

# The HHSA Connection

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2006

SAFE, HEALTHY AND THRIVING COMMUNITIES

Ensuring Operational Excellence!

## Holiday Fantasy in Gingerbread

### *Polinsky Children's Center Receives Castle*

**T**he Agency's Facilities Management team performs wonders on a routine basis, but when they were approached to move a castle - they gave a look and said "yeah right!"

Fortunately for the kids at Polinsky Children's Center, the team was able to work some logistical magic to brighten up the holidays by bringing a spectacular gingerbread creation to the Center.

Third District Supervisor and Board Chairwoman **Pam Slater-Price** donated the four foot square, 5 foot 7 inch tall gingerbread castle to the Polinsky Children's Center. The castle was judged best of the gingerbread fantasies in the Epilepsy Foundation's San Diego Gingerbread City 2005 competition and fundraiser, which netted \$170,000. "Magic of Castillo Encantado," entered by the Barona Valley Ranch Resort & Casino.

Slater-Price served as a gala chair for the event. San Diego's new Mayor Jerry Sanders was the honorary chair of the celebration.



Gingerbread castle, and members of Facilities Management Team Dave Snyder, Capital Projects Coordinator and George Gonzales, Administrative Analyst III.

CLASSY CLASSIFICATIONS: PRINTER/HSS

## A Quality Original

### *Making the Copies*

**I**n 1989, **Richard Soares** started with the County as an offset printer operator, with a shiny new ITEK 974 press. Together they produced forms, manuals, guides, letters and more. Soares became a Senior Operator and Supervisor of the Print Shop unit.

Last October, following routine maintenance on his machine, a technician realized that Soares had produced more than 100,790,600 copies during the past 16 years - the most made by this type of machine anywhere in the Western United States, if not the entire country, and it was incredible what good shape the machine was still in.

After many years of reliable service, Soares started a new adventure on December 9 as a Human Services Specialist.



Soares and partner.

## A Message from Jean Shepard

### *Agency Director*

**L**ast month, HHSA made a presentation to the Board of Supervisors on our preparedness for pandemic flu. Experts fear that a strain of avian flu called H5N1, which has been found in Asia and parts of Europe, could mutate and be transmitted from person to person all over the world, killing millions. The report was thorough and comprehensive, and involved extensive input from our partners in the healthcare community. The Board has asked that we return in June for another update on preparedness efforts, and to that end we are working with our partners, other cities, state and federal agencies, and internally with County staff to set goals, identify gaps and complete projects. We have accomplished many goals in our efforts to make San Diego County ready to face the worst, and much more needs to be done. For more information on the County's pandemic preparedness, visit the Pandemic Flu website at [www.sandiegopandemicflu.org](http://www.sandiegopandemicflu.org).



*Jean M. Shepard*

## Edgemoor Residents Step Out in Style

### *Holiday Stockings - and Shoes - Make for Happy Smiles*

Edgemoor held its holiday party complete with Santa, live music from renown flutist Holly Hoffmann and her group, plus a special present from the son of East Region/AIS Director **Pam Smith**. Alex Smith is the 49ers rookie quarterback, who also has a contract with Reebok. He and Reebok sent the Edgemoor residents new shoes! A local Boy Scout troop provided socks. There were big smiles everywhere.



East Region/AIS Director Pam Smith (above left) and Santa give Edgemoor residents sneakers and joy.



# Alcohol and Drug Services

## Taking Professional Values to a Personal Level

### *Alcohol and Drug Services "Adopts a Family" for the Holidays*

The holiday season can be a hectic and stressful time for many of us. In addition to the regular duties of everyday life, it's sometimes hard to keep the holiday spirit up with cards to send, baking to be done, parties to plan and attend, and gifts to buy. Alcohol and Drug Services (ADS) has found that one way to help employees "refuel" the spirit during this season is to help others in need.

For the past several years, ADS has supported the Salvation Army's "Adopt a Family" program by purchasing gifts for a San Diego County family in need. This year, more than half of the staff at ADS contributed to a family's holiday. ADS was given a "wish list" from each family member, and gifts were collected and



Tami Ferrari, Alcohol and Drug Program Specialist II, with donated gifts.

logged. Among the gifts collected were: toy cars and trucks; a scooter; a set of tools; two CD players; sweaters and shirts; and more than \$300 in gift certificates for grocery and department stores.

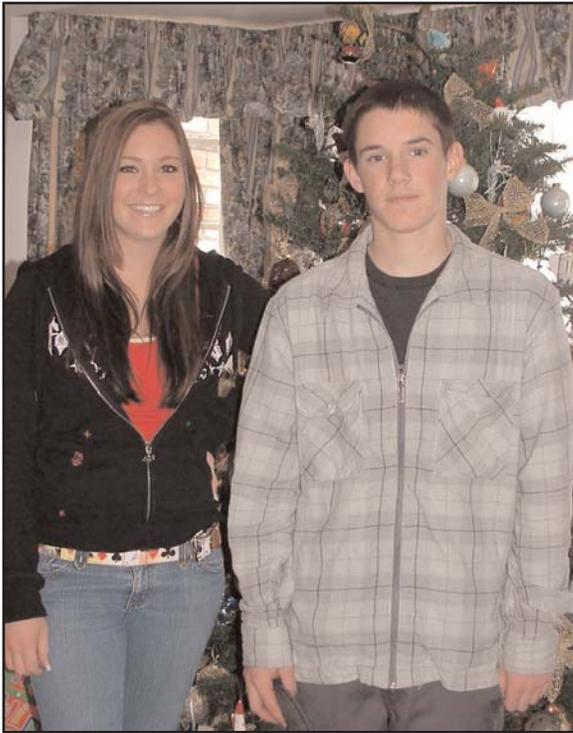
The thought that a local family in need would have a happier holiday was the reason for the employees' generosity. This effort is also an example of how ADS employees exhibit the Division's core professional values of "Respect and Trust" and "Personal Responsibility" on a personal level. If other departments would like to learn more about how to sponsor a family with Salvation Army in the future, please call **Tami Ferrari**, Alcohol and Drug Program Specialist II, at (619) 584-5077.

## Agency Staff Bring Holiday Cheer

### *From Cookies to Carols*

**N**orth County staff joined with foster and kinship families to celebrate the holidays at a special dinner on December 6. The event was hosted by New Alternatives, the North County Foster Parent Association, Friends and Family Community Connections, HHSA, and Green Oak Ranch, where the event was held. About 300

people enjoyed the festivities, which included crafts and cookie decorating, Polaroid photos with Santa, gifts for all the children, a holiday dinner, and carols sung by the North Regions Children's Services Choir. This year, gift donations were coordinated by two local high school students as their community service project, with additional gifts provided by the faith community. Families and volunteers alike appreciated the warm atmosphere that the celebration brought, particularly when watching the delight of children throughout the evening.



High school students Jena Watson and Matthew Moniz organized the toy drive as part of their community service project.



Santa (Mike Green) with North Inland Children's Services Manager Job Moraido.



Claudia Bell prepares for the show.



HHSA North Regions Children's Services Choir, from left - the conductor Lisbeth Abramson, first row facing from left to right: Lisa Guthrie (organ player), June Herzog, Gail Pomare, second row left to right: Claudia Bell, Frances Scarlett, Ben Bautista.

## Making the Season a Little Brighter

### *Touching the Lives of North Region Families*

**O**n December 8, a truckload of toys, donated through the US Marine Corps Reserves' Toys for Tots program, arrived in North County. This is the sixth year that the holiday event was coordinated by the Agency's North Inland Family Resource Center (FRC), which assists County residents seeking financial public assistance or medical insurance coverage. Additionally, the North Central Mission Valley FRC staff picked up toys directly from the Marine Depot - marking their eighth year participating in the Toys for Tots program.

Numerous staff volunteered to unload, sort, and distribute the toys to families. Key coordinating staff in North County included **Mindy Ripley** and **Liz Watson** (just a few of the volunteers are pictured below). In North Central Region, **Jennifer Young** coordinated the family distribution with the help of **Monica Fernandez, Cynthia Rodriguez,** and **Elizabeth Mata.**

All families registered in advance for their gifts, which were available for children of all ages, and were distributed to more than 1,500 low-income children through the Escondido, Fallbrook, Ramona, and Mission Valley offices. As December was "Safe Toys and Gifts" month, the Agency also provided information on choosing safe and age-appropriate gifts during the holiday season.



Staff volunteers helped coordinate extensive holiday toy donation efforts. From left: Liz Watson, Sara Samarin and Dorri Angier.



Pictured in front of toy delivery truck, from left: Ethel LeBlanc, Andrea Gonzalez, Jan Exley, Victoria Mercado, Aundria Reif, and Liz Watson.

## Hearts of Compassion

### *Sharing a Moment of Joy with a Distressed Family*

**A**gency Hospital Outstation Services (HOS) staff assist patients every day with special needs. On one particular occasion, they went well above and beyond the expectations of their job. On December 20, **Pat Marquez**, a Medi-Cal intake worker for HOS, informed her manager that she had received a referral for a female patient who had been hospitalized for hypertension and a brain aneurysm. She reported that this patient unexpectedly passed away leaving three minor children and two elderly parents that had depended on her for their care. The children were now orphaned as their father was also



*Agency staff and the Palomo family share a moment of holiday cheer during difficult times.*

deceased. The grandparents, advanced in years, and not in the best of health, are faced with an uncertain future and an increased risk of financial instability. An aunt and uncle, only recently returned to the USA from being stationed overseas with the military, were also temporarily living in the home. The joy of their homecoming was now overshadowed with this unexpected loss and the added responsibility of helping to meet the emotional and physical needs of their sister's adolescent children and their own elderly parents.



News of the tragedy experienced by this family quickly reached HOS Administrative headquarters in Kearny Mesa and a call for action went out to all County staff located there. The employees of Medical Care/Policy Administration (MCPA) and Health Care Access Division (HCAD) rallied together in support of the family through this stressful time. The family was contacted to see what was needed immediately and in the weeks ahead. Staff provided referrals and the names of key contacts that could assist the family in obtaining guardianship for the children. More than \$800 was collected for the purchase of gifts and necessities. On December 22, several HCAD and MCPA employees personally delivered the gifts to the home and met the entire family. Their visit was brief but provided the family a few moments to reflect on the holiday season as they paused from planning a memorial for their beloved daughter, sister, mother and friend. By sharing their lives with these Agency employees in this way, the family allowed others to experience the joy of giving. These few days of activity were a flurry of joy flowing from hearts full of compassion.



*An Agency employee's car serves as a temporary Santa's sleigh.*

## San Diego Goes to Washington

### *HHSA Strategy Agenda Makes It to the National Agenda*

The Agency's new Strategy Agenda was featured at a national conference in Washington, DC last month. The conference, "Linking Performance Measures to the Budget," was sponsored by the Advanced Learning Institute. Presenting the Strategy Agenda were **Jackie Werth**, of the Agency's Strategy and Planning Division, and Rose Hayden, RAH Consulting (who advised the executive team last year with development of the Strategy Agenda). Their presentation, which described the Agency's journey in performance management, took the form of a case study panel, called "Cascading Measures for Bottom Line Results." They described how a complex local government agency, with 300 varied programs which are organized into 6 regional service delivery areas, simplified its structure. The Agency progressed from having too many measures of success for the individual programs, to developing a unified framework for measures which is anchored in community priorities and shows how each unit and individual within the Agency contributes to the achievement of key goals and mission critical services.

The Strategy Agenda, a one-page brochure, drew positive feedback from the conference participants, who appreciated the simplicity and effectiveness of the brochure as a communication tool. Werth explained that this same brochure is being shared with the Agency's community advisory committees, as a way to engage stakeholders and to continue to solicit their feedback on priorities, strategies and results. This is consistent with the latest trends in managing for results - greater transparency to the public and greater relevance to the day-to-day operations of managers and staff alike.

The [Strategy Agenda](#) is available on the Agency's intranet.

## ENVISION PROGRESS

### A Strategy Agenda for the Health and Human Services Agency In San Diego County



A Five Year Plan  
FY 2005-2010

**VISION:** Safe, Healthy, Thriving Communities

**MISSION:** To make people's lives safer, healthier and self-sufficient by managing essential services.

# Public Health

Promoting Safe and Livable Communities -  
Working for Prevention of Adverse Health Risks!

## Health Statistics - It's Resolution Time!

### *As Holiday Season Ends, it's Time for a Healthy Lifestyle*

The New Year is a perfect time to get on a healthy track regarding diet and exercise (after all those holiday treats!). Here are a few numbers that might help motivate you:

- In San Diego County, 13.9% of adolescents, ages 12-17, are overweight or obese. This includes adolescents who have a Body Mass Index (BMI, which is body weight adjusted for height) in the 95 percentile (heavier than 95 out of 100 kids) with respect to their age and gender.\*
- In San Diego County, 54.0% of adults, ages 18 and up, are overweight or obese, with a BMI of 25 or greater.\*

January 15 - 21 is Healthy Weight Week. For more information, visit [www.healthyweight.net](http://www.healthyweight.net).

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

### County's Community Health Statistics Unit

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

**Request statistics:**  
(619) 515-4318

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

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

## From North Inland Region

### *Rare Disease Diagnosed in Girl After Worker Recalls Documentary*

When protective service workers **Alan Groves** and **Francisco Llerandi** responded to a referral this past summer, little did they know what positive impact they would have on the life of a child. Upon investigating the referral, they found that the four-year old child did not speak and had hearing only in her right ear. Her complexion was very dark and she appeared to have black gums, feet and fingers, which were swollen at the tips. The child couldn't walk, but instead would take a step and then squat compressing her body into a ball.

Groves recalled a documentary he had seen 10 years ago on a syndrome called "older blue baby." The cases in the documentary were in Russia, as the "blue baby" symptoms were rarely seen in the United States. He recalled the symptoms described in the documentary, and specifically recalled the coloring of the hands, feet and gums in the children filmed in the documentary. He further recalled that the difficulty children had in walking, is because the condition forces blood to the extremities and to the lungs. Children diagnosed in the United States generally receive open heart surgery that is performed in the first year of life.

On the day of the visit in July, the mother had a doctor's appointment for the child at 2:30 p.m. Groves and Llerandi transported the child and the mother to the clinic immediately. Uncomfortable with his recollection, Groves asked the child to be seen immediately. The child was evaluated at the clinic and an immediate appointment was made with cardiology at Children's Hospital. Again, Groves and Llerandi transported the child and mother to the appointment. The physicians at Children's were immediately concerned with the child's oxygen level and the consensus was that the child was close to death. She was admitted, with surgery scheduled for the following morning.

During the operation, her color normalized, and since then, the child's feet, hands, fingers, lips and gums are now a healthy pink. She can now hear in both ears and a scan showed no obvious brain damage. She is now home and walking for the first time in her life. She is playing with toys given to her by Children's Services and enjoys being able to pick up small items with her new normal-size fingers. She has yet to smile and never has in her four young years but it is expected that she will soon learn to do that and more. She is receiving physical therapy and other treatments at Children's Hospital.

Because of the characteristic behavioral symptoms and the uniqueness of the case, a video was made at Children's Hospital as a training tool for other health professionals. Due to these factors, Groves and Llerandi helped save a child's life.

## From Central Region

### *Good Will Goes a Long Way*

Northwest Family Resource Center Medi-Cal intake human services specialist **Barbara Sbardella** completed an intake interview for a single, unemployed, U.S. veteran, diagnosed HIV positive. He reported that he had no money and was relying on the good will of others to maintain his needs.

Sbardella processed a Disability and Adult Programs (DAPD) application for him. During the interview she made him aware and encouraged him to pursue other services for which he met the criteria. Consequently, the client applied for several programs including State Disability Insurance (SDI) and Social Security Assistance (SSA). Shortly thereafter, the client received a lump sum payment for several months of SDI as well as an SSA Disability lump sum payment and ongoing eligibility.

As a result of Sbardella's assistance, the client became self-sufficient and is now a full-time student at San Diego City College. He commented to Sbardella, "If you had not made me *do* all this - I would not have all of this."

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

## From South Region

### Casey Kinship Program

I have been privileged to be a part of the South Region Kinship pilot program with the Casey Breakthrough Series. The program's first priority is to support relatives who are caregivers and encourage a practice of including the parent in case planning.

This story is about a grandmother who took on the responsibility of caring for her grandchildren and how her own mother-daughter relationship improved.

In working with this grandmother, she informed me that she felt out of touch with her daughter's drug addiction. The grandmother was struggling to understand her daughter. I planned a joint visit, facilitating the communication between the two. The grandmother listened to her daughter in a non-judgemental fashion and appeared to be supportive and accepting of her daughter's plan for recovery. They both felt they had communicated more openly than ever before, and felt a new sense of connection. This will definitely help in reuniting the child with his mother.

Something I saw as a small thing, made a big difference to this family. Through our efforts, we can continue to assist kinship families. After all, once we are out of their lives, the family will only have each other to rely on.

From *Tatiana Rajsbaum, social worker*

## Safety in the Agency

Promoting Safe and Livable Communities Working for Prevention & Protection!

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

### From Public Administrator/ Public Guardian



At PA/PG, staff created a tabbed binder on each hazardous chemical including emergency first aid procedures to treat exposure. The safety binder is in the main warehouse desk for quick reference.

### Director's Call-In

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

### HHSA Events Calendar

Check out goings-on, or, advise your web contact to post events.

**Compliance Office:**  
**(619) 515-4244**

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



**County of San Diego**  
Health and Human Services Agency

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Jean M. Shepard

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- East Region: .....Eve Leon-Torres
- Financial & Support Services: .....Marion Morris
- Information Technology: .....Maria Tellez
- Mental Health: .....Bonita Maglidi
- North Central Region: .....Nina Constantino
- North Coastal Region: .....Nina Constantino
- North Inland Region: .....Nina Constantino
- Public Health: .....Pete Sison
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