

AGING & independence

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

MSSP “Makes Us Feel Like Someone is There”

By Kim Gallo
Director, Aging & Independence Services

There are few things as strong as a mother’s love, except perhaps, a daughter’s love. This rings true for Ruby, 73, and Debha, 41, of the Greer family. Ruby was a caregiver to her mother for 40 years. It was a challenging journey, especially in the later years when her mother suffered from seizures and strokes, became bedridden, and lost the ability to talk. Debha notes, “Mom had to almost ‘know’ what grandma would want, what she would think or want to say.” Ruby had been to nursing school and, according to Debha, “she was teaching the nurses that would come in” so that her mom could have the best possible care. “Mom never felt like she could take a break.”

And while there was no doubt that Ruby would do everything she could to support her mom, it was a relief when the Multipurpose Senior Services Program (MSSP) stepped in to help. Managed by Aging & Independence Services, MSSP provides care planning and coordination services for Medi-Cal-eligible older adults age 65 and over who are at risk of placement in a skilled nursing facility. The program helps arrange services, such as bill paying, laundry, and shopping, and provides regular check-ins to ensure needs are being met. MSSP supports older adults to live at home safely for as long as possible.

It was a big help to receive care coordination assistance through MSSP, as well as being supplied with some essential items, such as incontinence supplies, but the greatest blessing was the emotional support the family received from their MSSP case worker, Heidi Klein. “Ms. Heidi would come around...and ask if we needed anything,” Ruby notes. Having been a caregiver herself, Heidi could relate to the Greer’s circumstances and helped them feel less alone. Debha adds, “Mom knew someone else besides her family was there for her. That a stranger can mean so much to you, that is something else.”

One day in 2015, Debha got the call that her grandmother was on the brink of passing. She immediately left work to be by her grandmother’s side—something for which her work decided to terminate her. Ruby’s caregiving journey was coming to a close, while Debha’s was just about to begin.

Ruby had been so busy tending to her mother’s health that she had been neglecting her own. She hadn’t been able to prioritize doctor appointments, managing chronic conditions, or eating a healthy diet. Debha, then in her early thirties, had been busy with work and building her own life. She wasn’t intimately attuned to her mom’s

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Debha Greer (left) is a caregiver to her mother, Ruby Greer (right).



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situation or how her mother would benefit from having someone to take care of her. Suddenly, her mother's need for help was as clear as day. Debha promised her mom, "I'll be here for you and I'm not going to leave you."

Debha came in "not knowing anything" about being a caregiver and the types of resources that could help her mom. Fortunately, Ruby introduced Debha to Heidi and they were able to enroll Ruby as a client in the MSSP program, just as they had done with her mom. Heidi helped guide Debha on the things she needed to do—enroll her mother in the In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) program, become her mother's official IHSS provider, file paperwork for social security, and the myriad of other tasks to help Ruby get the support she needed. Debha moved in with her mother. Despite winning a wrongful termination hearing, she decided not to return to her job and became Ruby's full-time caregiver. She began cooking Ruby nutrient-rich vegan meals, taking care of the house, and managing Ruby's healthcare needs.

It has been seven years now and Debha wouldn't change a thing. Her mother's lifelong, tireless commitment to care for others is her inspiration. After the death of her husband, Ruby lovingly raised Debha and her brother as a single parent. She also extended compassion to foster children and kids that she provided with daycare. Then, of course, there was her 40 years of service to her own mother. Debha frequently reflects on her mother's selfless example. "It makes me want to be

there even more," she explains. "I dedicate my life to her."

And while Debha works hard and has made sacrifices to be by her mother's side, it is not an exaggeration to say that becoming a caregiver may have saved Debha's life. "I was headed down the wrong path," Debha explains. "I was trying to fit in. Trying to hang out." Becoming her mom's caregiver helped Debha achieve sobriety. It also allowed her to deepen her commitment to her faith. Today, she experiences great comfort and hope due to her relationship with God.

Today, Ruby and Debha's bond is as deep as ever. Ruby feels grateful that her daughter has followed in her footsteps. Ruby shares, "I needed someone who gives the same love and care that I had for mom. It makes me happy to know she is there for me." She is well aware that Debha could be living a different life. Debha makes sure her mom knows: "I CHOOSE this. I want to be here. Who can think about doing anything else but taking care of your family members?"

The Greers are truly a family of caregivers, built on a foundation of faith and love. And they both continue to feel blessed for the role that MSSP plays in their lives. Debha says, "You make Us Feel Like Someone Is There...And We're Not Alone."

MSSP is currently enrolling new clients. For more information or to apply, call the Aging & Independence Services Call Center at **(800) 339-4661**.

A TRIBUTE TO MOTHERS (AND HELPERS) EVERYWHERE

Debha Greer (profiled above) is a devoted caregiver to her mother and Multipurpose Senior Services (MSSP) client, Ruby Greer. Debha writes poetry as a way to express the deep love, affection, and respect she has for her mother, reflected in the poem "Mama" (excerpt below left). She also has dedicated a poem "Mother's Day... Everyday" (excerpt below right) to MSSP Manager Heidi Klein, who served as both her grandmother and mother's case manager, and for whom the family is most grateful.

MAMA

*I live every day just to see your smile mama
You push so hard and have so much faith
That's why I still believe mama
You sacrificed, never asked for much
That's why I give my all for you mama...
I will do anything for everything you did for us
Mama*

MOTHER'S DAY...EVERYDAY

*Thank you God for our mothers...
You are the ones that hold everything together
If it weren't for you, making the decisions to have a creation
A beautiful bond and connection, another chapter of life...
A voice that's strong as a warrior, you must not be afraid,
for you are brought here to celebrate life.
Happy Mother's Day, Mom, everyday...and all mothers
across the world.*

In the COMMUNITY

JOIN THE CALIFORNIA SENIOR LEGISLATURE

Advocate for the needs of older adults by serving on the California Senior Legislature! The California Senior Legislature (CSL) is a volunteer body whose primary mission is to gather ideas for legislation at the state and federal levels, craft the ideas into formal proposals, prioritize the proposals, present them to members of the Legislature or the Congress, and advocate for laws implementing the ideas.

CSL elections are held on a four-year cycle. Elections will be held at the AIS Advisory Council meeting on May 9th. Applicants must be present. San Diego County has a total of 8 seats (2 Senate seats and 6 Assembly seats).

Candidate Eligibility:

- 55 years of age or older on election day (May 9th)
- Registered Voter
- Resides in San Diego County
- Additional criteria related to technology, mobility, and experience can be found in the application packet

For more information, or to receive an application packet, contact Jana Jordan at **(858) 495-5566** or **jana.jordan@sdcounty.ca.gov**. Applications are due March 31. Additional information about CSL can be found at **4csl.org**.

GET HELP CHANGING MEDICARE PLANS

Most Medicare enrollees know about the Annual Enrollment Period in the fall, but did you know about the Medicare Advantage Open Enrollment Period in January, February, and March each year? Medicare Advantage enrollees can change coverage one time during this period. The Health Insurance Counseling & Advocacy Program (HICAP) provides free and unbiased help comparing Medicare coverage options. HICAP Counselors are available in-person, by phone, or by email to help. Call **(800) 434-0222** (toll free) or **(858) 565-8772** (local), Monday - Friday, 8am - 5pm or email **dweil@seniorlaw-sd.org**.

CARE MANAGEMENT: MULTI-PURPOSE SENIOR SERVICE PROGRAM

Sometimes staying independent in one's home means getting help. That extra help with bill paying, shopping, laundry, and other tasks can keep someone from needing to live in a nursing home. If you or a loved one are age 65+, eligible for Medi-Cal, and need assistance to continue living safely at home, consider applying for the Multipurpose Senior Services Program (MSSP).

MSSP care managers work with the client, family members, and medical team to find and coordinate services in the home. Through the timely use of services, MSSP protects frail older adults and helps them live at home for longer.



Care management services include: a comprehensive health and psychosocial assessment; care planning with the client and family; arrangement of services; coordination of care with other community agencies; some limited payment of in-home services; monthly phone contact; quarterly home visits; and ongoing monitoring and phone contacts as needed.

For more information on MSSP or to apply, contact the AIS Call Center at **(800) 339-4661** M-F from 8 a.m.-5 p.m.



VOLUNTEER OF THE MONTH

Pat Justice, a Senior Volunteer Patrol (SVP) at the San Diego Police Department (SDPD) Southern Division is the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) Volunteer of the Month for February 2022. She was nominated by Carlos Lacarra, the Community Relations Officer and Stan Tom, the RSVP Administrator.

Pat Justice has been with SDPD since 1976. For more than 45 years, Pat has performed many duties and has taken on many lead roles. She was the first member of the RSVP Academy in 1992 and she served as the Neighborhood Watch Coordinator and Captain, as well as the Southern Division Captain's Advisory Board.

Pat has also been involved in many of SDPD's community service efforts, such as the Teddy Bear Drive to benefit Rady's Children's Hospital, and food collection drives for families experiencing food insecurity in both San Diego and Tijuana. Pat also has served as a Greeter-At-Large at the International Police Chiefs' Convention, representing SDPD and welcoming Police Chiefs and their representatives from around the world.

Pat has been the food expert for the holidays, providing the turkeys for the traditional Thanksgiving turkey fry and preparing full Christmas holiday meals for on-duty officers. Continuing with the holiday spirit, she served with Shop-with-a-Cop since its inception and has transformed into Mrs. Clause for the past 30 years.

Due to Pat's many incredible accomplishments and her dedication to SDPD, May 31st, 2011, was recognized by the San Diego City Council as Pat Justice Appreciation Day!

Pat states she has "loved every minute" of her more than 44 years of volunteer service. Working with You Are Not Alone (YANA), the program that checks in on frail older adults who live alone, has been a highlight for her. Pat explains, "When [the clients] see you, they brighten up. Sometimes we're the only ones they see." Pat encourages anyone who is looking for a volunteer role to consider the YANA program "because you will meet the most wonderful people."

Thank you, Pat, for your years of dedicated service! Your passion for volunteering shows through your many decades of dedication to this work!



Pat Justice

VOLUNTEER WITH THE SAN DIEGO AUTOMOTIVE MUSEUM

The mission of the San Diego Automotive Museum is to tell the story of the social and technological past, present, and future of motorized vehicles through its collections, exhibitions, and educational programs. The San Diego Automotive Museum has been a partner of RSVP since 1992 and has exciting volunteer opportunities to offer. Do you have a love for cars or motorcycles? If so, join the San Diego Automotive Museum family! The San Diego Automotive Museum, in beautiful Balboa Park, is looking for volunteers who love the history of cars and motorcycles and enjoy interacting with the public.

Docents, the front-line of the Museum's operations, are needed to work on the floor of the museum and interact with the public. After 20 hours serving as a docent, you can be trained to serve in other ways, such as providing tours, working in the library, restoring cars, and attending off-site events. Volunteers receive perks such as free admission to the museum, a discount in the gift shop, and the opportunity to earn free passes.

The San Diego Automotive Museum's small core of paid employees and large pool of wonderful volunteers (like yourself!) make for a harmonious team with a positive attitude. The Museum is looking for volunteers to assist with promoting and sustaining this great environment. Candidates must have a healthy team spirit and be willing to participate with a regular commitment. For more information, please email RSVP Assistant Manager Myles Jonathan Field at Myles.Field@sdcounty.ca.gov or call (858) 495-5039.



AGE WELL SAN DIEGO: LOOKING BACK

Age Well San Diego (Age Well) is the County of San Diego's commitment to make our region an even better place for people of all ages to be healthy, safe, and thriving. Age Well launched in 2016 when San Diego County joined the AARP® Network of Age-Friendly Communities and the Dementia Friendly America Network. Through a community engagement process, an action plan was created that includes five priority areas: health & community support, housing, social participation, transportation, and dementia-friendly. With the help of partners, Age Well has led to many accomplishments, including:

Village Symposium: On January 28, 2019, a symposium was held to educate residents and stakeholders about village-like community support systems.

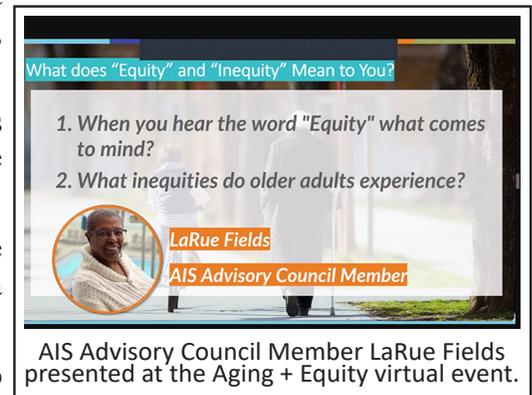
Accessory Dwelling Unit Symposium: Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) can provide an important housing solution for older adult renters and homeowners. The Age Well Housing Team held an ADU Symposium on March 7, 2020.

Ways to Engage Guide and Video: A "Ways to Engage" handout and video provides older adults with information about recreational, educational, and volunteer opportunities.

Ride Well to Age Well Guide: This guide for older adults catalogs existing transportation options and explains how to use popular ride share services.

Training of Local Dementia-Friendly Champions: People were trained as "Local Champions" and are now qualified to conduct Dementia Friendly sessions throughout the region.

Aging + Equity Workshop: Held on October 20, 2021, this workshop explored how equity can be tied into older adult-related work.



AGE WELL 2.0: MOVING FORWARD

Age Well 2.0, the next phase of the Age Well initiative, will continue to build upon the important community-driven work of the original action plan and will include new ideas and priorities. We will be using monthly team meetings to gather input on the vision, priorities, and goals for Age Well 2.0. Join us!

Health & Community Support: Caregiver support, community villages, technology, health-related resources, safety/preparedness, and access to the outdoors. Input sessions: Fridays | 1:00pm to 2:30pm | 2/25, 3/25, 4/22, 5/27, 6/24

Housing: Zoning and design, homelessness, housing stock, opportunities to age in place/community. Input sessions: Thursdays | 1:00pm to 2:30pm | 2/3, 3/3, 4/7, 5/5, 6/2

Social Participation & Inclusion: Intergenerational programming, combating isolation and exclusion, civic and empowerment opportunities, diversity of programs for all ages and abilities. Input sessions: Wednesdays | 9:30am to 11:00am | 2/16, 3/9, 4/13, 5/11, 6/8

Transportation & Community Connections: Complete communities, public spaces, alternative transportation, pedestrian safety, access to resources. Input sessions: Wednesdays | 1:00pm to 2:30pm | 2/23, 3/23, 4/27, 5/25, 6/22

Dementia-Friendly & Brain Health: Education and awareness, early detection, caregiver support, community involvement. Input sessions: Tuesdays | 10:30am to 12:00pm | 2/15, 3/15, 4/19, 5/17, 6/21

For details on how to attend the virtual meetings, or for other opportunities to provide feedback, contact Melissa.Hernandez@sdcounty.ca.gov.

LOVE YOUR HEART

February is American Heart Month, a time when all people can focus on cardiovascular health. 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 numbers include your blood pressure, cholesterol and triglyceride levels, and glucose and A1c levels. Talk to your doctor about getting checked. Visit www.heart.org/conditions to learn more about how to “know your numbers.”

GET ACTIVE: 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.sdparcs.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.

For more tips, visit www.LoveYourHeartSD.org.

HEALTHIER LIVING CLASSES

These free, interactive, and goal-oriented virtual workshops help people manage their health conditions:

Healthier Living with Chronic Conditions (virtual): February 25-April 1 (Fridays), 12-2:30 p.m. Ok to start with the second class session. Hosted by Aging & Independence Services. To register, visit <https://bit.ly/3tBLwMd> or call **(858) 495-5500**.

Healthier Living with Chronic Conditions (in-person): February 28-April 4 (Mondays), 10:30 a.m.-1 p.m. Ok to start with the second class session. Held at the Herrick Library, 9001 Wakarusa St., La Mesa 91942. To register, email info@herricklibrary.org or call **(619) 825-5010**.

COVID-19 BOOSTER RECOMMENDED FOR ALL ADULTS, EXTRA DOSE FOR IMMUNOCOMPROMISED

Following the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the California Department of Public Health’s (CDPH) recommendations, the County is urging eligible San Diegans to get a COVID-19 vaccine booster shot. Adults ages 18 and older **should** receive a booster shot. Getting vaccinated will help protect against severe illness from the Omicron variant.

The time frame for getting a booster depends on which vaccine you received. If you received either the Pfizer or Moderna two-dose vaccine series, you may get a booster five months after you received your second dose. If you received the one-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine, you may receive a booster two months after the primary dose.

Those who are moderately or severely immunocompromised (ages 12+) may receive an additional booster shot (4th dose) at least five months after their 3rd dose of Pfizer or Moderna. You can get a booster through your medical provider, a retail pharmacy, or a site operated by the County. For additional details or where to obtain a vaccine, visit www.coronavirus-sd.com or call **2-1-1**.

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

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

MARCH 8, TUESDAY 2:30-3:45 P.M.

A free, online *Stroke and Brain Injury Support and Education Group* will be hosted by Scripps Health. Meet with stroke and brain injury survivors, caregivers, and loved ones. Ask questions, share coping strategies, or learn new information about strokes and brain injuries. Registration is required. Email pimstone.deborah@scrippshealth.org or call (760) 633-6709 to RSVP.

MARCH 9, WEDNESDAY 9 A.M.-12 P.M.

A free, senior health fair, *Spring into Healthy Living*, will be held outdoors at the McGrath Family YMCA, 12006 Campo Rd., Spring Valley 91978. Hear presentations, participate in health screenings, and learn about community, health, and lifestyle resources. Free continental breakfast and opportunity drawings.

MARCH 9, WEDNESDAY 10-11:30 A.M.

A free webinar or phone session, *Living with Alzheimer's (for the person with a dementia diagnosis)*, will be offered by the Alzheimer's Association. An Alzheimer's disease diagnosis is life-changing and leads to many questions. Learn what you need to know, what you need to plan, and what you can do as you navigate this chapter of your life. To register, visit www.alz.org/sandiego/events and click on "Educational Programs" or call (800) 272-3900.

MARCH 11, FRIDAY 1-2 P.M.

Offered in-person or online, *Must Have Strategies for Living Well While Living Longer* (course #515), will be offered both online and in person at San Diego Oasis, 5500 Grossmont Center Dr., La Mesa 91942. Geropsychologist Dr. Joe Casciani brings an uplifting perspective on aging successfully, overcoming obstacles, and the resilience needed to start new chapters. Cost: \$10. Visit www.sandiegooasis.org or call (619) 881-6262 to RSVP.

MARCH 12, SATURDAY 9:30-11 A.M.

A free webinar, *Maintaining Your Brain Health*, will be hosted by Alzheimer's San Diego. Learn about the latest research on lifestyle changes and strategies that everyone can use to maintain their brain health. To RSVP, visit www.alzsd.org/classes or call (858) 492-4400.

MARCH 17, THURSDAY 2-3 P.M.

A free *Driver's Education Class for the Seasoned Driver* will be offered by Sharp Grossmont at the Grossmont Healthcare District Conference Center, 9001 Wakarusa St., La Mesa 91942. This class for mature drivers is geared toward those who want to educate themselves on safer driving practices. You will learn how to assess your driving skills, find ways to protect yourself on the road, and be safer behind the wheel. Visit www.sharp.com/classes or call (800) 827-4277 to register.

MARCH 23, WEDNESDAY 1-2 P.M.

An online class, *Cox Presents: Music Apps and Streaming* (course #558), will be offered by San Diego Oasis. In this class we'll explore some of the popular free services including Spotify, Pandora and Deezer, and also look at subscription options. Have your smart phone or tablet handy if you'd like to sample a tune or two. Cost: \$5. Visit www.sandiegooasis.org or call (619) 881-6262 to RSVP.

MARCH 26, SATURDAY 10 A.M.-1 P.M.

National City will host free *Senior Saturdays* on the 2nd and 4th Saturday of the month from February to May at Kimball Park, 12th Street and D Avenue, National City 91950. Enjoy activities, educational opportunities, and entertainment geared towards older adults. The theme for March 26 is "Feeling Fit" and for April 9, it is "Arts & Crafts." No registration required. For details, call (619) 336-4290 or email communityservices@nationalcityca.gov.

MARCH 30, WEDNESDAY 2:30-3:30 P.M.

Join Ulli Reiner and Naomi Alter for a *Violin and Harp Duo* at the Vista Library, 700 Eucalyptus Ave., Vista 92084. Enjoy "A Concert of Classical Favorites." For details, call (760) 643-5100.

SEND IN YOUR ITEMS

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



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