

# HHSA Connection

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

## A Moment of Silence

Board of Supervisors Chairman Greg Cox and Agency Director Nick Macchione joined parents of children who have died of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) at a candlelight vigil held October 29 on the County Administration Center West Plaza. October was SIDS Awareness Month. Since 2004, 86 young babies have died from SIDS in San Diego County.



### HHSA Multimedia VIDEO



News Coincides With 5th Anniversary of Domestic Violence Hotline

## Domestic Violence Declines in San Diego County

Five years after the launch of the County of San Diego Domestic Violence Hotline, officials announced that reports of domestic violence have decreased in the region.

During a news conference at the County Administration Center commemorating Domestic Violence Awareness Month, County health and elected officials reported that the number of domestic violence cases have dropped by 13 percent from 21,756 in 2003 to 18,874 in 2007. They also announced that in its first five years, the Domestic Violence Hotline received more than 27,000 calls.

In the past 11 years, there has been an average of 20 intimate partner-related deaths per year. So far, there have been 11 such deaths in 2008. "Thanks to the work of the County, early intervention can help stop the cycle of family violence," said Supervisor Pam Slater-Price. According to the American Bar Association, about 1.3 million women and 835,000 men are physically assaulted by an intimate partner annually in the United States.

To learn more about the warning signs of domestic violence or to seek help, contact the County of San Diego Domestic Violence Hotline at (888) DV-LINKS (385-4657).

### HHSA Multimedia VIDEO



# EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

## From the Director's Desk

### Listen Up!

Say what you mean -- and mean what you say. This simple wisdom was imparted to many of us at a young age by our parents, grandparents, teachers, and mentors. Increasingly, though, the way in which we "say what we mean" has become more and more complex. People communicate constantly and immediately through text messages, social networking sites, blogs, emails and chat rooms. We now have a new shorthand vocabulary for texting and email, such as LOL and ^5 (high five). These days, it has become rare, even novel, for people to sit down and compose a handwritten letter by way of "snail mail". Well, I still send welcome notes to all new employees as well as congratulatory notes for outstanding performance evaluations, promotions and other extraordinary customer service accomplishments. But, there's no denying the fact that technology has revolutionized the way we communicate. However, some communication fundamentals are as relevant today as they were during the days of cave writing and carrier pigeons. Below are a few tips that you probably do already but if not you should definitely work on perfecting as a personal knowledge goal.

Successful communication always begins with effective listening. The goal of communication is to increase understanding by conveying and exchanging ideas; active listening is a great



Nick Macchione

way to make sure we understand the message being conveyed to us. As you know, people appreciate and respect when we take the time to listen - and understand - their point of view. So, a little empathy goes a long way when dealing with the daily thousands of difficult conversations and interactions that take place in our efforts to assist families, children, adults and seniors who are in crisis. In addition, we can all hone our active listening skills by following the below steps. Demonstrating these behaviors will improve our interactions with our colleagues, customers and community partners.

- Make eye contact and avoid distractions
- Pay attention to the words of the speaker – and the feelings behind the words
- Be engaged - Be genuine - Remember, show real interest
- Paraphrase what the person has said
- Ask for clarification
- If you express your views, do so only after you have listened first
- Watch non-verbal cues

A UCLA study found that up to 93 percent of communication effectiveness is determined by nonverbal cues. That means what we "say" silently often "speaks" loudest. When we communicate with others, our body language should match the message we articulate with words. Nonverbal communication can range from gestures, posture, use of space, eye contact and facial expressions. Every gesture communicates something and we can teach ourselves to listen, not only with our ears, but with our eyes. Perceptiveness and sensitivity to nonverbal cues can help us determine how a person is feeling.

For our customers, these cues can help us deliver the best possible service.

When leading a meeting or speaking to a group, the nonverbal cues from participants can help us determine how the group is reacting to our remarks and when we should take a break or end the session. If a person's words convey one message and their nonverbal communication says something completely different, it's wise to pay particular attention to what's not said aloud.

### Err on the side of over communicating

When the message is relevant and appropriate, I believe it is always better to err on the side of over communicating. The effectiveness of an organization can be measured by its' ability to establish communication channels up, down and across an organization. Within the Agency, our 5,700 strong are encouraged to communicate ideas, thoughts and suggestions for improving public services, streamlining processes and saving money. These conversations, whether they occur in staff meetings, among colleagues, or one-on-one with managers and supervisors, are relayed to the Executive Team. Meanwhile, communication originating with the Executive Team is dispersed throughout the Agency to front line staff. Perfecting this process – particularly for an organization of our size – takes time and continuous effort. The ability to communicate effectively impacts every facet of our operations. Our steadfast commitment to continuous improvement will only make us stronger and better able to serve the residents of our community.

## Employee Spotlight

Recognition is becoming routine for **Heidi Bubeck** – and that's a good thing.

Bubeck is a Human Services Specialist at the Ramona Family Resource Center, and she's on a roll, earning frequent praise from the clients she helps.

Since April, Bubeck has earned more than 20 excellent customer service nominations. She's done it through effective communication, courteous service and putting herself in her clients' shoes.

"Every single day the majority of my customers tell me thank you and how I'm respectful of their situation and how I've made them feel more comfortable," said Bubeck. "I'm generally a very cheer-

ful person.

"I'm almost always smiling. I'm sympathetic and courteous and it touches my heart some of these situations these customers are in. It's genuine."

Bubeck said one of the keys to making sure clients have a good experience is looking at things from their perspective. "I know that people need to understand things. The Medi-Cal program is very difficult. I take the time to explain and sometimes it takes several times over and over to help them understand.

"Knowledge is power," she continued. "When people feel like they understand something – they feel comfortable."



Heidi Bubeck



# EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

## Good Communication - It's Worth the Effort

By Susan Bower

Alcohol and Drug Services Director

We all know that communication is critical in today's environment, where information comes to us at the speed of light. Communication plays a pivotal role in decision making, employee morale, and work efficiency, but the amount of information we have to manage each day can be overwhelming. Who has time to ensure that everyone has received - and understood - the information they need? The bottom line is, we need to make the time. For starters, consider the "Critical Communication C's":

- Clear – does my message make sense?
- Complete – am I including everything?
- Concise – can I say it with fewer words?
- Comprehensive – am I reaching everyone who is impacted?

And, as perfect as your message may be, if it doesn't actually reach anyone, it still won't work. The communication golden rule is

to know your audience. You may need to change your vocabulary, timing, body language, or strategy. Consider following up on that phone call or face-to-face meeting with an email or hand-written note. Also key: responsiveness, follow-through and listening.

Communication also plays a critical role outside the Agency walls. After all, HHSA exists to serve people who desperately need help, be it with mental health or substance abuse treatment, employment assistance, parenting education, or support for seniors. Simply put, people can't get our help if they don't know about it. What are you doing to make sure the community knows your services are available?

The work you do is important. By communicating effectively, you connect with those around you to increase the power of your actions. Take the time and make the effort to share information with care. The effects are both immediate, and long lasting.

## Employee Recognition

Does your department have a great employee recognition program? Is there something special you've done to recognize excellent employees and acknowledge their efforts? Send your stories to editor Tom Christensen, [Thomas.christensen@sd-county.ca.gov](mailto:Thomas.christensen@sd-county.ca.gov) by Tuesday, Nov. 25. Employee Recognition is the theme for the December Connection.

## Effective Communication & the Media

This Just In...

By Holly Crawford,

Manager of Media and Public Affairs

How many people have earned their fifteen minutes of fame by appearing in some obscure, outrageously entertaining video on YouTube? The answer is: too many to count. Gone are the days when people wait around for CBS, NBC or ABC to show up at their door. Instead, they pick up a camera – or a cell phone - and broadcast themselves.

As a society, we've taken this whole business of news and entertainment into our own hands. Realizing just how eager people are to participate in the news making business, even traditional media is providing a stage and a loudspeaker for the masses. CNN launched ireport.com, a user-generated internet site where stories come from users, not seasoned journalists, and the stories are not edited, fact-checked or screened before they post. Some of the stories are later vetted and broadcast on the network. The CNN midday show with Rick Sanchez features constant viewer comment from Twitter and MySpace and his "expert" guests are frequently just regular 'ole online bloggers. CNN is not alone; most networks and cable channels are providing media platforms for the "regular Joe."

What do these emerging trends mean for us?

■ We can expect public opinion to be influenced and sometimes shaped by the work of citizen journalists. Several HHSA employees have already seen their names and office phone numbers posted on internet blogs. This trend is not going away any time soon; in fact, it is likely to expand. Anyone with a cell phone and a keyboard now has the ability to become a "reporter." We must be extra diligent in our quest to ensure that accurate information is conveyed to our customers.

■ If words like podcasting, RSS feed, Snapfish, and Twitter are foreign to you – grab the nearest young person and prepare to be schooled. Communication technology is changing at warp speed and it behooves us all to keep pace with the times. Do a little research and you'll find these tools are easily demystified and may actually enrich your online experience.

■ We will continue to explore the use of video and "new media" tools to communicate both internally and with our customers.



## Tracking Media: How are We Doing?

The Agency's Office of Media and Public Affairs is now tracking and analyzing stories about HHSA that appear in the local media. We are creating some nifty charts that show which programs and regions are generating press; how many positive versus negative or neutral stories HHSA produces; and whether the stories are print, broadcast or internet. During the first quarter of this fiscal year the Agency can boast 93% of the press we've received has been positive. The Agency's Office of Media and Public Affairs is using this data to set goals to increase the number of positive media stories featuring your exceptional work.

Why is it important for us to earn positive media? We want our customers to know about the services we provide. We want the residents of San Diego County to hear about our efficient use of their tax dollars and the positive ways you work to change lives and improve the health and well being of county residents. We all have a role in this. Here's how you can help...

Start thinking like a reporter. You don't have to act like one, just think like one. There are countless untold stories about Agency employees making a difference. Is there a customer you've helped who has an extraordinary story to tell? Are you and your colleagues teaming up to launch a new project or volunteering to help the community in a new or creative way? Share your ideas with your supervisor and email [holly.crawford@sdcounty.ca.gov](mailto:holly.crawford@sdcounty.ca.gov).



Here are some elements that make a story newsworthy. The more of these elements your story has, the more interested reporters will be.

**Immediacy:** Early this morning or today = compelling. If it happened yesterday, it's old news

**Proximity:** If it's happening locally, it's more likely to garner attention. If it's a national story, can you localize it and make it relevant for San Diego County?

**Prominence:** People with clout draw media

**Oddity:** When someone hears about it, they respond with, WOW! or REALLY?

**Conflict:** Clashing ideologies

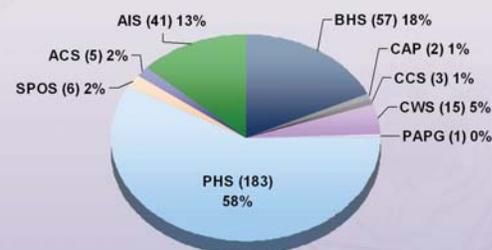
**Suspense:** A mystery unsolved

**Emotions:** Anything that tugs at your heart strings – like foster kids reuniting

**Consequence:** Impact of state budget cuts to HHSA programs

### Media Stories by Program

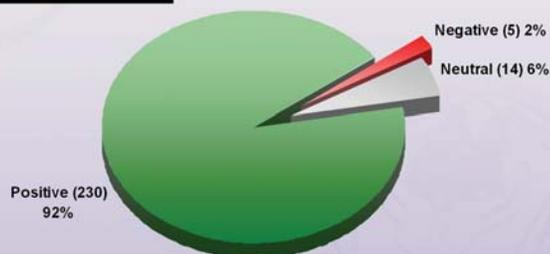
Total Stories = 313



Source date: July 1 – Sept. 30, 2008

### Positive, Negative, and Neutral Stories

Total Stories = 249

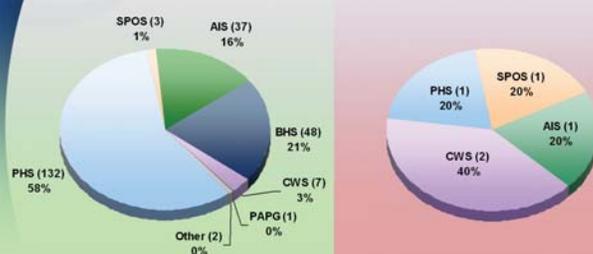


Source date: July 1 – Sept. 30, 2008

### Positive and Negative Stories by Program

Total Positive = 230

Total Negative = 5



Source date: July 1 – Sept. 30, 2008

## The Dangers of Lead

HHSA Multimedia  
VIDEO

The Agency's Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program (CLPPP) used National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week Oct. 19 – 25 to increase awareness of the causes of lead poisoning.

Parents had their children's blood tested for lead exposure and picked up educational materials at County libraries throughout the week. Children can be exposed to lead through a variety of ordinary items including candy, ceramicware, toys, toy jewelry, old paint and some folk medicine remedies.

For more information, [click here](#).



## Fighting for Those Who Fight for Us: Helping Out on the Home Front!

Imagine that you are in the United States Armed Forces making roughly \$20,000 a year. You are married with two young children and are preparing to deploy for the third time in three years. You have found it increasingly difficult to reintegrate into family life after each completed mission, however you are anxious to return to combat to assist your comrades.

During the deployment, you often worry about the health and well being of your family. Will there be enough money to pay the bills and keep food on the table? You are aware of some resources to assist military families, yet you worry about the stigma of applying for assistance.

In February, 2008, the North Regions Military Team was formed to address these types of issues for military families living in the North Central, North Coastal and North Inland Regions.

The Military Team's goal is to improve the lives of military children and their families by identifying service gaps and increasing access to essential services, particularly public health, self-sufficiency and child welfare services. The first outcome of this team's efforts is a "Military 101" workshop designed and conducted by the centralized Child Welfare Services' Military Liaison who works closely with the team. The goal is for all North Regions' staff to have the opportunity to participate in this workshop to increase awareness of and sensitivity to military protocols as well as military family needs and stressors during troop deployment and reintegration.

November is National Military Appreciation Month and efforts are being made to capture data on the presumably large number of military families served across our North Region; develop strategies for culturally-appropriate outreach; and partner with military advocacy groups, providers and personnel.

Ultimately, the North Regions Military Team aims to establish a best practice model of serving military families in San Diego County and share it across Agency programs and regions.





## Walking Home with the GOLD

The City of La Mesa's Cx3 Project (Communities of Excellence in Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity Prevention) recently won Governor Schwarzenegger's Gold Medal Award and will receive \$10,000 from the Governor's Council.

Last fall, local teens and mentors began work on a civic engagement project brought together by the Agency's East Region and Public Health Services, and the City of La Mesa. The Cx3 Project was designed to infuse intergenerational support and teach youth to assess several factors known to impact health: walkability, marketing of unhealthy products, access to parks and availability of fresh produce at local stores.

Students conducted a walking assessment of west La Mesa encompassing high density, ethnically diverse and lower income neighborhoods. Youth and mentors advocated for one environmental change: walkability around Helix Charter High School. As a result of the combined efforts, the City of La Mesa received \$550,000 in funding for installation of sidewalks in the target area.

The achievement is a step forward in East Region's overarching strategy to promote healthy community design and improve regional health indicators such as asthma, diabetes/obesity, motor vehicle accidents, oral health and older adult falls.

## HEALTH NEWS

### Tell the Flu Bug to "Buzz Off"

VIDEO



### "We are Family" at San Pasqual Academy

Family Day was held recently at San Pasqual Academy. Approximately 145 family members enthusiastically participated. Although they had an opportunity to meet with the residential, teaching and HHSA staff, the focus was all about family and fun!

The event kicked off with a talent show in the auditorium, followed by a BBQ lunch in the Cyber Café. Everyone then participated in various events including softball, basketball, volleyball, pool with an inflatable jumper, music, coloring and face painting for the younger family members.

Surrogate grandparents who live on campus had a paper hat making station, where creative artwork was displayed. There was a youth photography display in the Café and videos of Academy graduations and sports were shown. Guests used their creative talents to make foam frames for pictures taken of their family.

Academy youth showed-off their homes and personalized bedrooms to family members. A final opportunity to showcase the Academy came when families were given a bag of organic vegetables grown in the Academy's farm.



The 2008 Adoptions Heart Gallery was displayed during October at the Spring Valley County Library.



**Board of Supervisors**  
 Greg Cox, District 1  
 Dianne Jacob, District 2  
 Pam Slater-Price, District 3  
 Ron Roberts, District 4  
 Bill Horn, District 5



**Chief Administrative Officer** - Walter F. Ekard

**Health & Human Services Agency Director** - Nick Macchione

County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency

**Editor:** Tom Christensen

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 East Region: Katie Judd  
 Financial & Support Services: Donna Matta  
 North Central Region, North Coastal Region,  
 North Inland Region: Nina Constantino  
 Public Health: Wilma Wooten  
 South Region: Jayne Reinhardt



Vanessa Silva showed off her artistic talents while visiting the HHSA booth at the Eastside Community Fall Faire and Car Show in Oceanside.



## North Regions Strengthens Community Connections

Agency staff and community members of the North Regions Strategic Initiative #2: Safer Living Environments Committee partnered with the Eastside United Community Action Group to coordinate and participate in the 15th Annual Eastside Community Fall Faire & Car Show held on October 4th at Balderrama Park in Oceanside.

North Regions participation provided an opportunity for this at-risk community to connect with services, resources, and information from Public Health Nurses, Child Welfare Services staff and numerous other community agencies. Over 400 people participated.

## A Leap Forward in Technology

With more than five years of planning, preparation, testing, training and general anticipation behind them, the Mental Health Services special assignment team began a two-month long cutover process to a new Management Information System (MIS).

It's a single integrated system for client tracking, compliance monitoring, local and state reporting, billing, and managed care that will eventually serve about 2,500 system users. And best of all, when fully implemented in about 2011, the new MIS will include an Electronic Health Record.



Kathryn Grant and Henry Tarke are two of the leaders spearheading the new technology conversion.

## Give us a HAND



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**PLEDGE**  
during the 2008  
CECO/United Way  
Campaign  
which runs from  
10/06/08 thru  
11/30/08

1. Log onto **Employee Self-Service**
  - Go to County Intranet Website (CWW)
  - Find Hot Links Section
  - Click Employee Self Service
2. Once you are logged into **PeopleSoft**:
  - Click CoSD Employee Self Service
  - Click CECO/United Way Pledge
  - Make pledge to CECO and/or United Way
  - Save your changes



### WHO TO CALL:

- Need a **password reset**, contact the Help Desk.
- For help with CECO/United Way Self-Service page entry, contact your Department HR/Payroll Office.
- For questions regarding CECO and/or United Way, contact your Department Rep (for list go to [www.sdceco.org](http://www.sdceco.org))