

AGING & independence

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Fire Can't Destroy 'Grandparents' Spirit

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Just past midnight on Oct. 22, one of the San Pasqual Academy staff members knocked on the door of Howard and Jacqueline Nichols. A fire was coming and everyone was evacuating.

"We took a toothbrush and a change of clothes," said Jacqueline. "It was a good thing we left when we did. Shortly afterward, within the next hour, the fire came through the valley."

It was three days before they learned that their home, possessions and three vehicles had been destroyed. Also burned were two organs and a piano Jacqueline used to entertain the Academy students when they came to visit. And billiard balls Howard had used to play pool with the teens.

The Nicholuses weren't alone; other seniors living around the academy also lost their homes and belongings.

"Sorry about your loss, Grandma," one of the foster youths said to Jacqueline.

For nearly five years, the Nicholuses and the other surrogate "grandparents" that are part of the San Pasqual Academy Neighbors program have lived in homes around the campus and have been key supporters and mentors for the dozens of teens who live at the academy. They've tutored



HOWARD AND JACQUELINE NICHOLS WITH AN ACADEMY STUDENT.

them. Howard has provided bicycles and taught the teens how to maintain them. Jacqueline has given several cooking classes and makes alterations on prom dresses. They laugh with these students, but mostly they just love them.

"They see us as people who have unconditional high regard for them," said Elder Nichols. The title "Elder" is related to his ministry work.

So it was nice to hear words of comfort from

them during this time, Jacqueline said.

"This fire was a bad thing," Howard said, "but not the worst thing." The Nicholuses have lost two sons, one at age 7 and the other just two years ago at age 25.

"Through it all, our faith has kept us going and hopeful," he says. The pair try to share this positive attitude in what they do with young people and with others.

Their steady, positive influence was packed along with the toothbrushes and change of clothes when the Nicholuses and the other grandparents were moved with students and staff members first to a campsite, then later to Green Oak Ranch during the wildfires.

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SUN AND FUN FOR SENIORS AND YOUNGSTERS



INTERGENERATIONAL GAMES IN BOTH THE SOUTH BAY AND EAST COUNTY BROUGHT OLDER ADULTS AND ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CHILDREN TOGETHER TO ENJOY SKILL CHALLENGES AND EACH OTHER. THE SHYNESS WHEN THEY FIRST MEET IS SOON GONE AS THEY WORK AS A TEAM TO TACKLE BALL TOSS, SOCCER AND MORE.

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE)

“We were in campers at the ranch and we were able to continue to eat and spend time with them. There was a sense of familiarity, that we were all in it together,” Jacqueline said.

“We even went together on a yellow bus for the football game,” Howard added, “which they won!”

The students, staff and grandparents have returned to San Pasqual Academy. The grandparents all have new mobile homes, until their other homes are rebuilt. They are happy to be back in the valley, even with the blackened areas.

Gradually, the Nicholsons are filling their closets and shelves again. They’ve restarted their clock collection with a wallclock that chirps a different bird sound each hour. “We lost one of those in the fire and when I found one in the store, I thought this was a good sign,” Jacqueline said.

Although they lost their photos in the fire, the couple had just a month earlier given 50 of their most prized photos to Joaquin Anguera so he could create a Powerpoint for a presentation the couple was preparing for Dr. Anguera’s gerontology students. So even though the originals are gone, they have a disk of important photos that they can replicate.

Despite all the change and loss from the wildfire, the Nicholsons haven’t skipped a beat in terms of giving back to the community. Elder Nichols, 65, is on the AIS Advisory Board and has been active with the St. Stephens ministry. Jacqueline, 59, volunteers as a life coach for a foster teen in the Workforce Academy for Youth (WAY) program. And they remain “grandparents” for the many foster teens who live at the academy, and those who return and visit because that is home to them. ▲

SIGNING UP FOR A MEDICARE DRUG PLAN

The enrollment period for Medicare prescription drug plans runs through Dec. 31. The Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services has revised its Web site to help beneficiaries sort through plans. See www.medicare.gov. ▲

SENIOR HOMES ON SCHOOL GROUNDS



SENIORS ON BROADWAY, A MIXED-USE AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT THAT COULD BECOME A NATIONAL MODEL, HAD ITS GRAND OPENING IN NOVEMBER. THE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT IS LOCATED AT 825 BROADWAY, CHULA VISTA, ON THE CAMPUS OF THE CHULA VISTA LEARNING COMMUNITY CHARTER SCHOOL. SOME 41 AFFORDABLE HOUSING UNITS HAVE BEEN BUILT NEAR THE PLAYGROUND AND SENIORS WILL OCCUPY THOSE HOMES AND ACT AS MENTORS AND “GRANDPARENTS” FOR THE STUDENTS AT THE SCHOOL. FOR MORE INFORMATION, CALL (619) 426-4592.

HONORING



RETIRED AND SENIOR VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

VOLUNTEER OF THE MONTH

Mel and Stella Epperson, nominated by Georganne Woodward with the San Marcos Senior Center, are the RSVP Volunteers of the Month. Stella and Mel have been RSVP volunteers for five years. Stella has served more than



MEL AND STELLA EPPERSON

1,800 hours; Mel has more than 1,400 hours. Stella is a front counter assistant greeting all the seniors and answering the phones. She also served for two years as the president of the Senior Club, which is the center's nonprofit organization that raises funds for the senior center furnishings and activities; she is now the vice president. Mel drives a nutrition van, bringing isolated seniors into the center for lunch at least once a week. Together, Mel and Stella are in charge of the weekly bingo and are always the first to volunteer for all special events. Congratulations, Mel and Stella. Your volunteer work is truly making a difference in North County.

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:

Spring Valley County Library needs an East County Career Center resource facilitator to help with library and career resources.

San Miguel Consolidated Fire District in Spring Valley needs a fire prevention assistant, a receptionist, and help with data entry, program development, accounts receivable, and customer service.

San Diego Blood Bank is looking for a canteen host, a bloodmobile greeter, a health fair volunteer, a special events volunteer, and a Plasma Boy walk-around character.

San Diego Center for the Blind Thrift Store needs individuals to organize, receive and sell thrift store items.

Neighborhood House Association needs a clerical/office support person with some computer skills.

San Diego Hospice & Palliative Care needs clerical assistants and delivery couriers.

City of San Diego Senior Citizen Services needs a senior lounge assistant for its location in Balboa Park at Casa Del Prado. The job will include greeting patrons and setting up the lounge.

Camp Pendleton Volunteer Services handles all volunteer opportunities on Camp Pendleton.

Vector Control Program, County of San Diego Environmental Health, needs volunteers to do community presentations about West Nile Virus and other environmental issues.

RESPONSE TO THE OCTOBER FIRES

If you were involved in the evacuation response or support during the October fires in our local area, send your stories to RSVP. We are collecting these for the County and also to send to the Corporation for National and Community Service, our federal grant agency. We also welcome digital photos.

RSVP volunteers are integral in our communities year-round, including in emergencies, and we thank you for your dedication and commitment.

SAVE THE DATE: MAY 13, 2008

The 13th Annual RSVP Volunteer Recognition Brunch has been scheduled for the morning of May 13 at the Town & Country Convention Center in Mission Valley. Registered RSVP volunteers who recorded 50 hours or more in 2007 will receive an invitation to be our guests. Those invited may bring a guest for a nominal fee. Sponsor exhibitor tables will be available along with food, entertainment, awards, and opportunity drawings. Please mark this important date on your calendar.



THE THANKSGIVING MEALS ON THE MOVE (MOM) VISIT BY VOLUNTEERS LOUIE, PATRICIA AND BRIANNA AVALOS MADE ESTHER ACEVEDO SMILE. SHE LOVED HER HOT TURKEY DINNER, FLOWER AND THE PLACEMAT MADE BY A STUDENT AT BIRD ROCK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL. A BIG THANKS TO VOLUNTEERS AND THE FOLLOWING SITES: CATHOLIC CHARITIES LEMON GROVE AND ST. CHARLES SITES, BORREGO SPRINGS SENIOR CENTER, ALPINE SENIOR CENTER, CARLSBAD SENIOR CENTER, NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSE SENIOR CENTER, SAMAHAN SENIOR CENTER, ST. JUDE'S SENIOR CENTER, SENIOR COMMUNITY CENTERS AND THE SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT CENTRAL KITCHEN.

KINSHIP HELP FOR GRANDPARENTS

More than 300,000 grandparents in California report they are legally responsible for their grandchildren who are living with them. AIS and the YMCA Youth & Family Services offer free overnight camps and other aid to help San Diego County grandparents (age 55 and older) who are the primary caregiver of a child. For more info, contact Danielle Davis, YMCA's Kinship Support Services Program, (619) 543-9850, ext. 122; email: ddavis@ymca.org. ♣

INTEGRATION PROJECT UPDATE

The next meeting of the Long Term Care Integration Project will be from 10:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 9 at Point Loma Nazarene University, Mission Valley, 4007 Camino Del Rio South, San Diego, 92108.

There will be a presentation from the TEAM SAN DIEGO online training. The group will see if the new TEAM SAN DIEGO curriculum draft meets their needs as community-based providers. TEAM SAN DIEGO is a community education initiative to change the culture wherein a person's providers, caregivers, and the individual take joint responsibility as a "virtual team" for improved care outcomes.

All interested individuals are invited to attend, but the project is particularly interested in having care managers, social workers, discharge planners and home health aides, as well as physicians and their office staff. RSVP by Jan. 4; a light lunch will be served. Call Cindy Vogel at (858) 514-4652 or email her at: Cindy.Vogel@sdcounty.ca.gov.

No Planning Committee meeting in December. For project details, see www.sdltcip.org or call (858) 495-5428. ♣

INFLUENZA VACCINATIONS AVAILABLE

The Flu Shot Hotline, (877) FLU-0202, is available to give seniors and others information about where to receive a flu shot. Medicare (Part B) will pay for the flu shot as well as a pneumonia vaccine. The influenza season typically occurs between November and May. The flu vaccine is recommended for people age 60 and older. ♣

YOGA AND LUNCH AT VISTA LIBRARY

To attract new adult customers to the welcoming environment of the library and to promote mental and physical health in older adults, the San Diego County Library, in partnership with AIS and the City of Vista, offers a luncheon program called "Food for Thought."

The program, held from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. the first and third Thursdays of every month beginning Jan. 3, takes place at the Vista Branch Library, 700 Eucalyptus Ave. Sessions combine one hour of yoga with a noon gourmet boxed lunch.

No cost for the program; a donation of \$3 is suggested for the lunch for those 60 and older; \$5 for others. Reservations are required for lunch: (760) 726-1340 x 1531. ♣



WITH A SPECIAL LUNCH, AIS THANKED THE MANY VOLUNTEERS ON OUR ADVISORY PANELS, INCLUDING THESE FOLKS REPRESENTING THE IHSS ADVISORY COMMITTEE: (FROM LEFT) JACQUELINE JACKSON, VICTORIA AND BUD SAYLES, LIZ PETERSON, VIRGINIA WILSON, SHIRLEY OWENS AND MAQUETHA CHAMBERS.

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 you can email to denise.nelesen@sdcounty.ca.gov.

DEC. 6, THURSDAY

2 TO 4 P.M.

“Help! I’m a Caregiver” is a free class at the Grossmont Healthcare District Conference Center, 9001 Wakarusa St., La Mesa. Find out about resources, placement options, support groups. To register; call (800) 827-4277.

DEC. 13, THURSDAY

12:30 TO 3:30 P.M.

A women’s self-defense class will be offered at the College Avenue Senior

Center, 4855 College Ave., San Diego 92115. The free class, conducted by Kat Wagner of the Center for Community Solutions, will focus on awareness, intuition, assertiveness and physical techniques. For more information, call (619) 583-3300.

DEC. 14, FRIDAY

10 TO 11 A.M.

“Alzheimer’s and Other Dementias,” a talk on the diagnosis and progression of various dementias, will be held at the Fallbrook Healthcare Foundation Pittenger House, 135 S. Mission, Fallbrook. To register: (760) 723-7570.

JAN. 3 & 17, THURSDAYS

11 A.M. TO 1 P.M.

The Food for Thought program at the Vista Library, 700 Eucalyptus Ave., in Vista, will feature Gentle Yoga by Yoga Vista for both programs, which are followed by a gourmet lunch. A donation of \$3 for seniors and \$5 for others is suggested for lunch. Reservations are required for lunch, but not for the program. Call (760) 726-1340, ext. 1531.

JAN. 16, WEDNESDAY

9:30 TO 10:30 A.M.

“2008 Medicare and HMO Update” will be presented by Jean Soderberg of HICAP (Health Insurance Counseling and Advocacy Program) at the Sharp Cabrillo Medical Staff Conference Room, 3475 Kenyon St., San Diego. Registration required; call (800) 827-4277.

JAN. 21, MONDAY

9:30 TO 10:30 A.M.

“Maximizing Your Memory” will be presented by Alisa Cox with the Alzheimer’s Association at the Peninsula Community Service Center, 3740 Sports Arena Blvd., #2, San Diego. Registration required: (800) 827-4277.

FEB. 6, WEDNESDAY

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

Senior Housing Expo will be held at the La Mesa Community Center, 4975 Memorial Dr., La Mesa. The Expo is a free event for seniors interested in learning more about housing options, including assisted living, reverse mortgages, shared housing and more. There will be speakers and exhibits. For more information, call (619) 464-0505.

JOIN A COMMUNITY ACTION NETWORK

The San Diego Community Action Network (SanDi-CAN) meets from 10:30 a.m. to noon the last Tuesday of each month at the War Memorial Building, 3325 Zoo Dr., San Diego. For more information, call Brian Rollins at (858) 505-6305; www.localcommunities.org/lc/sandican.

The East County Action Network meets from 1 to 3 p.m. the third Wednesday of each month at Wells Park, 1153 E. Madison, El Cajon. Call Kathy Holmes-Hardy at (619) 401-3994, or see www.EastCountyActionNetwork.org.

The South County Action Network meets from 1 to 3 p.m. on the fourth Tuesday of each month at the San Diego County Library, Bonita-Sunnyside Branch, 4375 Bonita Rd., Bonita. Contact Anabel Kuykendall, (619) 476-6142, or see www.localcommunities.org/lc/socan.

The North County Action Network meets from 1 to 3 p.m. the fourth Tuesday of each month at 1370 San Marcos Blvd., Room 100, in San Marcos. Contact Karen Singer at (760) 754-5945; www.localcommunities.org/lc/atf. ▲

ADVISORY COUNCIL

The AIS Advisory Council will meet at noon Monday, Dec. 10 and Jan. 14, at Aging & Independence Services, 9335 Hazard Way, Kearny Mesa. Meetings are 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.