

AGING & independence

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One-to-One Attention for Special Residents

BY PAMELA B. SMITH

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Pilar Velasco's work desk is nestled against one wall inside the community room of TownCentre Manor, a HUD apartment complex in Chula Vista. She usually doesn't get much done at her desk; too many interruptions...and she welcomes those interruptions.

Pilar, 54, is a social worker with South Bay Community Services. Because of a special federal grant called ROSS (Resident Opportunities and Self-Sufficiency), she is stationed at this public housing apartment building. Her job is to improve the quality of life for the elderly and disabled residents of this complex.

"I love this job; it's nirvana," she says. Pilar previously worked with Child Services for San Diego County, but now loves helping older adults. She learned about the needs of this population while providing care for her father, who is now deceased. "You learn a lot by being a caregiver and that prepared me for this job." Many of the 69 residents don't have family nearby. Pilar is part caregiver, part advisor, part activities director and always a friend.

Every day at TownCentre Manor is different, even if it



PILAR VELASCO

starts with the same coffee get-together in the morning. That opportunity to chat with residents in a relaxed setting is valuable, she says. Frequently, she'll learn about special needs and concerns.

"Whatever they want to talk about; it's all good," she says. "Could be the news, activities planned for the day, whatever. They see that I'm there and available."

Since she started this position in July, the number of residents who seek her help has steadily grown. One resident was upset recently because the eye doctor gave her a prescription that wasn't covered by her medical plan and was more than she could afford. Pilar worked with a pharmacist and the doctor to find a covered medication that worked.

Another resident was confused about her bills and felt comfortable enough to let Pilar help her figure out how to pay down her balance.

A new resident, from the Middle East, does not speak English and desperately needs a housekeeper. Pilar is looking for a housekeeper who speaks Farsi.

Pilar is not only the local problem solver, but as a social worker, she's on the lookout for any decline in someone's ability to function either physically or mentally. And she does what she can to prevent decline, by increasing their interaction with others, improving their physical and mental fitness,

**SAVE THE DATE: JUNE 3
FOR AGING SUMMIT 2010**

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SALUTING A HERO AS WE SAY GOODBYE



JOHN GAFFANEY

On Nov. 5, we lost a special County colleague and friend when John Gaffaney, 56, was killed at Fort Hood, Texas. John was in the Navy from 1973 to 1978 and the California National Guard from 1984 to 1999, retiring with the rank of major. He re-enlisted as an Army reservist with the rank of captain three years ago on the condition that he would be deployed to the Middle East. He had been in Texas one day before he died.

In the civilian world, John was a registered nurse with special training in mental health counseling and had worked for the County for 22 years, the last 9 years with Adult Protective Services (APS).

Everything about John was ideally suited to helping soldiers who were suffering the stresses of war. He was enormously patient and calm. He was sensible and wise. He engendered respect by being respectful of everyone he met. And he faced very tough situations head on. APS workers often have complicated, emotional cases that can be chaotic

and scary. John was quick to assess situations and to act. He loved solving problems and, as a supervisor, guiding his staff members to solutions of their own.

How ironic that his quick action put him in harm's way. "He tried to rush the shooter and took at least five rounds," said Army Reserve Colonel Kathy Platoni, who was in the room where John was shot.

Those selfless instincts were a big part of John's character. He believed in doing the right thing, in serving others, and in protecting people who were less capable.

Even though John couldn't accomplish the mission he pursued so doggedly, his memory will live as an example of someone who sought purpose in his life and gave his all.

As intense as John could be about many things that mattered to him, he always had his wry smile ready. In a journal that AIS employees gave to John's family, many co-workers describe his "teasing sense of humor," his "positive attitude," and that "twinkle in his eye."

As a Harley-Davidson lover, he would have grinned at the salute from 100 members of the Patriot Guard on motorcycles who welcomed his casket when he returned to Miramar Naval Air Station.

Our deepest sympathies go to John's wife, Christine, and son, Matthew. We join them in adjusting to the loss of this hero who would shake his head at being called one. ▲

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and by having meaningful activities available.

Pilar finds out what people love to do and about their past. She has been able to incorporate those interests into the activities she provides. There's a cooking class, where residents are the cooking instructors and use one of their favorite recipes each session. Then, Pilar prints out the recipes for everyone.

One resident who loves to crochet leads a crafts class.

And then there's Lennis Picha, 68, Stan Monk, 65, and Angel Gomez, 76, otherwise known as "The Misfits." Thanks to the recent acquisition of a drum set, this trio of music lovers has just started a rock band, planning to perform during holiday events and at the regular potlucks. The group hopes to raise money for an accordion because another resident used to play that instrument. The Misfits also



'THE MISFITS': ANGEL, LEFT, STAN AND LENNIS

plan to audition singers among their peers.

No one has complained about the loud Friday afternoon practices. In fact, some residents have told Pilar that they welcome the music.

Lennis admits this is the first activity at TownCentre Manor that he has joined since moving there 24 years ago. He had previously been in bands and had enjoyed playing keyboard and other instruments. But he lost his vision four years ago

and "I never thought I'd play again," he says.

But now he's back, thanks to Pilar's encouragement and Angel's patience in putting pesos on certain keys until Lennis got familiar with the instrument through touch. The Misfits are getting ready to rock 'n roll for the holidays, and the residents of TownCentre Manor can't wait. ▲

HONORING



RETIRED AND SENIOR VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

VOLUNTEER OF THE MONTH

Jim Miller, nominated by Sue Carpenter, Volunteer Coordinator of the El Cajon Police Department, is our RSVP Volunteer of the Month. Jim has been an RSVP volunteer for more than 11 years, having served more than 6,030 hours.

Jim was a graduate of the first RSVP Academy at the El Cajon Police Department's Retired and Senior Volunteer Patrol. He has been involved with patrol assignments on a weekly basis and also assists Animal Services in the office answering phones and dealing with customers at the front desk. He is active in both the DUI and Drivers



JIM MILLER

License checkpoints. He is also involved in a new assignment where RSVP volunteers are doing radar readings for the Traffic Division. The statistics from this activity are used by traffic officers to determine where special enforcement is needed. Jim also works yearly events such as the Mother Goose Parade, Oktoberfest in La Mesa and the Lakeside Parade. "Over the years, it is hard to find anything that Jim has not done or been a part of for the RSVP organization. He even designed the first forms that were used by RSVP when they started to do their first patrol assignments," says Sue Carpenter. Jim has received distinguished awards with the El Cajon Police Department RSVP, including Volunteer of the Quarter awards in 1998, 2006 and 2007, and was selected as the Volunteer of the Year in 2008. Congratulations, Jim. Your dedication to volunteering is making a difference in the community.

SPOTLIGHT: FOSTER YOUTH SERVICES

Voices for Children advocates for foster youth through a network of trained volunteers. By developing a one-on-one relationship with their appointed children, these volunteers are able to understand the kids' concerns and fears, and in many instances they are the only stable and consistent adult presence in the life of that foster child. More than just a mentor, volunteers make recommendations to the court on the best course of action for the child. To learn more about the program, visit www.speakupnow.org. For details regarding volunteering with Voices for Children, 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:

March of Dimes needs office volunteers.

Reach Out and Read needs volunteer readers to promote literacy by reading to children and modeling book sharing techniques to parents in clinic waiting rooms.

UCSD Police Department needs patrol volunteers.

VA Healthcare System needs patient aides and van drivers.

City of Carlsbad needs adult literacy tutors, clerical assistants, computer aides and fingerprint technicians

San Diego County Library needs volunteers for adult literacy tutors and branch library jobs for various locations throughout San Diego.

North County Adult Day Health Care is seeking caregivers.

American Cancer Society needs volunteer drivers and cancer information volunteers.

Meals-on-Wheels Greater San Diego, Inc. needs volunteers to deliver meals to seniors in need of nutritional support. Deliveries take about two hours and volunteers may do it once or twice a month.

Neighborhood House Association needs housing assistants, nutritional aides and office support volunteers.

THANK YOU TO MOM HELPERS

We appreciate all the work that went into our recent Thanksgiving Meals on the Move home delivery for homebound seniors and want to recognize those groups that made it happen.

Thanks to Alpine Community Center, Carlsbad Senior Center, Cloudbreak Church, National City Nutrition Program, Neighborhood House Senior Center, Peninsula Shepherd Center, Pilipino-American Senior Citizens, Senior Community Centers, St. Jude's Nutrition Program, St. Vincent School, Vista Academy of Performing Arts.

Also, a big thanks to the food service personnel in the Sheriff's Department, especially Lawrence Mendez Sr. and Kurt Greiner. ♣

If your income is above \$85,000 (single) or \$170,000 (married couple), then your Medicare Part B premium may be higher than \$110.50 per month.

Note: If you delay your enrollment into Part B, you may have to pay a late enrollment penalty of 10 percent of the current Part B premium amount for each 12-month period you delayed enrollment. This is true, unless you had creditable coverage from an employer group health plan.

Contact Social Security at (800) 772-1213 if you have any questions about your Part B premium for 2010. You may also contact Elder Law & Advocacy's HICAP program at (800) 434-0222 for a free one-on-one Medicare counseling session to review your benefits and rights. ♣

HONOR FOR OMBUDSMAN VOLUNTEER



JUNE SINGER

June Singer, a volunteer with our Long-Term Care Ombudsman program for 13 years, has been selected as a Woman of Dedication for 2010 by the Salvation Army Women's Auxiliary. She will be one of 15 women honored at a luncheon on Feb. 24 at the Sheraton Harbor Island Hotel. The honorees are being recognized for improving the quality of life for others.

"June has committed countless hours assisting in resolving concerns for residents of long-term care facilities," says Chris O'Connell, Ombudsman program supervisor. "Many of these residents have little or no contact with the outside world and often feel a lack control over their own lives. With her 'can-do' attitude, June is a real champion for resident rights. She is a true advocate in every sense of the word."

The Long-Term Care Ombudsman program is having a 40-hour training for new volunteers in February. For more information, call (800) 640-4661. ♣

CAMPAIGN HONORS THE SPIRIT OF '45

As part of a year-long public awareness campaign commemorating the 65th anniversary of the end of World War II, there will be a special event from 1 to 4 p.m. on Monday, Jan. 18, on the USS Midway Museum, 910 N. Harbor Dr., San Diego 92101.

A highlight of the event will be special guest Edith Shain, the nurse who was photographed being kissed by a joyous sailor in Times Square on Aug. 14, 1945, that inspired the statue "Unconditional Surrender" that stands in front of the Midway. Edith will be joined by Hollywood legends and WWII veterans Hugh O'Brian, Tony Curtis and Ernest Borgnine, and other VIPs.

This free event is open to the public, but reservations are required. To RSVP or learn more, go to www.Spiritof45.org or call toll-free (877) 814-1945. ♣

MEDICARE PART B PREMIUMS FOR 2010

New Medicare Part B premium for 2010 will remain the same for most Medicare beneficiaries (\$96.40). Beneficiaries who currently have the Social Security Administration (SSA) withhold their Part B premium and have incomes of \$85,000 or less (or \$170,000 or less for joint filers) will not have an increase in their Part B premium for 2010.

For all others, the standard Medicare Part B monthly premium (minimum) will be \$110.50 in 2010. The Medicare Part B premium is increasing in 2010 because of possible increases in Part B costs. New Part B beneficiaries will pay \$110.50 (or if the beneficiary did not have the Part B premium withheld from their Social Security benefit in the previous year).

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:

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

Feb. 25 (Thursday) at Bayside Community Center, 2202 Comstock St. in the Linda Vista area of San Diego 92111.

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

All events 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 your desired date. ♣

DEC./JAN. ISSUE

This issue of *Aging & Independence* is for December and January. The next bulletin will be published in February. The 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 email to denise.nelesen@sdcounty.ca.gov.

DEC. 6, SUNDAY

7:30 P.M.

“Healthy Holiday Eating” will be presented by a registered dietitian in the Walker Room at the Schaetzel Center, Scripps Memorial Hospital La Jolla, 9888 Genesee Avenue, La Jolla 92037. For more information: www.scripps.org or call (800) 727-4777.

DEC. 8, TUESDAY

5 TO 7 P.M.

The Alzheimer’s Association is offering an orientation for family of persons newly diagnosed with Alzheimer’s Disease at Belmont Village, 3535 Manchester Ave., Cardiff 92007. Another orientation is set for 2 to 4 p.m. on Dec. 17 at the Alzheimer’s Association, 6632 Convoy Court, San Diego

92111. To register or for more information, call (858) 492-4400.

DEC. 10, THURSDAY

NOON TO 3:30 P.M.

Winter Wonderland Tango Lessons followed by live entertainment will be held at the Balboa Park Club in Balboa Park. Cost is \$3. For information, call Senior Citizen Services, (619) 236-6905.

DEC. 11, FRIDAY

4 TO 5 P.M.

“Laughercise Class” will be held the second Friday of every month at the Serra Mesa-Kearny Branch Public Library, 9005 Aero Dr., San Diego 92123. For more, call (619) 573-1396.

DEC. 12, SATURDAY

2:30 TO 3:30 P.M.

The Moonlight Serenade Quartet will be featured at an afternoon social at the County Library, El Cajon Branch, 201 E. Douglas Ave., El Cajon. For more information, call (619) 588-3703.

DEC. 17, THURSDAY

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.

JAN. 11, MONDAY

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

“Senior Expo: Protect Yourself & Your Wallet” will be held at the County Library, Lemon Grove Branch, 8073 Broadway, Lemon Grove 91945. Reservations required; call (800) 510-2020, press “4” and leave your name, phone number and state Jan. 11.

JAN. 16, SATURDAY

9 A.M. TO 3 P.M.

Successful Aging Expo, sponsored by the *San Diego Union-Tribune*, will be held at the Town & Country Convention Center in Mission Valley. No reservations needed for this free event.

JAN. 18, MONDAY

1 TO 3 P.M.

Better Breathers Clubs of San Diego meet the third Monday of every month at 2750 Fourth Ave., San Diego. For more information, call (619) 297-3901.

JAN. 30, SATURDAY

10 A.M. TO NOON

Presentation on arthritis at the Grossmont HealthCare District Conference Center, 9001 Wakarusa St., La Mesa. Registration: (800) 827-4277.

2010 ELDERCARE DIRECTORY AVAILABLE

The 2010 San Diego Eldercare Directory has been published and is available in local libraries, senior centers and other locations. This directory has tips for caregivers, as well as a listing of resources. The publication is produced by the *San Diego Union-Tribune*’s SignOnSanDiego.

For more information about getting a copy of the directory, call (800) 533-8830 and press “6.” ▲

ADVISORY COUNCIL

The AIS Advisory Council will meet at noon Monday, Dec. 14 and Jan. 11, at AIS, 9335 Hazard Way, San Diego 92123. Open to the public.

CA SENIOR LEGISLATURE

The San Diego CSL meets at 10 a.m. on the second Monday of the month at AIS.