

AGING & independence

COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY
AGING & INDEPENDENCE SERVICES

Home: A Place to Share

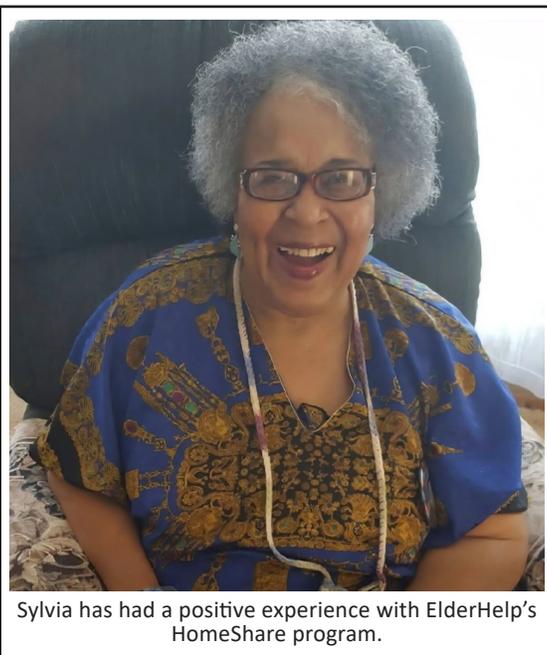
By Allison Boyer
Interim Director, Aging & Independence Services

For over 30 years, Sylvia has been living in her family’s San Diego mobile home. Her mother purchased it, and they lived together happily, sharing many good times in the home. With two retirement pensions to pay the bills, Sylvia and her mom were able to live comfortably. Sadly, Sylvia’s mother passed away in 2014. Sylvia suddenly had the pressure of maintaining a household on only half the income.

Fortunately, Sylvia is not one to back away from a challenge. She has overcome several personal challenges, such as learning to effectively manage chronic health conditions. She also has navigated a successful career, serving for more than 20 years as a supervisor for the US Post Office. From these experiences she has learned how to solve problems, look for people to collaborate with, and make things happen.

Not wanting to move from her beloved home, Sylvia decided to look for a couple of roommates to invite into her household. She learned about ElderHelp’s HomeShare program, a unique affordable housing solution that matches seniors who want to age in place with adults seeking lower-cost housing.

The benefits to homeowners (or renters with a spare room) are many: supplemental income, peace of mind



Sylvia has had a positive experience with ElderHelp’s HomeShare program.

with having another person in the home, and companionship. The service exchange option allows a home seeker to provide some assistance around the house (e.g., housekeeping, errands, transportation) in exchange for reduced rent on a room. ElderHelp assists in matching potential housemates, conducting background checks and other types of screening, creating a rental agreement, and mediating any difficulties that may arise.

Overall, Sylvia has had positive experiences renting out the two extra rooms in her home. She shares, “I’m a good judge of people,” but admits that one of the

things she likes best about HomeShare is that they do a background check. She also notes that in the HomeShare program, the first month allows for a trial period for both parties to adjust to the new living arrangements and work out the kinks—or not. The program helps participants complete a match agreement, sets clear expectations, and supports both participants throughout the match, including when it ends. Many people have achieved long-lasting and meaningful connections through the program. The average match lasts four years with the longest match reaching over 17 years.

Sylvia has had several roommates over the past ten years.
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Sylvia describes her current roommate “as a gift from God.” She brings a kind and gentle energy into the home. She also cooks soft food that Sylvia can eat with ease despite using dentures. Even though the two having been living together happily for the past couple of years, Sylvia admits the pair had to adjust a little bit as they “are opposites.” Sylvia explains, “I talk too much! I have to try to be quiet and keep my music reasonable.”

Sometimes life with roommates has brought challenges. A couple of years ago, one of Sylvia’s roommates started experiencing health challenges. “I really liked her,” Sylvia recalls, “but I couldn’t live with her [anymore].” Sylvia expressed gratitude for the guidance and support provided by ElderHelp in helping her roommate find a level of care that best met her needs. This support allowed the match to end on a positive note and gave Sylvia the opportunity to find a new match moving forward.

Having others in the home helps Sylvia to feel safe and more at ease. Sylvia has some health concerns which cause her to have balance problems. As she is prone to falls, Sylvia appreciates the help roommates can provide with certain in-home tasks, such as answering the front door and providing assistance when her balance is off. It has been a blessing for Sylvia to be able to live independently but have the peace of mind of knowing someone else is in the home.

Most of all, having roommates has been a boon for Sylvia’s social life. With an outgoing personality, she enjoys the company of the people who cross her path. Sylvia shares, “I have 150 friends and I’m adding every day!”

Saying goodbye has been the hardest part of sharing her home. Sylvia muses, “Roommates come and they go, but I get attached to people so when they leave, it hurts.” Often though, goodbyes can lead to new beginnings. After more than 30 years in her beloved home, Sylvia is now the one packing her bags and preparing to embark on a new adventure—and this time she’ll be the roommate. Sylvia is planning a move to Houston to live with a family member. As she gets older, she is looking forward to receiving extra support and companionship from family.

But while Sylvia is excited about the next phase, she is taking her time. She won’t be leaving until her current roommate finds a new place to land. Sylvia is hopeful HomeShare will help her current roommate find just the right match, as the program did for her throughout the last ten years.

ElderHelp is grateful to partner with the County of San Diego to provide the HomeShare program. For more information on HomeShare, please visit: <https://elderhelpofsandiego.org/solutions-for-living/homeshare/> or call **(619) 284-9281**.

HAVE AN EXTRA ROOM TO SHARE?

For more than 30 years, ElderHelp has operated HomeShare, a roommate-matching program that connects people who want to rent out a room in their home—for extra income or assistance around the house—with individuals seeking an affordable place to live. ElderHelp is grateful to partner with the County of San Diego to provide this program. Their continued support makes these meaningful matches possible across the San Diego community.

HomeShare is available countywide and serves adults of all ages (18+), with the requirement that at least one person in each match is age 55 or older. All participants undergo a thorough vetting process and receive ongoing support from ElderHelp’s staff. To help ensure the best possible matches, applicants apply directly to specific home provider listings on ElderHelp’s website. For more information, please visit: <https://elderhelpofsandiego.org/solutions-for-living/homeshare/> or call **(619) 284-9281**.



In the COMMUNITY

NEW INTERIM DIRECTOR OF AIS

AIS welcomed Allison Boyer as the new Interim Director this past November. Previous Director, Jennifer Bransford-Koons, was appointed as Interim Chief Operations Officer for the Health and Human Services Agency (HHS). Allison has 27 years of experience with the County. She began her career with Self-Sufficiency Services, transitioned to work in AIS as both a Social Worker and Social Work Supervisor for the IHSS program, and then held roles as a Human Services Program Manager, Chief of Agency Operations, and Deputy Director of Departmental Operations throughout HHS. Most recently, Allison was serving as Assistant Director for AIS.



ANOTHER CHANCE FOR MEDICARE CHANGES: HICAP AVAILABLE TO ASSIST

Although the fall Medicare Annual Enrollment Period ended December 7, the Medicare Advantage Open Enrollment Period runs from January 1-March 31 and provides another opportunity to make coverage changes. During this time, you can switch from one Medicare Advantage (Part C) plan to another or drop your plan and return to Original Medicare with a Part D prescription drug plan. The Health Insurance Counseling & Advocacy Program (HICAP), provides free and unbiased assistance. HICAP counselors are available for phone or in-person appointments (M-F; 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.). Call toll-free at **(800) 434-0222** or locally at **(858) 565-8772**, or visit www.elaca.org/gethelp for more information.

ADOPT (OR FOSTER) A SENIOR PET

Pet ownership is associated with many benefits to older adults, including an increase in physical activity, reduced feelings of loneliness and depression, and an increased sense of purpose. Right now, shelters and rescue groups are overflowing with pets in need of a good home. Senior pets often are overlooked, despite having lots of love left to give. There are numerous local rescue groups and shelters to explore, but the following organizations focus on senior pets:



Frosted Faces Foundation: Located in Ramona, Frosted Faces offers fee-free adoptions of dogs age 8 and older. The Foundation covers the ongoing costs of adoptees' chronic medical conditions through their on-site clinic. The "Seniors for Seniors" adoption program supports older adults age 65 and up who adopt through the organization. Volunteers help ease some of the potential challenges, such as by transporting pets to veterinary appointments, and delivering food, supplies, and medication. If the older adult becomes hospitalized, the pet can board for free during the recovery time and is always welcome back to the facility if their owner can no longer care for them. Frosted Faces also offers the opportunity for individuals to foster a pet via a brief "field trip," a two-week "frosted fling," or a longer-term commitment. To learn more, visit www.frostedfacesfoundation.org, email info@frostedfacesfoundation.org, or call **(858) 304-0204**.

Lionel's Legacy is another organization that provides adoption and foster opportunities for senior pets. In addition, they sponsor a lower cost Free to Chew dental clinic for senior pets in the community whose owners may be struggling to pay the typical costs associated with dental cleaning and possible tooth extractions. To learn more about Lionel's Legacy, visit www.lionelslegacy.org or email seniors@lionelslegacy.org.

Other local options: Don't forget to check out local public shelters, such as those in Bonita and Carlsbad (County of San Diego's Department of Animal Services), the San Diego, Oceanside, and El Cajon shelters (San Diego Humane Society), and Chula Vista shelter (Chula Vista Animal Services). You will find dogs, cats, and other pets of all ages. Consider volunteering, fostering, or donating supplies if you love pets but aren't able to adopt at this time.



VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION

The Retired and Senior Volunteer Program and Poway 4S Ranch Volunteer Sheriff's Patrol (VSP) selected **Elizabeth "Liz" Shade** as their Volunteer of the Quarter. Liz was nominated for going above and beyond the 30 hours a month requirement, averaging 40 hours a month in 2025. As a VSP member, she participates in home vacation checks, visits and calls participants in the You Are Not Alone (YANA) program to check on their safety and wellness, and assists with traffic control after vehicle accidents or breakdowns. She has been with VSP for over 22 years, providing 12,400 hours of career service. Her other responsibilities have included representing the Poway Sheriff's Station as an Honor Guard for multiple Sheriffs' memorials, coordinating the Rapid Response Team and Scheduling Team, and participating in multiple events. These events include National Night Out, Holiday with Heroes, presenting the YANA program to the community, and Boy Scouting activities. Her energy, dedication, and selflessness towards this program motivates both newer and long-time volunteers. Congratulations, Liz, and thank you for your hard work!



The Fourth District Senior Center (FDSRC), located in the George L. Stevens Senior Community Center, nominates **Jamie Polk** as their Volunteer of the Quarter. Jamie is one of the most seasoned volunteers at FDSRC at 89 years old. She has been serving for 4 years at the Center, with 1,250 lifetime hours, averaging 24 hours a week. She works as their Front Desk Receptionist and also works with their Facilities, Food Service, and Special Events teams. She stands out due to her commitment to the FDSRC and her hospitality that brings a warm, welcoming environment to the visitors, participants, and staff who come to the Center. Through her efforts, she furthers the FDSRC mission of providing a wholesome, safe place for the older adult community to thrive and live independently. One of her peers said, "Working alongside Ms. Jamie is the highlight of my day. Her energy is inspiring, and her laugh is infectious." Thank you, Jamie, for your service to the community!

HAVE FRUIT TO SPARE? SHARE WITH SENIOR GLEANERS OF SAN DIEGO COUNTY

If your family and friends can't eat all the fruit from your trees, consider donating the excess to hungry people rather than letting it go to waste. Let's put it into bellies and not landfills! The Senior Gleaners of San Diego County will pick your excess fruit and deliver it on your behalf to local food pantries, churches, and other organizations that regularly help feed our neighbors. It's free to you and at the end of the year, the Senior Gleaners will provide you with a receipt for the value so that you can write it off on your taxes! Whether you have one tree or a dozen, the Senior Gleaners will arrive when the fruit is ready. Register your trees at seniorgleanerssdco.org/site_registration.php.

Would you like to help with the effort? Senior Gleaners is open to all people 55 and older who can spare a couple of hours to volunteer on weekday mornings. There are no set time commitments, although most Senior Gleaners quickly make friends with like-minded peers, enjoy the outdoor exercise, and readily come back knowing they are making a sustainable local contribution. Sign up at seniorgleanerssdco.org/volregistration.php.



LOVE YOUR HEART



This February, the County of San Diego will celebrate its fifteen year of Love Your Heart. During this annual event, organizations from across the U.S. and Mexico provide free blood pressure screenings to the public and share cardiovascular health information. Here are a few steps you can take to be heart-healthy:

KNOW YOUR NUMBERS: Know your heart health numbers to screen and control for high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and diabetes. These include your blood pressure, cholesterol and triglyceride levels, and glucose and A1c levels. Talk to your doctor about getting checked. Visit www.heart.org/HBP to learn more.

GET ACTIVE AND REDUCE STRESS: Perform moderate physical activity for at least 30 minutes five days a week (you can also conduct three 10-minute sessions daily)...and make it fun! Try organizing a walking club with your friends and family. Get outside and enjoy the many beautiful trails and parks we have in San Diego County. Visit www.sdparks.org or call **(858) 694-3030** for more information.

EAT HEART-HEALTHY FOODS: Eat fresh fruits and vegetables whenever possible – at least 5 servings each day, low-fat or non-fat dairy, and foods high in fiber. Avoid foods high in sodium, saturated and trans fats, and sugar. Visit www.heart.org/nutrition for healthy eating ideas.

AVOID TOBACCO: If you are a smoker, get support to help you quit! Call the California Smokers Helpline at **(800) NO BUTTS (800-662-8887)** or visit www.smokefreesandiego.org.

Additional information, resources, and tips can be found at www.livewellsd.org/events/love-your-heart in the “Love Your Heart @ Home” section.

Blood Pressure Categories



BLOOD PRESSURE CATEGORY	SYSTOLIC mm Hg (top/upper number)		DIASTOLIC mm Hg (bottom/lower number)
NORMAL	LESS THAN 120	and	LESS THAN 80
ELEVATED	120-129	and	LESS THAN 80
STAGE 1 HYPERTENSION (High Blood Pressure)	130-139	or	80-89
STAGE 2 HYPERTENSION (High Blood Pressure)	140 OR HIGHER	or	90 OR HIGHER
SEVERE HYPERTENSION (If you don't have symptoms*, call your health care professional.)	HIGHER THAN 180	and/or	HIGHER THAN 120
HYPERTENSIVE EMERGENCY (If you have any of these symptoms*, call 911.)	HIGHER THAN 180	and/or	HIGHER THAN 120

*symptoms: chest pain, shortness of breath, back pain, numbness, weakness, change in vision or difficulty speaking

heart.org/bplevels

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NEW TAI CHI CLASSES

Aging & Independence Services offers free in-person and virtual Tai Chi classes. These evidence-based falls prevention programs improve movement, balance, strength, and flexibility. Three new classes are beginning in January.

Tai Chi: Moving for Better Balance (Starting January 12th): Santee City Hall, 1601 Magnolia Ave., Santee 92071 on Mondays and Fridays from 10:30-11:30 a.m. in Community Services Building 6.

Tai Chi for Arthritis & Fall Prevention: (Starting January 12th): Fallbrook Wellness Center, 1636 E. Mission Rd., Fallbrook 92028 on Mondays and Wednesdays from 12:30-1:30 p.m.

Tai Chi for Arthritis & Fall Prevention: (Starting January 13th): Nobel Recreation Center, 8810 Judicial Dr., San Diego 92122. Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9:30-10:30 a.m. For this site, registration is required through the [City of San Diego](http://www.cityofsandiego.gov) website. Use activity code 127881

For more information on these classes and to learn about additional Tai Chi classes held throughout the county, visit www.healthierlivingsd.org. For questions, email HealthierLiving.HHSA@sdcounty.ca.gov or call (858) 495-5500.

CARE MANAGEMENT SUPPORT FOR VETERANS

Care management services are available for local Veterans through the San Diego Veterans Independence Services at any Age (SD-VISA) program. SD-VISA serves Veterans enrolled in the Veterans Administration San Diego Healthcare System (VASDHS) who are at risk of nursing home placement. SD-VISA is a self-directed program through which Veterans privately employ individuals to provide homemaker and personal care services.

The Veterans Administration provides a monthly budget that is primarily used to pay caregivers. Family and friends can become paid caregivers and be compensated for some of the work they are already providing. In addition to caregiving services, the monthly budget can be used for other goods and services that allow the Veteran to continue living safely at home, such as fall detection cameras, lift chairs, home-delivered meals, air purifiers, housekeeping, and yard work. An Options Counselor can assist in guiding the purchase of items that support the Veteran's medical needs or disability.

To learn more about Veterans Directed Care/SD-VISA and apply, Veterans should consult their VASDHS primary care provider.

MENTAL HEALTH PREVENTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION FOR OLDER ADULTS

The Union of Pan Asian Communities (UPAC) Positive Solutions Program (PSP) provides outreach, along with mental health prevention and early intervention, to home-bound individuals (60+) who are at risk of becoming depressed or are showing signs of minor depression. Trained and compassionate staff members help clients recognize symptoms, identify possible causes of depression, and teach proven ways to cope. This is achieved through short-term psychoeducation, the evidence-based PEARLS (Program to Encourage Active and Rewarding Lives for Seniors) model, and other brief interventions. The goal is to reduce feelings of isolation and increase an individual's social support system and overall self-sufficiency. No healthcare insurance is required as the program is FREE. Therapists provide virtual (Zoom) or over-the-phone short-term counseling sessions in English, Spanish, or Vietnamese.



Explore the PSP website for more information: www.upacsd.org/services/adult-and-older-adult-mental-health-programs/positive-solutions/. If you are interested in receiving more information, completing a referral, or scheduling a presentation on the program, please call: (619) 481-2652.

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Please note: To ensure a timely and relevant calendar, the online and printed versions of this calendar may vary.

JANUARY 15, THURSDAY 11 A.M. - 12:15 P.M.

A free webinar, *Maintaining Your Brain Health*, will be offered by Alzheimer's San Diego in conjunction with ElderHelp. Learn about lifestyle changes and habits that everyone can use to maintain a healthy brain. To RSVP, visit www.alzsd.org/services/education/ or call (858) 492-4400.

JANUARY 17, SATURDAY 1:30-3 P.M.

A virtual workshop exploring *End of Life Options* will be held over Zoom. Join Health Law Professor and Bioethicist Thaddeus Mason Pope in an exploration of new and emerging end of life options. To register, visit <https://HemlockSocietySanDiego.org/event-directory> or call (619) 233-4418.

JANUARY 20, TUESDAY 6-7:30 P.M.

A virtual workshop, *Communicating Effectively and Understanding Dementia Behaviors*, will be held by the Alzheimer's Association via Zoom. Learn how dementia affects communication and tips for communicating well with family, friends, and health care professionals. You'll also learn about common behavior changes, how to understand and manage them using non-medical approaches, and when to seek additional help. For more information and to register, visit <https://tinyurl.com/4uz3rf2v> or call (800) 272-3900.

JANUARY 21, WEDNESDAY 1-2 P.M.

A *Decluttering Workshop* will be offered by Bee Organized San Diego at the Vista Library, 700 Eucalyptus Ave., Vista 92084. Start the year out with a refreshed space using tips from a professional organizer! For more information, call (760)-643-5100.

JANUARY 23, FRIDAY 11:30 A.M. -12:30 P.M.

A workshop, *Gentle Exercises for Pain Management*, will be held at the Mission Valley Library, 2123 Fenton Parkway, San Diego 92108. Join the Health Adventures Foundation to learn how to manage pain using mindful meditation in conjunction with other pain management strategies. For more information, contact Karen Reilly at kreilly@sandiego.gov or (858) 573-5007.

JANUARY 28, WEDNESDAY 1-2 P.M.

A *Don't Get Hooked Scam Prevention Workshop* will be held at the Pacific Highlands Ranch Library, 12911 Pacific Pl., San Diego 92130. Learn about different kinds of scams, including grandparent scams, lottery scams, telemarketing scams, and more. Resources will be provided. For more information, contact prstaff@sandiego.gov or (858)-523-7052.

FEBRUARY 7, SATURDAY 1-2:30 P.M.

A free program, *U.S. History Through Folk and Rock Music: Songs of Protest 1935-1975*, will be held at the Imperial Beach Library, 810 Imperial Beach Blvd., Imperial Beach 91932. Presented by Rose

Darrough, History Professor College with Desert Crossing Music's Michael J. Dwyer, this lecture will feature musicians like Woody Guthrie, Pete Seeger, John Prine, Billie Holliday and more. For more information, contact the Imperial Beach Library at (619) 424-6981 or email imperiallibrary@sdcounty.ca.gov.

FEBRUARY 17, TUESDAY 3- 4 P.M.

A class, *Aging Well in the Right Place*, will be hosted by San Diego Oasis at the Rancho Bernardo Lifelong Learning Center, 17170 Bernardo Center Dr., San Diego 92128. Discover practical strategies for aging comfortably at home, including advice on wellness, home modification tips, and local resources. Free. To RSVP, visit www.SanDiegoOasis.org (Course #2532) or call (858) 240-2880.

FEBRUARY 27, FRIDAY 1-4 P.M.

A *Paint and Sip Party* will be hosted by San Diego Oasis at the Grossmont Lifelong Learning Center, 5500 Grossmont Center Dr., Ste. 269, La Mesa 91942. Follow along step-by-step and paint a masterpiece. Surprise yourself by creating a fabulous painting. All materials as well as snacks/refreshments will be provided. Cost: \$40. To RSVP, visit www.SanDiegoOasis.org (Course #1241) or call (619) 881-6262.

SEND IN YOUR ITEMS

We welcome your contributions to this calendar. Email: sarah.jackson@sdcounty.ca.gov.



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- Elders and dependent adults experiencing abuse

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SAN DIEGO

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