

AGING & independence

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

Seniors Come First at Geriatric Emergency Departments

By Kim Gallo
Director, Aging & Independence Services

Going to the emergency department is no one's idea of a good time, but for older adults who may be frail or experiencing cognitive challenges, it can be an especially stressful experience. Fortunately, thanks to a public-private partnership involving non-profit West Health, the County of San Diego, and the region's major health systems, the majority of the county's emergency departments are focusing on the needs of seniors and will be seeking Geriatric Emergency Department Accreditation by 2021.

In September of 2019, at the request of Chairwoman Dianne Jacob, the Board of Supervisors approved the recommendation that the County of San Diego work with our partners on this important accreditation for the entire region. On December 9th, local healthcare leaders signed a pledge to join the San Diego Senior Emergency Care Initiative, a first-of-its-kind, public-private commitment by local health systems. The Initiative, funded with \$700,000 in grants and support from the County of San Diego and nonprofit West Health, makes San Diego County poised to

be the first county in the nation to offer accredited senior-friendly emergency care for older adults across the region.

Emergency departments that commit to becoming senior-friendly offer care that is tailored to the unique needs of the over-60 population, including those living with dementia. The physical environment may be modified to offer softer lighting, better access to restrooms, lower beds that are easier to get out of, access to walkers or other specialized equipment, and additional seating in rooms to accommodate family members and caregivers. In addition, new senior-specific protocols are added, such as assessing patients' mobility and the effects of multiple medications that a patient may be taking.

Most importantly, staff receive special training to assess each patient's needs beyond the acute issue that landed them in the emergency department. Staff ensure that necessary services, such as transportation, are in place to allow

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WEST HEALTH AND SAN DIEGO COUNTY LAUNCH A SENIOR-FRIENDLY EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT INITIATIVE

Back, (L-R): Dr. Robert Smith, VA San Diego Healthcare System; Dan Gross, Sharp Healthcare; Dimitrios Alexiou, Hospital Association of San Diego and Imperial Counties; Kimberly Gallo, County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency; Robin Gomez, Alvarado Hospital Medical Center; Steve Dietlin, Tri-City Medical Center; Gemma Rama-Banaag, Paradise Valley Hospital.

Front (L-R): Patty Maysent, UC San Diego Health; Mary West, West Health; Chairwoman Dianne Jacob, County of San Diego; Gary West, West Health; Shelley Lyford, West Health; Dr. Valerie Norton, Scripps Health; Sheila Brown, Palomar Health; and Dr. Adam Schwartz, Kaiser Permanente.



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patients to attend follow-up medical appointments. They also determine if other basic needs are being met, such as nutritional and social needs.

The extra level of care makes for a better experience for patients and helps support their recovery. Initial research from UC San Diego Health, the first local health system to receive accreditation at their Gary and Mary West Senior Emergency Care Unit, found that senior-specific emergency care resulted in a 12 percent decrease in the risk of a patient coming back to the emergency department within 30 days and a 20 percent decrease in their rate of hospital admission. These outcomes, in addition to supporting patients and caregivers to have a better quality of life, also reduce healthcare costs.

West Health has been a primary driver of emergency department accreditation nationwide, and the local effort has been spearheaded by Chairwoman Jacob, with support from West Health. Dr. Kelly Ko, Director of Clinical Research at West Health, notes that the San Diego region is well-positioned to be a leader in senior emergency care due to many local community organizations and

resources, West Health's expertise, and the commitment of the County to plan for the needs of older adults. The Aging Roadmap, our region's vision and framework for supporting healthy aging, places an emphasis on supporting hospitals to achieve Geriatric Emergency Department Accreditation.

Perhaps what is most remarkable is that all of the major health systems are coming together to share information, best practices, and strategies to improve care in our region. Dr. Ko explains, "All of the major health systems have really embraced this and are asking, 'how do we as a community serve the needs of seniors better?'" He adds, "We are leading the way as a county and serve as an example for the country. No one else is doing this at this level."

So, while a trip to the emergency room will never be a walk in the park, older adults in our region can expect to receive top-notch care that is tailored to their needs and will help support them to get and stay well.

For more information on local Geriatric Emergency Department Accreditation efforts, contact Dr. Kelly Ko, Director of Clinical Research at West Health, at kko@westhealth.org or (858) 412-8682.

JOIN THE AIS ADVISORY COUNCIL

The AIS Advisory Council assists AIS staff members on policy and programs needs related to its role as the Area Agency on Aging for San Diego County. There are nearly 30 members of the Advisory Council who meet the second Monday of each month at noon. The Council is seeking to fill open positions and is particularly seeking representation from those who live in the South Bay region of the county. Individuals from all backgrounds are welcome. For more information on the Advisory Council or to apply to join, contact Renée Sherrill at **Renée. Sherrill@sdcounty.ca.gov** or (858) 505-6541.

VOTING THIS MARCH? MAKE SURE YOUR BALLOT HAS THE OPTION YOU WANT

California's presidential primary election takes place March 3, 2020. Political parties decide who can vote for their presidential primary candidates. In the March 3rd primary election, voters will nominate one presidential candidate from each party to run against each other in the November 3, 2020 general election. You may need to take certain steps to vote for the presidential candidate you want in the primary election.

VOTERS REGISTERED WITH A POLITICAL PARTY

If you are registered with one of six political parties in California (American Independent Party, Democratic Party, Green Party, Libertarian Party, Peace and Freedom Party, and Republican Party), your ballot will list **only** that party's presidential candidates. You can vote **only** for that party's presidential candidates.

If your party registration is different from the party of the presidential primary candidate you want to vote for, you will need to **register to vote with that party**. If you wish to change your party registration, we encourage you to do so before February 17, 2020.

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In the COMMUNITY

SHARE YOUR VOICE: PUBLIC FEEDBACK FORUMS

The County of San Diego wants to hear from you! Join us at one of nine regional public feedback forums. Share your thoughts and ideas on how we might shape our community for people as they age, and give feedback on needed services and programs for older adults and persons with disabilities. Refreshments will be served. RSVP requested. To learn more or to RSVP, visit www.aisevents.org or call (858) 505-6433.

- **Wednesday, January 8 from 10:30 a.m.-1 p.m.** at the Ronald Reagan Community Center, 195 East Douglas Ave, El Cajon 92020.
- **Thursday, January 9 from 6-8:30 p.m.** at the Tierrasanta Recreation Center, 11220 Clairemont Mesa Blvd, San Diego 92124.
- **Friday, January 10 from 10:30 a.m.-1 p.m.** at the Otay Recreation Center, 3554 Main St, Chula Vista 91911.
- **Monday, January 13 from 9-11:30 a.m.** at the Carlsbad Senior Center, 799 Pine Ave, Carlsbad 92008.
- **Wednesday, January 15 from 8:30-11 a.m.** at the Gloria McClellan Adult Activity & Resource Center, 1400 Vale Terrace Dr, Vista 92084.
- **Friday, January 17 from 1-2:30 p.m.** at the Gary & Mary West Senior Wellness Center, 1525 4th Ave, San Diego 92101.
- **Tuesday, January 21 from 10:30 a.m.-1 p.m.** at the Escondido Public Library, 239 S. Kalmia St., Escondido, 92025.
- **Wednesday, January 22 from 9-11:30 a.m.** at George Stevens Senior Center, 570 S 65th St, San Diego 92114.
- **Friday, January 24 from 10:30 a.m.-1 p.m.** at Casa Familiar, 119 W Hall Ave, San Ysidro 92173. This session will be conducted in Spanish.

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VOTERS REGISTERED AS NONPARTISAN

If you are registered as nonpartisan, also known as “independent” or “no party preference,” your March 3, 2020 primary ballot will **not list** the presidential primary contest and candidates. There are over 550,000 voters in San Diego County registered as nonpartisan. However, nonpartisan voters can take steps to vote for a presidential candidate in the primary, as outlined below.

The American Independent Party, Democratic Party, and Libertarian Party are allowing nonpartisan voters to take part in their presidential primary elections. Nonpartisan voters can request one of these three parties’ ballots and vote for that party’s presidential primary candidate. Selecting one of these three parties’ ballots will not register you with that party – you will remain as a nonpartisan voter.

The Green Party, Peace and Freedom Party, and Republican Party have closed their presidential primary to nonpartisan voters. These parties are allowing only those registered with their parties to vote for their primary’s presidential candidates. Nonpartisan voters will not be able to select one of these ballots unless they re-register with that party. Re-register or register to vote before February 17, 2020.

No matter what your party preference is, all registered voters will be allowed to vote on nonpartisan contests and voter-nominated offices, such as U.S. congressional offices and state legislative offices. The “top two” vote getters in voter-nominated contests will advance to the November general election. For more information, call (858) 565-5800 or visit www.sdvote.com.

SENIOR VOLUNTEERS

VOLUNTEER OF THE MONTH

Dan Smoot, a Retired Senior Volunteer Patrol (RSVP) member of the El Cajon Police Department, is the volunteer of the month for December 2019. He was nominated by the El Cajon Police Department's Volunteer Coordinator, Samantha Scheurn.



Dan Smoot

Dan is a very important part of the Volunteer Patrol at the El Cajon Police Department. He plays an instrumental role in assisting with recruitment in order to build the RSVP program. He attends many special events to hand out flyers to those who may be interested in the program.

Dan also comes in on weekends to take potential applicants on ride-alongs. This gives potential volunteers a clear and realistic picture of typical RSVP duties.

Dan is proactive in ensuring that the patrol team has the equipment that they may need while in the field. When the volunteers were issued new vehicles recently, he took it upon himself to purchase various items for the vehicles. Dan also identified the need for dashboard covers to prevent damage to the dashboards. He was able to have the covers donated and then placed them in the vehicles himself.

In addition, Dan regularly assists with inventory in the station's property room. This help is much appreciated by the property room staff.

Dan's professionalism and willingness to help anyone who asks is a great example for all staff and volunteers. His dedication and commitment to the El Cajon Police Department's RSVP Program, as well as to the community, is commendable.

Thank you, Dan, for all that you do!

SHORT-TERM VOLUNTEER ASSISTANCE NEEDED

The International Rescue Committee (IRC) is an agency that works with people whose lives and livelihoods have been shattered by conflict and disaster. IRC helps these people to survive, recover, and gain control of their future.

The San Diego chapter of IRC is currently looking for volunteers to provide FREE tax preparation services to refugees and low-to-moderate income families. No previous tax experience is necessary. If chosen as a volunteer, IRC will provide you with training that will certify you as a volunteer tax preparer. In addition to preparing taxes, you may also be able to connect potential clients with other International Rescue Committee resources when appropriate.

Volunteers must be proficient in spoken and written English (second language skills a plus – Spanish, Arabic, Farsi, or another refugee language). They must also be able to attend a full weekend of tax training in January 2020. After completing the training, volunteers must then pass the IRS certification exam. The volunteer commitment would last from January 2020 to April 15, 2020, with a minimum of 6-9 hours per week.

This is a great opportunity to help others while gaining skills in tax preparation. If you are interested in this or in other volunteer opportunities, contact Mary Anne Briggs at maryanne.briggs@sdcounty.ca.gov or (858) 495-5039.



SENIOR VOLUNTEERS
IN ACTION



Give. Grow. Volunteer.

Are you looking for a flexible volunteer opportunity to feed your mind, body, and spirit while serving the community? Aging & Independence Services can help! Through Senior Volunteers in Action (SVA) and the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), you can make an impact in rewarding fields such as law enforcement, senior services, youth mentorship, museums and the arts, and more. Contact the senior volunteer programs office today at (858) 505-6399.

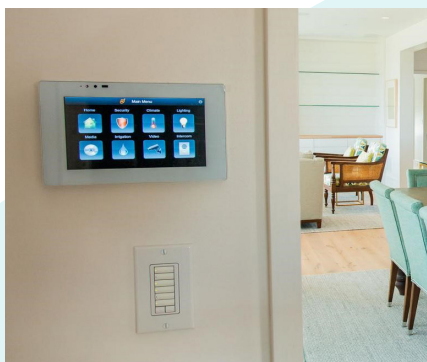
SMAART HOUSE: TECHNOLOGY FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING

Smaart House, a purveyor of technology solutions that empower mature adults to live independently, is a proud *Live Well San Diego* partner. Founded in 2017, Smaart House is a local San Diego-based small business enterprise employing and empowering San Diegans to live fulfilling lives.

Many older adults prefer to age in place and live in familiar surroundings for as long as possible. However, issues with mobility, dementia and memory loss, failing sight and hearing, and loneliness may require people to receive extra support as they get older. Families are not always available to assist. Projected caregiver shortages are expected to exacerbate this situation further. Smart homes can help.

Creating Smart Home Environments

Recent innovations in technologies like artificial intelligence (AI) and the Internet of Things (IoT) are transforming the quality of life for older adults and providing societal benefits. Through networks of connected devices, sensors, and cognitive



systems, Smaart House is enabling family members and caregivers to monitor the health and well-being of elderly people. Caregivers and social workers can remotely monitor an older population and be informed of events, activities, and behaviors which enable them to provide proactive care management.

Technology that Encourages Positive Social Behavior

Loneliness is an emerging problem that impacts many seniors. Smaart House installs digital voice assistants like Amazon Alexa and Google Home in senior communities to prompt and encourage social interaction. These voice assistants allow users to access their community's activities calendar, hear the news, listen to their favorite music and audiobooks, and set reminders to take their medications. Maybe just as important, the device allows users to bond with each other over the cool new things they discover it can do.

Each month, Aging & Independence Services acknowledges a Live Well San Diego partner—an organization in our community that is committed to the vision of a region that is building better health, living safely, and thriving. To learn more about Live Well San Diego or to become a partner, visit www.livewellsd.org.



Assistive Technologies for People with Disabilities

For individuals living with paralysis and mobility impairments, home can be a place of obstacles and isolation. However, voice-enabled technology is a game-changer for independent living across the disability and aging populations. With these devices, people living with paralysis can control simple, daily tasks within their home with just their voice. And with compatible devices installed, they can even use their voice to turn on lights, turn up the thermostat, and check who is at the door.

Technology and smart homes have the potential to significantly increase older adults' independence and quality of life. To learn more about Smaart House, visit www.smaart.house/. For questions, call (888) 902-9434 or email Bijou@smaart.house.



FALL PREVENTION CLASSES

Many older adults have concerns about falling and restrict their activities. A MATTER OF BALANCE is an award-winning program designed to manage falls and increase activity levels. Classes will meet once weekly from **10 a.m.-12 p.m. on Fridays from January 10-February 28** at Scripps Memorial Hospital La Jolla, RIE Conference Room, 9888 Genesee Ave., La Jolla 92037. Participants will learn to view falls as controllable, set goals for increasing activity, make changes to reduce fall risks at home, and exercise to increase balance and strength. For more information or to register, email InjuryPreventionLJ@scrippshealth.org or call (858) 626-6160.



A MATTER OF
BALANCE

MANAGING CONCERNS ABOUT FALLS

CAREGIVER WORKSHOPS

Wednesday, January 15 from 6-7 p.m.: *10 Warning Signs of Alzheimer's* will be held at St. James Lutheran Church, 866 Imperial Beach Blvd., Imperial Beach 91932. Learn how to recognize common signs of the disease; how to approach someone about memory concerns, the importance of early detection and more. To register, visit www.alz.org/CRF and select "Alzheimer's Education Programs," or call (800) 272-3900.

Tuesday, January 21 from 6:15-7:30 p.m.: *Effective Communication Strategies* will be held at the Alzheimer's Association, 5075 Shoreham Pl., Ste. 240, San Diego 92122. Explore how communication takes place when someone has Alzheimer's, learn to decode the verbal and behavioral messages delivered by someone with dementia, and identify strategies to help you connect and communicate at each stage of the disease. To register, visit www.alz.org/CRF and select "Alzheimer's Education Programs," or call (800) 272-3900.

Wednesday, January 22 from 10 a.m.-12 p.m.: *Managing Resistance* will be held at Alzheimer's San Diego, 6632 Convoy Ct., San Diego 92111. If you are struggling with someone who refuses help, join us to explore what causes resistance. You'll also develop new caregiver strategies to strengthen relationships, build trust, and preserve dignity. To RSVP, visit www.alzsd.org or call (858) 492-4400.

Friday, January 31 from 9 a.m.-12 p.m.: *Mobility Assistance & Safety Tools Workshop* will be held at Southern Caregiver Resource Center, 3675 Ruffin Rd., San Diego 92123. Learn about various transfer techniques and see professional demonstrations on how to assist someone with mobility challenges. Know when it's time to use medical equipment to safely care for others. Connect with available community services. Register online at <http://bit.ly/CaregivingMobility2> or call (858) 268-4432.

GET YOUR FLU SHOT

Influenza ("the flu") is a contagious illness that can be severe and life-threatening, especially for older adults. The flu can make existing health problems worse and is particularly dangerous for people with chronic health conditions, like heart disease and diabetes. The best way to prevent catching the flu is to get the flu vaccine every year. The vaccine is now available at many retail pharmacies and physician offices. To find a site for a flu shot, call 2-1-1 or visit www.sdiz.org.

JOIN THE FEELING FIT CLUB

The Feeling Fit Club is a free functional fitness program for older adults, focusing on aerobic endurance, strength, flexibility, and balance. With more than 25 locations across San Diego County, there is sure to be one near you. The Feeling Fit Club episodes are also available on television and online. For class schedules, locations, and additional information, visit www.HealthierLivingSD.org or call (858) 495-5500.

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

JANUARY 7, TUESDAY 1-5:30 P.M.

A **Driver Safety Course**, offered by AARP®, will be held at the Norman Park Senior Center, 270 F St., Chula Vista 91910. The first 4-hour session will be on Jan. 7 and the second will be Jan. 14. Completion of the course may entitle attendees to reduced auto insurance premiums. For details or to register, call (619) 409-1930. Cost: \$15 for AARP® members, \$20 for others. Visit www.aarpdriversafety.org for additional dates/locations.

JANUARY 10, FRIDAY 10 A.M.-12:30 P.M.

A **Fitness Palooza** will be held at San Diego Oasis, 5500 Grossmont Center Dr., La Mesa 91942. Start the New Year off right with a free sampling of exercise classes that will be offered during the Oasis spring trimester. Twenty-minute sampling sessions of international folk dance, soul line dancing, Tai Chi, and more! The event will also be held in North County at the Escondido Senior Center, 210 Park Ave., Escondido. No RSVP required. For details, visit www.SanDiegoOasis.org or call (619) 881-6262.

JANUARY 11, SATURDAY 10 A.M.-1 P.M.

Standing Strong, a fall prevention workshop, will be held at Scripps Memorial Hospital La Jolla, Schaetzel

Center-Great Hall, 9890 Genesee Ave., La Jolla 92037. Engaging presentations, balance screenings, resources, and complimentary lunch. Free parking. To RSVP, call Scripps at (800) 727-4777.

JANUARY 18, SATURDAY 9:30 A.M.

Seniors Computer Group of San Diego meets every Saturday morning at 9:30 a.m. at Wesley Palms retirement community in Pacific Beach, 2404 Loring Street, San Diego 92109. Individual and group instruction on how to get more from computers and smart phones. Open to beginners and “geeks” as well. No charge to visitors. Free coffee, tea, juice, and cookies. Learn more at www.scgsd.org.

JANUARY 27, MONDAY 3:30-4:30 P.M.

Urban Soul Line Dancing will be held at the La Mesa Adult Enrichment Center, 8450 La Mesa Blvd., La Mesa 91942. No dance experience necessary! Drop-in fee is \$10. For details, call (619) 667-1322.

JANUARY 29, WEDNESDAY 10 A.M.-12 P.M.

Living with Memory Loss, a class designed for people living with early-stage memory loss and their care partners, will be held at the Oceanside Library Civic Center Branch, 330 N. Coast Highway, Oceanside 92054.

Learn strategies for adapting to daily challenges, enhancing health and wellbeing, and planning for the future. To register, visit www.alzsd.org or call (858) 492-4400.

JANUARY 30, THURSDAY 9 A.M.-4 P.M.

A free one-day workshop on **Estate Planning and Long-Term Care** will be held at the Silverado Encinitas Memory Care Community, 335 Saxony Rd., Encinitas 92024. Offered by the non-profit San Diego Planning Partnership, the workshop will provide unbiased, objective information without solicitation. Receive a workbook outlining decisions to considering in preparing your plan. To register, visit www.SD-PP.org or call (619) 500-1902.

JANUARY 30, THURSDAY 10-11 A.M.

A class for seniors, **Eat Well in the New Year**, will be held at the Grossmont Healthcare District Conference Center, 9001 Wakarusa St., La Mesa 91942. Are you ready for nutrition strategies that will last all year long? A registered dietitian will teach you nutrition strategies that are both meaningful and right for your lifestyle. You will set healthy eating goals and build confidence in your eating style. RSVP to www.sharp.com/classes or (800) 827-4277.

ADVISORY COUNCIL

The AIS Advisory Council will meet on Monday, January 13 at AIS: 5560 Overland Ave., 3rd Floor, San Diego 92123.

SEND IN YOUR ITEMS

We welcome your contributions to this monthly calendar. Just send items by the 1st of each month preceding the issue date to: sarah.jackson@sdcounty.ca.gov.

AGING & INDEPENDENCE SERVICES

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Calendar information is welcome and must be submitted before the 1st of the month preceding the issue date. Submit to: Editor *Aging & Independence*, P.O. Box 23217, San Diego, CA 92193. Or, submit by email to: sarah.jackson@sdcounty.ca.gov

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