AGING & independence

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

OMBUDSMAN VOLUNTEERS: ESSENTIAL ALLIES FOR FACILITY RESIDENTS

By Jennifer Bransford-Koons
Director, Aging & Independence Services

Patrick Hanson, 84, has always had a soft spot for older people. While his career began as a high school educator, he later gravitated to serving older adults through his work for VITAS Hospice. He always felt at ease in healthcare environments. "Some people have fear of nursing homes. They don't even want to visit their own families. It wasn't scary to me," Patrick explains.

Ombudsman volunteer Patrick Hanson was recently recognized as Volunteer of the Year by the San Diego County Board of Supervisors.

As Patrick transitioned toward retirement, he knew he wanted to continue contributing and making a difference in people's lives. A colleague was serving as a Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program volunteer and shared more information with him about the program. Patrick decided to take the plunge and complete the training. The rest is history; he has been serving as an Ombudsman volunteer for sixteen years. This past spring he was recognized as a "Volunteer of the Year" by the San Diego County Board of Supervisors.

Long-Term Care Ombudsman program volunteers advocate to improve the quality of life for older adults and those with disabilities who are residents of nursing homes and residential care facilities. The program is mandated by the federal government with authority under the Older Americans Act. In San Diego County, both paid staff and certified volunteers identify, investigate, and resolve complaints made by, or on behalf of, residents. Volunteers engage in a variety of tasks, such as: visiting facilities to monitor and address issues, meeting with residents to offer support and assistance, advocating with residents in the resolution of complaints, providing education on resident rights, and investigating issues of poor care, neglect, or abuse. Volunteers are an integral part of the program and conduct much of the on-the-ground work.

In the life of an Ombudsman volunteer, each day is different. Sometimes a quick chat simply brightens a resident's day and helps them to feel that they have a lifeline to the outside world. Other times, Patrick uncovers needs and frustrations that he can help to address. Issues may include call-light response time, complaints about food, friction with a roommate, or even serious care issues. He has intervened on occasions when someone is set to be discharged inappropriately. Regardless of whether the issue is big or small, volunteers help residents feel heard and empowered.

It is not an easy role, however, and requires an openness to people from all walks of life. It also requires one to walk a fine line; volunteers are there on behalf of residents, but not simply to be a "friendly visitor." Also, volunteers can do their job most effectively if they have good rapport with staff, but this cannot

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interfere with the volunteer's obligation to residents. Patrick explains, "I'm friendly with staff, but I'm quick to say, 'name badge!' if a staff member's badge isn't visible." He adds, "I operate under the assumption that the administrator and staff of a facility want to do a good job. I'm not their enemy. We can work together to solve a problem. You learn and I'm still learning that there are always two sides to the story."

Sometimes complaints are not the result of the facility but rather confusions about the healthcare or insurance system, such as the Medi-Cal share of cost. For instance, clients may believe a facility is inappropriately taking their SSI check, but per Medi-Cal rules, clients are only allowed to retain $35 each month for personal incidentals with the rest of their check going towards the cost of their care.

On rare occasions, Patrick has encountered very serious concerns. One summer, a heat emergency had been declared. When Patrick visited the facility, he learned their central air conditioning was broken. While the facility had brought in hallway A/C units, these were not sufficient, and the temperature had risen to 93 degrees in the patient rooms. As excess heat can be particularly dangerous for older people and those with health conditions, Patrick immediately connected with the state Ombudsman office to intervene. Soon, additional portable A/C units were brought in, along with sunshades. Patients who were mobile were relocated to the dining room which was cooler than the patient rooms.

With over 1,300 facilities in San Diego County, the need for Ombudsman volunteers is great. Patrick encourages anyone who would like to support older and disabled adults in facilities to become a volunteer. He shares, "I happened to come out of a health care background. You don't have to have any of that…only a sense of compassion for the elderly and wanting to listen to people."

When he is not volunteering, Patrick enjoys gardening, cooking, and traveling with his partner, Jim—especially to Puerto Vallarta. The couple is also active in their church and involved in monthly food collection efforts for previously unhoused neighbors at a local apartment complex.

At 84, Patrick is happy to report that "life is good," and that is true, in part, because of his commitment to the community and helping others. He notes, "I think it is important that everybody does something…it gets you out of yourself."

Patrick and the entire Long-Term Care Ombudsman team invite residents who are passionate about older adults and interested in making a difference to learn more about the program.

In order to serve as an Ombudsman, prospective volunteers must attend a 36-hour certification training, make a one-year commitment of about five hours per week, have access to reliable transportation, and pass a physical and background check. New volunteers must also complete a minimum of 10 hours of mentoring before they can be certified. For more information about volunteering, email Kristin.Rigsbee@sdcounty.ca.gov or call (858) 505-6985.

Anyone—including residents, family members, friends, staff, or concerned community members—may voice a concern or file a complaint about a facility with the Long-Term Care Ombudsman program. To connect with the office, call **(800) 640-4661**.

In the COMMUNITY

COOL ZONES FOR HOT DAYS

Each summer, older adults are encouraged to beat the heat by visiting Cool Zones throughout the county. These air-conditioned sites welcome older adults and persons with disabilities free of charge. Some offer social opportunities or other resources. The effects of heat can be greater on older adults and their bodies may not provide the same warning signs as they did at younger ages. Visit www.CoolZones.org or call the Aging & Independence Call Center at **(800) 339-4661** to locate a Cool Zone near you.

CARE MANAGEMENT: MULTIPURPOSE 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 60+, 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/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.

PUBLIC AUTHORITY
In-Home Supportive Services
San Diego County

BECOME A PROFESSIONAL CAREGIVER

Help older adults and disabled individuals who receive In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) by pursuing a rewarding career as a caregiver! Earn extra income and enjoy a flexible schedule while helping people to live independently in their homes. No experience is necessary. The San Diego IHSS Public Authority will assist you with training. Apply by calling **(866) 351-7722** or visiting www.sdihsspa.com/regapp. For more information, visit www.sdihsspa.com.

JOIN THE AIS ADVISORY COUNCIL

The AIS Advisory Council is a volunteer resident group that serves as an advocacy body for older adults and persons with disabilities. The Council looks at ways to strengthen the aging support network and operations and serves as the voice of consumers and community experts to maximize the delivery of AIS services. If you are 60 years of age or older, or involved in the professional network of support for older adults, the Advisory Council can use your expertise. For more information, visit https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/AISAdvisoryCouncil or email any questions to **AIS.AdvisoryCouncil.HHSA@sdcounty.ca.gov**.

VOLUNTEERS OF THE QUARTER

The Coronado Senior Volunteer Patrol (SVP) proudly nominates **Lynda Balkam** as Volunteer of the Quarter. Lynda joined the Coronado SVP in September 2016 and quickly became a key member. She has contributed approximately 3,000 volunteer hours and has consistently taken on new responsibilities. Lynda's efforts were quickly recognized, leading to her appointment to the governing board of the SVP.

Lynda Balkam

Lynda is eager to volunteer in various areas where she can make a positive impact, including as an Academy Trainer, in Beach Patrol and Security Support, and with critical administrative tasks. Her management and active participation in assisting with the District Attorney's public complaint process helps free up officers to concentrate on other duties. Lynda routinely takes on a leadership role for special events. She is also an active member of the Emergency Call-Out team and can always be counted on to respond.

Consistently ranking among the top volunteers each year in hours worked, Lynda has received a Presidential Service Award annually to honor her achievements. Her outgoing personality and commitment to helping others set her apart. Thank you, Lynda, for everything you do!

Bob Odelson

Robert "Bob" Odelson, Lead Docent at the San Diego Air & Space Museum, has been named Volunteer of the Quarter. Bob has gone above and beyond by revamping the museum's docent scheduling system and training guidelines, significantly improving communication and coordination among all volunteers. His commitment extends beyond his regular duties: he assists with special events as a VIP Escort, supports long-term volunteers as a Library/Curatorial Assistant at the USS Midway Museum, and serves as an Airport Ambassador at San Diego International Airport. Bob is also a key member of the RSVP Advisory Council within Aging & Independence Services.

Known for his friendly demeanor and strong communication skills, Bob brings warmth and professionalism to every interaction. He has become a key contact for outside organizations seeking docent tours and regularly helps facilitate connections within museum departments. A natural extrovert, Bob particularly enjoys engaging with parents and children who are visiting the museum, ensuring that each visit is both educational and memorable. As Jerry Kidrick, Volunteer Coordinator, puts it, "Bob is my right-hand man at SDASM. In his role as Lead Docent, I rely heavily on his leadership skills, training support, and scheduling. I could not do my job without Bob." Congratulations, Bob, for your exceptional service to the community!

Robert "Bob" Mains has been named Volunteer of the Quarter by the Chula Vista Police Department (CVPD). Bob serves as the Senior Volunteer Program (SVP) Coordinator, contributing an impressive 20 to 30 hours per week for the past 11 years for a total of more than 7,500 hours. Bob's commitment to the SVP program is unmatched. He coordinates operations and patrols, leads meetings, and mentors fellow volunteers. His leadership style, grounded in a can-do attitude and leading by example, has inspired over 50 volunteers to excel in their roles and give their best. His efforts were recently honored when he was named CVPD SVP of the Year after heroically saving a life at the scene of a traffic collision by applying a tourniquet to the leg of a seriously injured motorcyclist.

Bob Mains

Bob has streamlined processes such as the Daily Field Activity Report, introduced GPS for patrol efficiency, and ensured that each SVP member is well-trained and prepared. He keeps everyone informed, motivated, and involved, fostering a culture where every volunteer feels valued. In addition to his SVP duties, Bob also volunteers with the Chula Vista Community Emergency Response Team (CERT), demonstrating his commitment to community safety. Thank you, Bob, for everything you do to keep Chula Vista safe!

FALL PREVENTION AWARENESS

FALL PREVENTION AWARENESS WEEK EVENTS

The most common cause of unintentional injury-related death among older adults in San Diego County is falls. Fortunately, many falls are preventable. Join Aging & Independence Services and the San Diego Fall Prevention Task Force for a variety of free, informative workshops for Fall Prevention Awareness Week this September. Advance registration is required. To register for one or more workshops, or for additional workshop details, please visit www.SanDiegoFallPrevention.org.

Saturday, September 20, Time TBD: ***Standing Stronger Fall Prevention Workshop.*** Offered by Scripps at Scripps Mercy Hospital, 4077 Fifth Ave., San Diego 92103.

Monday, September 22, 2-3 p.m.: ***Balance & Beyond: A Panel on Fall Prevention & Aging Well.*** Offered by Aging & Independence Services virtually on ZOOM.

Tuesday, September 23, 9 a.m.-12 p.m.: ***Fall Prevention & Balance Screening Event.*** Offered by Sharp/Grossmont Healthcare District at the Grossmont Healthcare District Library, 9001 Wakarusa St., La Mesa 91942.

Tuesday, September 23, Time TBD: ***Standing Stronger Fall Prevention Workshop.*** Offered by Scripps at Scripps Memorial Hospital La Jolla, 9888 Genesee Ave., La Jolla 92037.

Wednesday, September 24, 1:30-3:30 p.m.: ***Wellness Wednesdays-Fall Prevention.*** Fallbrook Community Health & Wellness Center, 1636 East Mission Rd., Fallbrook 92028.

Friday, September 26, Time TBD: ***Standing Stronger Fall Prevention Workshop.*** Offered by Scripps at Scripps Encinitas Rehabilitation Center, 1092 North El Camino Real, Encinitas 92024.

FALL PREVENTION TIPS

One in four older adults (65+) fall each year. To reduce your risk of falling:

- **Stay active** to improve your strength, flexibility, and balance. Walking, dancing, Tai Chi, and exercise classes are all good ways to improve your health.
- **Talk with your doctor** about health issues such as osteoporosis, your Vitamin D level, medications, difficulty with hearing or vision, or if you feel faint, off-balance, or dizzy. Your doctor or pharmacist can also look at your medications to check for side effects that can affect your coordination.
- **Have your vision checked** at least one time each year by a professional.
- **Make your home safer:** remove things you could trip or slip on, maintain good lighting and nightlights, and install strong grab bars and handrails. Our eyes often need more light as we age.

For more tips, visit: www.SanDiegoFallPrevention.org.

FALL PREVENTION RESOURCE GUIDES

For more fall prevention tips, check out the **regional fall prevention guides** created by the San Diego Fall Prevention Task Force. The guides connect older adults to organizations, programs, and information that can help reduce fall risk. To access the guides, visit www.SanDiegoFallPrevention.org and scroll down to the "Task Force Materials" section.

MENTAL HEALTH PREVENTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION FOR OLDER ADULTS

The Union of Pan Asian Communities (UPAC) Positive Solutions Program (PSP) provides outreach, along with mental health prevention and early intervention, to home-bound individuals (60+) who are at risk of becoming depressed or are showing signs of minor depression. Trained and compassionate staff members help clients recognize symptoms, identify possible causes of depression, and teach proven ways to cope. This is achieved through short-term psychoeducation, the evidence-based PEARLS (Program to Encourage Active and Rewarding Lives for Seniors) model, and other brief interventions. The goal is to reduce feelings of isolation and increase an individual's social support system and overall self-sufficiency. No healthcare insurance is required as the program is FREE. Therapists provide virtual (Zoom) or over-the-phone short-term counseling sessions in English, Spanish, or Vietnamese.

Explore the PSP website for more information: https://www.upacsd.org/services/adult-and-older-adult-mental-health-programs/positive-solutions/. If you are interested in receiving more information completing a referral, or scheduling a presentation on the program, please call: **(619) 481-2652**.

SUPPORT FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH DEMENTIA AND CAREGIVERS

If you or a loved one are living with Alzheimer's or dementia, local support is available. The following organizations provide education, training, support groups, connection to clinical research opportunities, and more:

Alzheimer's San Diego: Visit www.alzsd.org or call **(858) 492-4400**.

Alzheimer's Association San Diego/Imperial Chapter: www.alz.org/sandiego or call the 24/7 helpline at **(800) 272-3900**.

UC San Diego Shiley-Marcos Alzheimer's Disease Research Center: Visit www.adrc.ucsd.edu or call **(858) 822-4800**.

Additional caregiver support, including respite care, is available to caregivers of people living with a variety of conditions through **Southern Caregiver Resource Center**. Visit www.caregivercenter.org or call **(858) 268-4432**.

CHALLENGE CENTER CLASSES FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES, OLDER ADULTS

The Challenge Center (5540 Lake Park Way, La Mesa 91942) offers a variety of classes and programs to assist older adults and people of all ages with disabilities to transform their quality of life and increase wellness and independence. Some of the Challenge Center's class options include Balance & Conditioning, Aquatics, and the 5-week Age-ility 360º total fall management class.

The Age-ility class helps older adults to improve agility, power, and balance to reduce their risk of falls and serious injury. A licensed Physical Therapist guides and teaches participants in fall prevention, fall recovery, and falling techniques to reduce the risk of injury should a fall occur. In this class, you will improve power, agility, and balance strategies for fall prevention/management and to confidently expand your life. With the use of "crash mats," you are able to safely, comfortably, and progressively practice how to fall without injury and how to rise from the floor. By the end of the course, you will see your progress with evidence-based testing of agility and fall risk.

Call the Challenge Center at **(619) 667-8644** for more details, including cost and how to reserve your spot, or visit https://challengecenter.org.

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

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

AUGUST 12, TUESDAY
4 - 5:30 PM

Feeding San Diego will host the ***Lakeside Summer Pantry*** at the Lakeside Library, 12428 Woodside Ave., Lakeside 92040. The pantry allows community members to pick up fresh, nutritious produce and pantry staples. For more information, contact Kelly at **619-443-1811** or **lakesidelibrary@sdcounty.ca.gov**.

AUGUST 15, FRIDAY
10 AM

San Diego Oasis will host a class, ***Supreme Court Decisions You Should Know: Individual Liberties***, at the Grossmont Lifelong Learning Center, 5500 Grossmont Center Dr., Suite 269, La Mesa 91942. Explore the background, rulings, and ongoing significance of U.S. Supreme Court decisions about government power and individual liberties. Cost: $15 (Course #1669). To register, visit www.sandiegooasis.org or call **619-881-6262**.

AUGUST 19, TUESDAY
1 - 2 PM

Chair Yoga is offered on Tuesdays at the El Cajon Library, 201 E. Douglas, El Cajon 92020. Join for a modified yoga class that boosts strength, flexibility and well being. For directions, call **619-588-3718**.

AUGUST 21, THURSDAY
2 - 4 PM

An ***iPhone for Seniors*** class will be hosted at the Encinitas Library, 540 Cornish Dr., Encinitas 92024. Join an interactive workshop designed for older adults to learn tips and tricks to use an iPhone. Time is reserved at the end for individual Q&A. Cost: Free. Space is limited; advanced registration is encouraged. To register, please go to the library or call **760-753-7376**.

AUGUST 25, MONDAY
1 - 2:30 PM

Alzheimer's San Diego presents ***Living with Memory Loss*** at 17170 Bernardo Center Dr., San Diego 92128. Tailored toward individuals with early stage memory loss and their care partners, learn strategies to adapt to daily challenges, enhancing health and well being, and future planning. Take your next step for legal, safety, and communications changes. Cost: Free. For more information, go to www.sandiegooasis.org or call **858-240-2880**.

SEPTEMBER 6, SATURDAY
2:30 - 3:30 PM

A class in ***Mediterranean Climate Plants*** will be presented at the Mission Hills Library, 215 W. Washington St., San Diego 92103. Learn from San Diego Master Gardener Betty Corvey how to successfully grow these unique and drought tolerant plants in San Diego's climate. Cost: Free. For more information, contact Stephen Wheeler at **sjwheeler@sandiego.gov** or call **619-692-4910**.

SEPTEMBER 10, WEDNESDAY
11 AM - 12 PM

Oasis San Diego presents ***Metabolic Reset: Tips to Turbocharge Your Body's Engine*** at the Rancho Penasquitos Library, 13330 Salmon River Rd., San Diego 92129. Learn to supercharge your metabolism with SMART eating and adopting positive lifestyle changes to improve your metabolic health. Hosted by Sonia Cervantes, Certified Health Coach, nutritionist and therapeutic chef. Cost: Free. For more information, contact Adrienne Peterson at **akpeterson@sandiego.gov** or **858-538-5159**.

SEPTEMBER 15, MONDAY
6 - 7:30 PM

Pressed Flower Luminaries is the month's Craft for Grown Ups at the North Park Library, 3795 31st St, San Diego 92104. Come and learn step by step how to make these stunning flower lanterns. All craft supplies provided. Registration is encouraged and begins August 11. For more information, including how to register, contact Zar Shain at **zshain@sandiego.gov** or call **619-533-3972**.

SEPTEMBER 23, TUESDAY
12 - 3 PM

Sharp Hospital will present a ***Fall Prevention & Balance Screening Event*** at Grossmont Healthcare District Conference Center, 9001 Wakarusa St., La Mesa 91942. Come learn about the hospital's Trauma and Rehabilitation Services, participate in screenings and a wellness assessments, and visit resource tables. To register, search "Seniors" at www.sharp.com/search/events.

SEND IN YOUR ITEMS

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

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