

AGING & independence

October 2009

Club Helped Widow Make New Friends

BY PAMELA B. SMITH

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In 1989, Lorraine Cole had been widowed eight years and, although she didn't mind being alone, she missed doing things with other people. When her husband was alive, most of their friends were couples. After he died, the couples continued to want to include Lorraine in activities, but "I felt like a third wheel."

She realized she needed to find single friends, but where?

"I didn't want to go to bars," says Lorraine, who was 60 at the time. "I was a school secretary and everyone around me was younger."

The singles clubs were geared to people less than half her age, and those groups mostly focused on dating. She wasn't as interested in finding a new husband as she was finding new friends.

She spotted a notice in the newspaper for widows and widowers to meet at a restaurant happy hour. That was the beginning of a group that "has changed my life," she says. Out of this gathering grew a social club for widows or widowers called WOW, which will be celebrating its 20th anniversary in November. Lorraine was one of the founding members.

When WOW was young, "we used to have potlucks in people's homes, but we're too big for that now." Membership tops 350. Instead of a happy hour and potluck once in a while, there are several activities each month. The group's October newsletter includes three walks at different places



LORRAINE COLE

each week, dance lessons, a "Movie & Meal Group," a dining-out event, a luncheon, a mixer, a Halloween party, as well as a happy hour. WOW also offers discounted trips to members, plus there are group rates for theater and music events. Different subgroups have developed based on interests, such as bridge. That's where Lorraine met her companion of four years, Ron.

When widows or widowers "re-couple," they generally remain members of WOW. But the organization continues to outreach to single seniors, Lorraine says. WOW has created special events primarily for singles (or "solos" as they call them).

The group welcomes new members all the time. There's a \$25 membership fee per year, plus proof of widow/widower status is required. Usually new members

have been without their spouse for a while before feeling ready to socialize.

"Everyone handles it differently," she says. "And if anyone wants to talk about what they're going through as a widow or widower, there are a lot of people around who have been through it."

She recalls one newly widowed woman to whom she said, "Some day, you will be happy again." The woman said that

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she didn't believe that was possible, "but a few years later, she was remarried and very happy."

Lorraine says that the greatest value from WOW for her has been building a network of friends. "I'm now so busy socially that when my family (son, daughter, three grandsons and six great-grandchildren) want to get together, my daughter says that she has to check with my schedule first because I'm the busiest!"

Wow's 20th Anniversary Recognition Event (dinner and dance) will be held from 5 to 9:30 p.m. on Sunday, Nov. 15, at the Handlery Hotel in Mission Valley. The event is only for WOW members. Cost is \$45.

To become a member of WOW, to receive a copy of the monthly newsletter or for additional information, see www.wowsd.org, or call Marie at (619) 461-7652. ♣

50+ LEARNING FORUM IN NOVEMBER

A learning forum geared for older adults who seek to find work, change jobs or improve their work skills will be held from 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. on Saturday, Nov. 7, at the Educational Cultural Complex, 4343 Ocean View Blvd., San Diego 92113. Registration begins at 8 a.m.

This free event, sponsored by AARP and the San Diego Mature Workforce Committee, will have several different speakers and breakout sessions, a technology demonstration, plus exhibitors from various learning institutions.

To register, call the AARP reservation line at (877) 926-8300. For more information about the event, see www.LearningForumSD.org. ♣

GAMES BRIDGE TWO GENERATIONS

Pairs of seniors and youngsters will toss balls and run their hearts out as they compete in Intergenerational Games this Fall in both East County and South Bay. Active older adults are encouraged to participate and register now. There is no cost.

The goal is to bring youngsters and seniors together to promote healthy, active lifestyles. The pairs face a number of physical and mental challenges, and everyone wins.

East County is the site of the first Intergenerational Games, which will be held from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Friday, Oct. 9, at the La Mesa Middle School, 4200 Park, La Mesa. For more information, call (619) 464-0505.

The second Intergenerational Games will be held from 8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 18, at the U.S. Olympic Training Center, 2800 Olympic Parkway in Chula Vista. To register for this event or for more information, call (858) 495-5769 or email diane.hunter@sdcounty.ca.gov. ♣



SECRETARY KATHY GREENLEE, RIGHT, WITH PAM SMITH
GREENLEE PICKS AIS FOR FIRST VISIT



Of all the Area Agencies on Aging in the country, new U.S. Secretary of Aging Kathy Greenlee chose to see Aging & Independence Services first. The secretary met with Director Pam Smith, toured our Call Center and chatted with several staff and Advisory Council members.

"You are the model for the nation," she told Pam. Among many positive comments, Greenlee was impressed with our integrated services, our partnerships with the libraries and other entities, plus our intergenerational programming.

Prior to becoming Secretary of Aging this June, Greenlee had been director of the Kansas Department of Aging. She worked with Secretary of Health & Human Services Kathleen Sebelius, former governor of Kansas.

Secretary Greenlee was joined during her AIS visit by David Ishida, who heads our region of the Administration on Aging, and Moya Thompson, who has been with the Administration on Aging for several years. ♣

BE A COACH FOR A FOSTER YOUTH

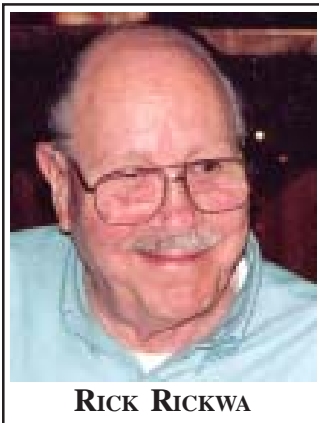
Life Skills Coaches are needed for the WAY (Workforce Academy for Youth) program. The WAY program offers emancipating foster youth a six-month internship with a County agency. Life Skills Coaches help the teens succeed at the internships, providing positive reinforcement, a listening ear, a sounding board and another viewpoint. Each coach receives a stipend of \$250 per month and is asked to spend three to five hours per week with the youth or on other work related to the program. If interested, contact Diane Hunter, AIS Intergenerational Coordinator, at (858) 495-5769 or diane.hunter@sdcounty.ca.gov. ♣

HONORING



RETIRED AND SENIOR VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

VOLUNTEER OF THE MONTH



RICK RICKWA

Rick Rickwa, nominated by Jennifer Davidson of Alvarado Hospital, is our RSVP Volunteer of the Month. Rick has been an RSVP volunteer for more than 11 years and has served more than 4,500 hours. Rick has served in a variety of volunteer roles, including Surgical Waiting Room, Information Desk (Area Advisor), and many leadership positions on the Executive Board of the Alvarado

Auxiliary (the nonprofit organization of hospital volunteers). Rick has influenced many, including student volunteers he trained years ago who are now reputable staff members and physicians at Alvarado. "He has made numerous contributions over the years. Rick is an integral part of the hospital's history," says Davidson, director of Volunteer Services for the hospital. Congratulations, Rick. Your volunteer efforts are making a difference in the community.

SPOTLIGHT: NORTH COUNTY LIFELINE

Organized in 1969, North County Lifeline, a nonprofit agency serving the communities of north San Diego County, provides counseling, social services, legal assistance and youth programs. Lifeline's mission is to develop youth resilience, nurture family strengths and to partner to solve community problems. Volunteering is an excellent way to utilize current expertise, build new skills, interact with the community and make a difference.

Lifeline provides many opportunities for community members to be involved with the agency, such as after-school mentoring and key administrative positions in various facets of the agency. Schedules and commitments are flexible. Lifeline's fun, friendly staff will make your volunteer experience a pleasure. For details regarding volunteering with North County Lifeline, contact RSVP at (858) 505-6399.

RSVP VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Public, nonprofit and health agencies seek volunteers in their communities. Potential volunteers can call RSVP at (858) 505-6399 for information on the following opportunities:

Elder Law & Advocacy needs office workers to help with filing.

North County Lifeline needs office support and travel trainers to assist groups of seniors on day trips within the County.

Grossmont Hospital needs volunteers to transport patients, visitors and staff between the hospital and the parking areas and to assist security staff with parking patrol.

San Diego Natural History Museum needs museum greeters and special projects volunteers.

Parasol Strutters needs entertainers.

Spring Valley Community Center needs program aides, tutors and mentors.

San Diego County Office of Education Foster Youth Services needs volunteer drivers, tutors and mentors.

WELCOME NEW RSVP STAFF MEMBERS



IRMA (SEATED) & TONI

We are happy to welcome Toni Eason and Irma Blackmon-Thomas as part-time Program Assistants with RSVP. Toni and Irma are placed at RSVP by Employment and Community Options.

They will assist the program by answering the phone, recording volunteer hours, processing mail and special projects. Toni and Irma demonstrate great customer service and teamwork.

We would also like to bid farewell to Carolyn Noonan who worked with RSVP for five years and thank her for adding her creative talent to our RSVP volunteer recognition programs. She recently moved to Colorado.

TIME FOR SEASONAL FLU SHOT

With all the talk about H1N1 (swine flu), we can't forget to prepare for the seasonal flu. In fact, older adults appear to have some immunity against H1N1 and will not need to be at the front of the lines to receive that vaccine. However, seasonal influenza can be a killer for seniors.

Seasonal flu vaccinations are now available and older adults should put this on their to-do list, and you might want to add the pneumonia vaccine. To locate a flu clinic near you, call **211** or visit www.sdz.org/flu. ♣

REMEMBER TO KEEP FIGHTING THE BITE

Don't forget about another pest that can make you quite sick. The mosquito-borne West Nile virus is still with us and can be dangerous, even fatal. The risk of complications increases for those over age 50, or who have weakened immune systems. In 2008, 35 people tested positive for locally-acquired West Nile virus in San Diego County.

Precautions include avoiding outdoor activity at dawn and dusk when mosquitoes that transmit the virus are active. When you're outside, use insect repellent with DEET, Picaridin, oil of lemon eucalyptus, or IR3535. Wear long sleeves and pants when outdoors. Ensure that windows and doors have tight-fitting screens without holes or tears; and dump all standing water where mosquitoes could breed.

For more information, call the County's West Nile virus information line toll free at **(888) 551-INFO (4636)** or visit www.SDFighttheBite.org. ♣

PHYSICAL AND FINANCIAL SELF-DEFENSE

Learn to defend yourself from being attacked physically or financially by attending one of our award-winning "Senior Expo: Protect Yourself & Your Wallet" events. Karate black belt Mary Davis shows how to avoid trouble and what to do if you are physically attacked. Representatives from the District Attorney's Office and Adult Protective Services alert you to scams and fraud. The schedule:

Oct. 20 (Tuesday) at the San Marcos Community Center, 3 Civic Center Dr., San Marcos 92069.

Nov. 19 (Thursday) at the George L. Stevens Senior Community Center, 570 S. 65th St. (off Skyline Dr.), San Diego 92114.

Dec. 4 (Friday) at the Lakeside Community Center, 9841 Vine St., Lakeside 92040. **Different time:** 1 to 3:30 p.m.

Jan. 11 (Monday) at the County Library, Lemon Grove Branch, 8073 Broadway, Lemon Grove 91945.

Feb. 25 (Thursday) at County Library, Imperial Beach Branch, 810 Imperial Beach Blvd, Imperial Beach 91932.

March 24 (Wednesday) at County Library, Valley Center Branch, 29200 Cole Grade Rd., Valley Center 92082.

April 16 (Friday) at the Coronado Public Library, 640 Orange Ave., Coronado 92118.

All events (except for Dec. 4) run from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. with lunch provided. To RSVP, call **(800) 510-2020** and press "4." Leave your name, phone number, plus which date/location you want. ♣

FREE FORUM ON END OF LIFE CHOICES

The San Diego Community Action Network is presenting "Creating Your Road Map: Navigating End of Life Decisions" from 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Tuesday, Oct. 13, at the Balboa Park Club Ballroom (near the Puppet Theater) in Balboa Park. Topics for this free event will include financial and estate planning, health care directives, legal issues and final arrangement options. To RSVP, call Sharp HealthCare at **(800) 827-4277**. ♣

PILOT PROJECT TO AID HISPANIC SENIORS

A team comprised of staff from AIS, Behavioral Health Services, Public Health Services and community partners, has designed a *Salud* (health) pilot program as part of an Hispanic Elder Project. The goal is to provide the most effective, cost-efficient means to help older Hispanic adults who have both diabetes and depression.

Salud outreach professionals will provide culturally appropriate health education, and will ensure the patients receive the care they need, including community resources.

The initial phase of the pilot, running through December, trains mid-level health professionals and *promotoras* (community health workers) to provide care management. Phase II, to begin early next year, will involve workers at two identified sites simultaneously following two different models.

The Elder Hispanic Project was developed following a federal initiative to improve the health of elder Hispanics. As of early August, the County has contracted with San Ysidro Health Center and North County Health Services to provide services. Program evaluations will be conducted by UCSD. ♣

LA MAESTRA HAS FREE MAMMOGRAMS

The La Maestra Family Health Center has partnered with Grossmont Imaging Center in La Mesa to provide free digital mammograms on the third Saturday of each month for uninsured and underinsured, low-income women ages 40 and older. To register or for more information, call Irene Lopez at **(619) 972-4185**. ♣

SEND IN YOUR ITEMS

This monthly calendar welcomes your contributions. Just send items by the 10th of each month preceding the issue date to: Denise G. Nelesen, editor, Aging & Independence Services, 9335 Hazard Way, San Diego, CA 92123-1222. Or fax to: (858) 495-5080. Or you can email to: denise.nelesen@sdcounty.ca.gov.

OCT. 9, FRIDAY

9:30 A.M. TO 12:30 P.M.

East County Intergenerational Games will be held at the La Mesa Middle School, 4200 Park, La Mesa. Older adults and youth are paired for skill challenges. Seniors needed. For more information, call (619) 464-0505.

OCT. 13, TUESDAY

9 A.M. TO 2 P.M.

“Creating Your Road Map: Navigating End of Life Decisions” will be held at the Balboa Park Club Ballroom (near the Puppet Theater) in Balboa Park. To RSVP; call (800) 827-4277.

OCT. 15, THURSDAY

9 TO 11 A.M.

Senior Health and Safety Fair will be held at All Souls Episcopal Church, 1475 Catalina Blvd., San Diego. There will be seasonal flu shots available (\$2 donation). For more: (858) 939-4790.

OCT. 15 & NOV. 5

11 A.M. TO 1 P.M.

Food for Thought at the Vista Library, 700 Eucalyptus Ave. in Vista has yoga and lunch (donation of \$3.50 for seniors and \$6 for others). To RSVP for lunch, call (760) 726-1340, ext. 1531.

OCT. 17, SATURDAY

10 A.M. TO NOON

San Diego chapter of the Hearing Loss Association of America meets the third Saturday of each month at LiveWell San Diego, 4425 Bannock Ave., San Diego 92117. For more: (858) 408-5047.

OCT. 20, TUESDAY

11 A.M. TO 1:30 P.M.

“Senior Expo: Protect Yourself & Your Wallet” will be held at San Marcos Community Center, 3 Civic Center Dr., San Marcos 92069. Learn physical and financial self-defense techniques. Reservations required; call (800) 510-2020, press “4” and leave your name, phone number and state Oct. 20.

OCT. 24, SATURDAY

8:30 A.M.

The Alzheimer’s Association Annual Memory Walk will held in Balboa Park, near Park Boulevard and President’s Way. Registration begins at 7 a.m. For more info, call (858) 492-4400.

OCT. 28, WEDNESDAY

10 A.M. TO 2 P.M.

Meet the Pharmacist Day and Senior Health Fair will be held at the Kimball Senior Center, 1221 D Ave., National City 91950. Meet one-to-one with a pharmacist to review your medications. RSVP required: (877) 926-8300.

OCT. 29, THURSDAY

4:30 P.M.

A free Family Support Group (for Spanish-speaking caregivers) will be held at Casa Pacifica, 1424 30th St., Suite C, San Diego 92154. To RSVP, call Ana at (619) 424-8181.

NOV. 6, FRIDAY

9:30 A.M.

Health fair, flu shots and luncheon at the College Avenue Older Adult Center, 4855 College Ave., San Diego 92115. For more: (619) 583-3300.

NOV. 7, SATURDAY

8 A.M. TO 2:30 P.M.

“50+ Works! Learn to Earn Learning Forum,” sponsored by members of the San Diego Mature Workforce Committee, will be held at the Educational Cultural Complex, 4343 Ocean View Blvd., San Diego 92113. To RSVP, call AARP at (877) 926-8300. For more, see www.learningforumsd.org.

NOV. 7, SATURDAY

3 P.M.

The American Association of University Women will present an Arts in Concert program at PianoSD, 1233 Camino del Rio South in Mission Valley. For more, information, call (619) 296-5376.

NOV. 13, FRIDAY

9 A.M. TO 5 P.M.

“Serving Older Women with Substance Use Problems, a free conference by the American Society on Aging in partnership with AIS, will be presented at the Balboa Park Club Ballroom, 2150 Pan American Road West, Balboa Park. To register or more information, see: www.asaging.org/asav2/aod/owc.cfm

ADVISORY COUNCIL

The AIS Advisory Council will meet at noon Monday, Oct. 12, at AIS, 9335 Hazard Way, San Diego 92123. Open to the public.