

AGING & independence

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

A Little Friendship Goes a Long Way

By Kim Gallo
Director, Aging and Adult Services
Aging & Independence Services

Corazon Alejandro, 69, thrived as an active member of her community while living in the Philippines. The eldest of seven children, she enjoyed a life with rich relationships and a rewarding career as a medical technician. Life became even more satisfying when she transitioned to full-time volunteer work in the Catholic Church. She took on the role of lector/commentator to do readings during church services and also became involved in the church's charitable work, visiting those who were elderly, sick, living with disabilities, or incarcerated. Not only was it rewarding work, but there were plentiful opportunities to connect with others. She laughs, "My best friends were nuns!"

There were, of course, still times when she faced difficult circumstances. Her marriage ended, leaving her to raise three young sons. Later on, her youngest son died unexpectedly at the age of 31 due to a heart problem. In 2008, she was diagnosed with cervical cancer and had to undergo treatment. With the support of her social network, however, she was able to navigate and bounce back from these challenges.

Life changed dramatically for Corazon when, at the age of 63, she moved to San Diego. Most of her immediate family had emigrated to the United States, including her mother, sister, brother, and two remaining sons, both



Corazon Alejandro

of whom had joined the U.S. military. Yet, it was a difficult move. She had to leave behind two granddaughters with whom she was very close, as well as her extended social network.

After the move, Corazon did not feel like herself anymore. She notes, "I didn't know that living here in America would be so lonely. I was crying every day." Corazon was showing signs of depression. Her struggles persisted for years.

Contrary to common stereotypes, depression and loneliness are not normal and inevitable parts of aging.

In fact, many older adults enjoy greater life satisfaction than they did during middle age. For those who may be struggling with depression or loneliness, it is important to reach out and seek help.

Corazon's son tried his best to make his mother happy. He would take her out shopping every Saturday and would treat her to new dresses and shoes. While she enjoyed Saturdays out with her son and looked forward to them, the clothes and shoes couldn't fill the emptiness during the week. Corazon felt alone. Her sense of isolation was compounded by a lack of affordable and accessible transportation. "In the Philippines," she explains, "I could go out any place that I wanted in a taxi, jeep, or bus."

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With time and support from her family, Corazon started making some new connections. She began attending a new church and also spent time at a local adult day care facility. While she enjoyed getting out of the house, she didn't really connect deeply with other attendees. Then she learned about EMASS.

EMASS (Elder Multicultural Access and Support Services) provides mental health prevention and intervention programming to older adults 60+ who are from underserved backgrounds, including those who are Filipino, Latino, Somali, or Iraqi/Chaldean. There are two program sites: one in Escondido which serves Latino and Filipino older adults and another in El Cajon which primarily serves Iraqi/Chaldean and Somali older adults. The centers offer programming 1-2 days per week. Activities are based around five key areas that, according to brain health expert Dr. Paul Nussbaum, help to support brain health as well as mental health. These include physical activity, socialization, brain engagement, spirituality, and education.

Corazon began attending EMASS every Friday. At first, she was apprehensive: "I was cautious and timid, but also curious. By the third Friday, it was like we had all known each other for so many years!"

At EMASS, Corazon and fellow attendees receive information to help manage their health and mental health, from fall prevention seminars to strategies that address depression. They also learn about nutrition and have the opportunity to get moving by doing Tai Chi or fitness activities. Perhaps most importantly, they form strong friendships and no longer have to feel alone.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES INFORMATION

If you or someone you care about is struggling with a mental health concern, such as depression, or a substance use condition, it is important to reach out for help. San Diego County has programs specifically for older adults and a hotline for mental health information, as well as crisis intervention, available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Calls are free and answered by trained professionals. To reach the Access & Crisis Line, call **(888) 724-7240**. You can also call **2-1-1** for information on mental health resources, emergency food, shelter, healthcare, and additional resources.

VITAL AGING 2019

Vital Aging 2019: Live Well to Age Well will be held on **Wednesday, June 19** at two locations: the San Diego Convention Center downtown and in North County at the California Center for the Arts, Escondido.

The conference brings older adults together for an enjoyable day of education and inspiration on topics pertaining to healthy aging. Registration details and information on the keynote speaker will be available in early May at www.AISEvents.org.

Even though she only attends EMASS once a week, Corazon no longer feels lonely "I have close friends. I can say anything. I can call them on the phone."

Through EMASS, Corazon also became involved with BUKAS, an organization for Filipinos who reside in North County. The group celebrates Filipino cultural heritage with singing and folk dancing and promotes social connectedness and community participation. Corazon is excited to participate in an upcoming line dancing showcase on May 25 at the Park Avenue Senior Center in Escondido.

It has taken some time and support, but Corazon now is living a happy life in the United States. She credits EMASS with helping to lift her out of the darkness. "EMASS changed my life. It makes me get out of my shell. My friends from there are like a family." She adds, "Now you can see from my face that I'm smiling."

Corazon encourages others to reach out, get help if they are feeling down, and build a network of friends. She urges, "Look or find people that will help you. Don't be afraid to tell them your needs, your situation in life. They will help you. Go out, be happy, life is short!"

The EMASS program is funded by the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency, Behavioral Health Services. The Union of Pan Asian Communities (UPAC) serves as the fiscal administrator. EMASS welcomes new participants to its programs, as well as volunteers from the community to assist with their nutrition program, office work, and other tasks. For more information, call **(760) 233-1984** or visit www.upacsd.com.

In the COMMUNITY

SENIOR CARE COACHING CLINICS

Do you have questions on how to go about finding quality senior care or resources? Attend a free, “pop-up” senior care coaching clinic staffed by a gerontologist from Consumer Advocates for RCFE Reform. To make an appointment, call **(619) 540-1648**. Clinic locations and dates:

Balboa Park Club, 2150 Pan American Rd. W, San Diego 92101. Thurs., May 23 and June 27, 12:30-2:30 p.m.

Balboa Park Senior Lounge, 1650 El Prado, San Diego 92101. Fri., May 10 and June 14, 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

La Jolla Community Center, 6811 La Jolla Blvd., La Jolla 92037. Mon., June 3, 10 a.m.-1 p.m.

San Ysidro Senior Center, 136 Park Ave., San Ysidro 92173. Thurs., June 5, 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

LEGACY CORPS VOLUNTEERS SOUGHT

Legacy Corps volunteers provide a break for caregivers and companionship for elderly or disabled loved ones in veteran and military families. Volunteers become members of the national AmeriCorps Program, and receive a monthly stipend. At the completion of the 450-hour, 12-month commitment, members earn a \$1,612 educational award, which may be gifted to children or grandchildren. There will be an orientation on **Wednesday, June 26 from 9 a.m.-2 p.m.** at 5560 Overland Ave., San Diego 92123. For details, call **(858) 505-6300** or email Dalija.Dragisic@sdcountry.ca.gov.

LIBRARIES CELEBRATE OLDER AMERICANS

In celebration of Older Americans month, the San Diego County Library and San Diego Public Library are offering special programming, plus spotlighting the variety of programs regularly available. Examples include:

May 14 at 1:30 p.m.: Medicare 101 Educational Seminar. Vista Branch. For details, call: **(760) 643-5100**.

May 14 at 6 p.m.: Vegan Adventures. Learn new recipes, see a cooking demonstration, and sample. Allied Gardens Branch. For details, call: **(619) 533-3970**.

May 16 at 2 p.m.: Leonardo da Vinci. Learn about the many facets of Leonardo. College-Rolando Branch. For details, call **(619) 533-3902**.

May 22 at 6 p.m.: Bingo Night. Play and win prizes! Imperial Beach Branch. For details, call: **(619) 424-6981**.

May 23 at 10:45 a.m.: 90-year-old author H. Bud Hauslein will discuss his book, “Playing the Odds: Live Your Life Expectancy and Beyond.” Rancho Santa Fe Branch. For details, call: **(858) 694-5110**.

May 23 at 6 p.m.: Jazz at the Library: The Bassett Brothers in Concert. Alpine Branch. For details, call: **(619) 445-4221**.

For information on County Library programming, visit: www.sdcl.org. For programming at the San Diego Public Library branches, visit: www.sandiego.gov/public-library.

CAREGIVER WORKSHOPS

Saturday, May 11 from 8:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.-Caregiver Conference: The Pathway to Mindful Caregiving will be held at the Chinese Community Church, 4998 Via Valarta, San Diego 92124. Topics include multicultural caregiving, stress management, effective communication, meditation, and more. Free refreshments, opportunity drawings, and community resource tables. To RSVP, visit www.sharp.com/classes or call **(800) 827-4277**.

Wednesday, May 15 from 12-1:30 p.m.-Memory Loss 101 will be held at Glenner Town Square, 2765 Main St., Chula Vista 91911. A comprehensive overview for anyone who wants to know more about memory loss, Alzheimer’s disease, and other dementias. Learn about risk factors, common symptoms, and resources for help. Register at www.alzsd.org or call **(858) 492-4400**.

Wednesday, May 29 from 10-11 a.m.-Understanding and Responding to Dementia-Related Behavior will be held at the Alzheimer’s Association, 5075 Shoreham Place, Ste., 240, San Diego 92122. Learn how to decode behavioral messages and identify common behavior triggers. Discover strategies to intervene with common behavioral challenges of Alzheimer’s disease. Register at <https://bit.ly/2Gdmr12> or call **(800) 272-3900**.

SENIOR VOLUNTEERS

VOLUNTEER OF THE MONTH

Jim Woolway is the RSVP/SVA Volunteer of the Month for May 2019. He joined the Coronado Police Department's Senior Volunteer Patrol (SVP) in 2015 and has made a significant impact since that time. Due to this, John Meyers, the Volunteer Coordinator for Coronado SVP, nominated Jim for this honor.



Jim Woolway

Before becoming a volunteer at the Coronado Police Department, Jim was a member of the US Navy for thirty-eight years. That training and experience served Jim well and he continues to make use of the skills honed in the Navy in his volunteer role.

Jim performs a variety of volunteer tasks in addition to conducting regular patrols. He ensures that the SVP vehicles are stocked and maintained, and that critical equipment (such as the defibrillator machine) is operating correctly. Jim also oversees the volunteer work schedules, and prepares, updates, and distributes these schedules weekly. Jim provides further administrative support by assisting the SVP Coordinator with procedure and document preparation and review. In addition, he serves as the Assistant Coordinator for many special events in Coronado and beyond.

Jim shares his expertise with others in a variety of ways, such as by serving on the Board of the Coronado SVP. Volunteer Coordinator John Meyers notes that Jim "provides a quiet, but thoughtful voice in discussions." Jim is also an academy instructor, as well as a field trainer for the new SVP recruits.

A reliable volunteer, Jim is there whenever he is needed, whether for a special event or to assist at the station. He is extremely dedicated and continues to be one of the volunteers who contributes the highest number of volunteer hours to the station each year.

In addition to being a huge asset to the Coronado Police Department, Jim also volunteers at his church, where he serves as the Chairman of the Church Council. Family plays an important role in his life and he is very involved in helping with the care of his three young granddaughters.

Thank you, Jim, for all you do for the Coronado Senior Volunteer Patrol and your community!

RSVP/SVA VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION

The Senior Volunteer office staff would like to send a big thank you to all volunteers who are currently serving hours, or who have served hours in the past. We would like to remind you that we will host three regional recognition events in May to honor those of you who served hours in 2018. Your dedication to volunteerism is very much appreciated and we hope to be able to thank you in person at one of these events.

If you are currently enrolled in the RSVP/SVA volunteer program, or were enrolled and served hours in 2018, you should have already received your invitation in the mail. If you haven't yet responded, or are enrolled in our program and haven't received an invitation, please call Mary Anne Briggs at **(858) 495-5039** or email MaryAnne.Briggs@sdcounty.ca.gov to let her know if you will attend. We look forward to seeing you there!



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**.



PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

101 MOBILITY OF SAN DIEGO: HELPING PEOPLE ENJOY LIFE

Nearly 40 percent of people age 65 and older have at least one disability, according to a U.S. Census Bureau report. Of those 15.7 million people, two-thirds of them say they have difficulty with walking or climbing. Changes in balance and mobility in older adults can hinder their ability to live safely, independently, and comfortably at home. Families and loved ones often worry, fearing falls and injuries. 101 Mobility of San Diego offers peace of mind for loved ones, and practical solutions for older adults, to enable them to continue to flourish in their homes.



As a licensed general contractor, 101 Mobility of San Diego plays an important role in the community by offering numerous home safety options to older adults and their loved ones across San Diego County. Stair lifts, ramps, pool lifts, wheelchair lifts, patient lifts, safety bars, and handrails are among the full line of mobility and accessibility solutions

that 101 Mobility provides to improve safety and assist people in enjoying an independent lifestyle.

At the core of 101 Mobility are people who are passionate about providing the optimal solutions and service for their customers. With a caring, personalized approach, 101 Mobility's Certified Aging in Place Specialist provides an in-home consultation to identify primary areas of concern and offer solutions to improve safety in the home, bringing an educated eye to sometimes hidden areas of risk.

For temporary needs, 101 Mobility offers a rental program for ramps, stairlifts, and portable patient lifts, and responds quickly to urgent needs. When equipment is installed in a home, whether a temporary or long-term solution, professional Mobility Specialists provide comprehensive training, so that those in need

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.



are confident and comfortable with the operation and care of their equipment. 101 Mobility also offers used equipment to help more people in our community access the supports they need to continue to live safely and independently at home.

101 Mobility of San Diego serves with the National Aging in Place Council to host community education classes to keep older adults healthy, safe, and thriving. Successful Aging in Place workshops help participants to plan in essential areas: housing, health and wellness, transportation, finance, and community involvement, equipping people in our community to age well.



To learn more about 101 Mobility of San Diego, including information about available solutions, or to schedule an in-home consultation, visit www.sandiego.101mobility.com or call (858) 800-2820. CSLB#1009815

SOUTH COUNTY MENTAL HEALTH FAIR

One in five adults in San Diego County faces behavioral health challenges, and many more friends and family members are affected by them. Recovery is possible and help is available. Sharp Chula Vista Medical Center and more than 50 community resource partners will gather for a day of learning intended to inspire and empower on **Saturday, May 11 from 8:30 a.m.-2 p.m.** at Chula Vista High School, 820 4th Ave., Chula Vista 91911. To learn more, visit www.sharp.com/changingminds.

NEW TAI CHI CLASSES!

Improve your balance and mobility with Tai Chi! Three new free classes are now offered:

South Chula Vista Library: 389 Orange Avenue, Chula Vista 91911. Tuesdays and Thursdays from 12-1 p.m.

Spring Valley Community Center: 8735 Jamacha Blvd., Spring Valley, CA 91977. Tuesdays and Thursdays from 11 a.m.-12 p.m. These classes are open to all, and include a focus on fall prevention and reducing arthritis symptoms.

Kalos Apartments: 3795 Florida St., San Diego 92104. **Starting May 14.** Tuesday and Thursdays from 3-4 p.m. These classes are open to all, and include a focus on fall prevention and reducing arthritis symptoms.

Classes are sponsored by Aging & Independence Services. For more information, visit www.HealthierLivingSD.org, or call **(858) 495-5500** to leave a message.

HEALTHIER LIVING CLASSES

These free, interactive, and goal-oriented workshops help people manage their health conditions.

Healthier Living with Chronic Conditions: May 16-June 20 (Thursdays), 2-4:30 p.m. at Silvercrest San Diego, 727 E St., San Diego 92101.

Classes are sponsored by Aging & Independence Services. For more information, visit www.HealthierLivingSD.org, or call **(858) 495-5500** to leave a message.

MINDFULNESS CLASSES

Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) is a systematic, participant-centered educational program that uses training in mindfulness meditation to guide people in the process of developing the skills of better self-care.

MBSR classes will be held on Tuesdays from 12:30-3 p.m., beginning May 21 and concluding July 9, at the College Avenue Center, 6299 Capri Dr., San Diego 92120. There is a required orientation/pre-screening meeting on **Tuesday, May 14, at 12:30 p.m.**

Taught by Dr. Ron Lech, a retired cardiologist and qualified MBSR instructor, the course will help you cultivate skills to manage the stress in your life associated with chronic illness, pain, and challenges of aging. You will also learn to live more fully in the present moment and be better able to fully engage in life.

For more information, call the College Avenue Center at **(858) 637-3270** or email the instructor at lechronald@gmail.com.

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

MAY 14, TUESDAY
1-2:30 P.M.

A peer-led *Recovery International self-help meeting* for those struggling with stress, tension, anxiety, panic, anger or mood disorders, will be held at the Rancho Peñasquitos Library, 13330 Salmon River Rd., San Diego 92129. Held most Tuesdays. For details, contact (858) 538-8159.

MAY 16, THURSDAY
2:30 P.M.

A *Conversation about Aging* with Journalist John Leland will be held at San Diego Oasis, 5500 Grossmont Center Dr., Ste. 269, La Mesa 91942. Hear insights from the author of "Happiness is a Choice You Make: Lessons from a Year Among the Oldest Old." Free, but registration is required. Register for class #95 at www.SanDiegoOasis.org or call (619) 881-6262.

MAY 17, FRIDAY
10 A.M.-1 P.M.

The *East County Senior Health & Information Fair* will be held at the La Mesa Community Center, 4975 Memorial Dr., La Mesa 91942. Receive health and community resource information and free health screenings, including blood pressure, balance, and hearing checks. There will also be opportunity drawings and giveaways. No RSVP required. For details, call (619) 740-4214.

MAY 18, SATURDAY
10 A.M.-1 P.M.

A *Senior Resource Fair* will be held at the San Diego LGBT Center, 3909 Centre St., San Diego 92103. This year's theme is "Staying Connected." For details, contact LaRue Fields at (619) 692-2077 ext. 205 or email lfields@thecentersd.org.

MAY 18, SATURDAY
11 A.M.

A *How-To Festival* will be held at the Serra Mesa-Kearny Mesa Library, 9005 Aero Dr., San Diego 92123. Join community experts from all walks of life for some experiential, peer-to-peer learning. Past presenters taught their community how to fold Origami, paint rocks, do soccer tricks, play piano, and more. Find out what presenters will teach this year! For more information, call (858) 573-1396.

MAY 22, WEDNESDAY
10 A.M.-12 P.M.

A presentation, *Is Alzheimer's in My Genes?*, will be held at the Carlsbad City Library, 1775 Dove Lane, Carlsbad 92011. DNA tests can now identify some genetic risk factors for Alzheimer's. Join Alzheimer's San Diego for a panel discussion with local neurology and genetics experts, who will answer questions and separate fact from fiction. Register at www.alzsd.org or by calling (858) 492-4400.

MAY 24, FRIDAY
1-2:30 P.M.

A presentation, *Why Advance Health Care Planning is Important for Everyone*, will be held at the Skyline Hills Library, 7900 Paradise Valley Rd., San Diego 92139. Learn about making and documenting choices for medical care if you lose the ability to express your own wishes. For more information, call (619) 527-3485.

MAY 29, WEDNESDAY
9 A.M.-12 P.M.

The *St. Paul's Senior and Family Resource Fair* will be held at St. Paul's Plaza, 1420 E. Palomar St., Chula Vista 91913. There will be a presentation on mental and physical wellness as we age, over 40 vendors, and interactive exhibits. For details or to RSVP, call Kelly Lapadula at (619) 239-6900 or email klapadula@stpaulseniors.org.

MAY 29, WEDNESDAY
1:30-3 P.M.

Attend a presentation on the *USS Midway Story* at the Lawrence Family Jewish Community Center (JCC), 4126 Executive Dr., La Jolla 92037. Learn how the USS Midway evolved from serving as an aircraft carrier to becoming a museum. Optional visit to the museum on June 12. Lecture only: \$6. Lecture and museum visit: \$38 (includes transportation and admission for self-guided tour). RSVP by May 22 to Melanie Rubin: (858) 362-1141.

ADVISORY COUNCIL

The AIS Advisory Council will meet at noon on Monday, May 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.



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Aging & Independence™ is published monthly by the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency, Aging & Independence Services. The purpose is to inform and recognize older adults, volunteers, and community partners.

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