienced a lot and was very fortunate to participate."
- "I feel that these types of careers reward you in a more emotional way and that it is worth more than money."

This Job Shadow Day is one of the efforts the North Regions engages in as part of their "Explore HHSA" Student Mentoring Program.



Judith Garces, physical therapist with California Children Services Medical Therapy Unit, shows Escondido High School student Kendra Duncan how to use the Lite Gait ambulation device.



Heather LaBelle, public health nurse with North Inland Public Health Center, talks with students Danielle Della-Rocco, San Pasqual High School, and Veroinca Chamu, Valley High School, about nursing careers.



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Rene Santiago Named Outstanding Community Leader in Chula Vista

South and Central Regions General Manager **Rene Santiago** was honored recently by the Chula Vista Community Collaborative. Santiago was honored as one of ten outstanding community leaders who have helped the Chula Vista Community Collaborative touch the lives of thousands of Chula Vistans in need.

Santiago was honored along with Chula Vista Mayor Cheryl Cox; County Board of Supervisors Chairman **Greg Cox**; Chula Vista City Manager David Garcia; Chula Vista Elementary School District Superintendent, Dr. Lowell Billings; Sweetwater Union High School District Superintendent, Dr. Jesus Gandara; South Bay Community Services Executive Director Kathryn Lembo; Todd Hoff of Scripps Mercy Chula Vista; YMCA Executive Director Tina Williams and Home Start Chief Executive Officer Laura Mustari.

A Little Extra Effort Has Big Effect

Resources for diabetic youth can be hard to find. For San Diego County foster youth, their support network recently strengthened through the dedicated efforts of HHSA San Pasqual Academy Protective Services Worker **Joelle Grove**.



Joelle Grove

While researching resources for one of the foster youth she works with, Joelle discovered the DiaBuddies Mentor Program, a collaborative between the Behavioral Diabetes Institute and a University of California San Diego student service organization. DiaBuddies aims to increase diabetes awareness and provide direct help, support and mentoring for adolescent youth.

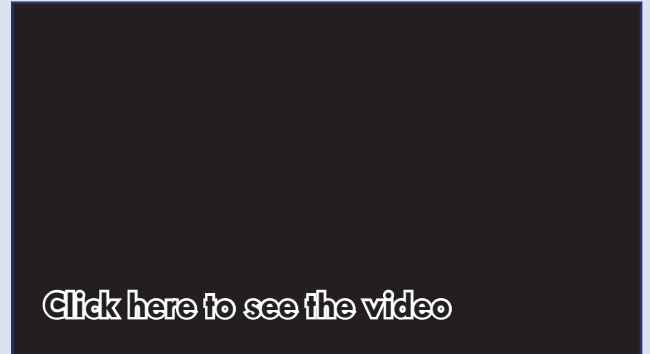
Locating DiaBuddies has had a significant impact on the diabetic youth at the Academy. Joelle brings a wealth of diabetes information and passion about the issue to the Academy. She attends meetings and conferences about diabetes; attends fundraisers to support the youth; and coordinates a diabetes support group. Nurses at the Academy's Health and Wellness Center have given Joelle kudos for presenting them information that better enables them to deal with diabetic youth.

Joelle's perseverance to find support for her diabetic youth is also having an agency-wide impact as DiaBuddies information has been shared with Child Welfare Services' Medically Fragile Unit and the regions. According to CWS Staff Psychologist, **Dr. Sara Maltzman**, "this could be an enormous support for them (diabetic foster youth) with significant medical as well as psychosocial benefits."

HEALTH NEWS

Toy Safety

VIDEO



[Click here to see the video](#)

Happy Holidays
and
Happy New Year
from the
HHSA
Connection

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