

AGING & independence

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

Help and Hope for Those with Hoarding Disorder

By **Alfredo Aguirre**
Director, HHS Behavioral Health Services

Imagine having such a hard time letting go of possessions that your home becomes filled to the brim with items you are unable to sort through or give away. Perhaps you feel compelled to keep bringing new items in, even though all of your storage space is exhausted. Entire rooms become unusable. You might not be able to lie down on your bed or access appliances. Worst of all, you may face eviction and live under the constant threat of being homeless.

Scenarios like this are the reality for thousands of older adults in our community, with estimates suggesting that over 6% of adults age 55 and older experience significant impairment due to hoarding. Although people of all ages struggle with hoarding, the problem is often long-term and may intensify with increasing age. Fortunately, the University of California, San Diego (UCSD) offers comprehensive treatment through the Cognitive Rehabilitation & Exposure/Sorting Treatment (CREST) program. CREST is offered to the community by UCSD through a contract with the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency, Behavioral Health Services.

To help older adults reduce their hoarding behaviors, CREST provides 26 treatment sessions, including

in-home treatment. One of the primary goals of the program is to prevent homelessness among low-income older adults who are at risk of losing their housing due to failing health and safety inspections. Responding to violation letters and remedying the concerns outlined



The CREST program teaches older adults to better manage hoarding behaviors.

within them is often the first order of business. However, although cleaning up clients' living space is an important outcome of treatment, Dr. Catherine Ayers, Associate Professor of Psychiatry, clarifies, "This program is not a cleaning service. Hoarding is a mental health condition that to manage, requires the development of new skills and habits that people will need to maintain for the rest of their lives."

The CREST program offers a unique treatment approach that helps older adults gain new skills to improve organization, categorization, planning, and problem solving. Clients also receive in-home "exposure therapy" to learn how to tackle—rather than avoid—dealing with their possessions. Over time, clients are better able to tolerate the distress that often accompanies the decision-making process about whether to discard an item. CREST staff also work with the County's Behavioral Health Services to help link clients to additional services and community resources.

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Making the decision to seek treatment is often challenging, but according to Dr. Ayers, “Most people with hoarding have insight that this is a real problem and they want to do something about it.” One client said it was “like being in the middle of a tornado,” but ultimately treatment allowed for “stepping out and looking at [the problem].” For those who are unsure about whether to seek assistance, Dr. Ayers encourages folks to “meet with a mental health provider at least once. People are fearful that we are going to go in and throw their stuff away. That is not what we do. We empower them to decide what they want to keep.”

When it comes to increasing comfort with sorting through possessions, practice is essential. The CREST program is not considered a once a week treatment; clients are expected to commit to daily sorting. Visits to the home help staff to work with the client to come up with a treatment plan and strategy. Peer support is a critical element of the program. Peer support specialists who have experience with hoarding behaviors themselves—and who have been successful in managing those behaviors—offer guidance, support, and reassurance that recovery is possible.

Results of the program are impressive. People avoid evictions. They regain the ability to use their home in very basic ways; they may be able to use the stove, refrigerator, shower, toilet, or bed that had previously been inaccessible. Mold or infestations that may have been worsening health conditions can be addressed. The problem-solving skills they have learned can be applied to other areas of life, too. People often find that they have more control and do a better job of keeping track of their appointments. In addition, once clients have a handle on their hoarding behaviors, time frees up



Before (left) and after (right) pictures of a client's living room.

in their day for pleasant activities. They may socialize more as there is less reluctance to invite people to their home. After-treatment support groups help clients to maintain their progress and receive ongoing support.

Not every older adult with hoarding disorder is interested in receiving treatment. For those who have friends or family members that fall into this category, Dr. Ayers encourages loved ones to continue to try to visit them in their home. She explains, “There is something about having another person in your home that makes it more real.” Of course, social connection is important for everyone, perhaps especially for those who are facing increased isolation due to hoarding.

Currently, the CREST program is targeted at adults 60 years and older who live in specific ZIP codes in central San Diego and are low-income and either eligible for Medi-Cal or uninsured. However, CREST staff encourage anyone who is concerned about hoarding to contact their office for information and resources. Dr. Ayers explains, “There is no wrong entrance into getting some kind of care.” There are plans in the near future to expand the program to serve older adults countywide. Eligible individuals who live outside of central San Diego can be added to the interest list. To learn more, call **(619) 543-6904**.

CREST HOARDING PROGRAM SUCCESS STORY

“Cynthia” is an older adult participant who was referred to the CREST program by her social worker. Cynthia had recently fallen and broken her arm, and the social worker was concerned that her home was a fall hazard. Her home contained excessive clutter and the living conditions were unsanitary, putting Cynthia at risk for eviction. Furthermore, Cynthia was isolated with few social connections.

After a year with CREST, Cynthia is no longer at risk of losing her housing. She has been successful at reducing clutter in her home, and does not collect as many new items. Cynthia is connected to mental health services, including a senior day program at Sharp, and family therapy with her daughter to strengthen their relationship. Through Jewish Family Service, Cynthia now receives transportation so that she can participate in social activities and access other services. To contact CREST, call **(619) 543-6904**.

In the COMMUNITY

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.

LIBRARIES CELEBRATE OLDER AMERICANS

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

May 17 at 1:30 p.m.: Practical Self-Defense for Older Adults. Vista Branch. For details, call: **(760) 643-5100**.

May 19 at 2 p.m.: The Battle of the Midway presented by the USS Midway Museum. Poway Branch. For details, call: **(858) 513-2900**.

May 22 at 12 p.m.: Engage at Every Age Wellness Fair. Skyline Hills Branch. For details, call: **(858) 552-1655**.

For details on County Library programming, visit: www.sdcl.org/older-americans-month.html. For programming at San Diego Public Library branches, visit: www.sandiego.gov/public-library.

REGISTER NOW: AGING SUMMIT 2018!!!

Aging Summit 2018 will be held on **Thursday, June 28 from 9 a.m.-3 p.m.** at the Town and Country Convention Center in Mission Valley, and the California Center for the Arts, Escondido. This year's theme is *Age Well in Action*. Join us for a day of inspiration and learning to see how San Diego County is becoming an age-friendly and dementia-friendly community. Learn how you can be involved!

To register, call Sharp at **(800) 827-4277** or visit www.AISEvents.org. Information on speakers coming soon.

DISCUSSIONS ON END-OF-LIFE ISSUES

Structured discussions and events focused on end-of-life issues can make these sensitive topics more accessible.

May 14 (Monday) from 1-3 p.m.: A *“Death Cafe”* is an agenda-free place to discuss end-of-life issues over some tasty treats. Attend this free gathering at the Mission Valley Public Library, 2123 Fenton Parkway, San Diego 92108. Not a grief or support group. Space is limited. No late arrivals. RSVP at www.deathcafe.com and or call **(858) 573-5007**. Will also be held on **June 4 (Monday) from 1-3 p.m.**

May 20 (Sunday) from 1:30-3:30 p.m.: A *discussion on receiving medical aid in dying* will be offered by Dr. Bob Uslander at the Scottish Rite Event Center, 1895 Camino Del Rio South, San Diego 92108. Call **(619) 233-4418** or visit www.hemlocksocietysandiego.org for details.

FUN AND FRIENDSHIP AT THE INTERGENERATIONAL GAMES

At the recent South County Intergenerational Games, nearly 100 older adults were paired with third-graders from Liberty Elementary School for physical challenges such as field hockey, Frisbee, and dance, plus nutrition games and activities to learn more about one another.

Big thanks to Gold Sponsors: **AARP, Community Health Group, Retirement Housing Foundation, The San Diego Foundation, Sharp Chula Vista Auxiliary, and UDW Home Care Providers Union.**

Thanks to Silver Sponsors: American Medical Response, Balboa Thrift and Loan, Kaiser Permanente, St. Paul's Senior Services, Starbucks, and Villa Bonita.





SOUTHERN CAREGIVER RESOURCE CENTER: CARING FOR THOSE WHO CARE FOR OTHERS



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.

Southern Caregiver Resource Center (SCRC), founded in 1987 as a 501c3, has been a proud *Live Well San Diego* Recognized Partner since 2014. SCRC has a long history supporting the psychological and emotional well-being of family caregivers, promoting health and safety to help keep our communities thriving.

According to Roberto Velasquez, SCRC Executive Director, “Most individuals lovingly take on the role of family caregiver. Many begin their caregiver role with little or no assistance. However, caregiving is often not a sprint. It could be a journey of 10-plus years.”

As the leading provider of comprehensive caregiver support services in San Diego County, SCRC helps thousands of family caregivers annually who provide support to frail older adults and adults living with Alzheimer’s disease and related disorders, stroke, traumatic brain injury, and other conditions and diseases. Services include assessments and care planning, on-going family consultation, a six-session counseling program, respite care to help families get a much needed break, legal and financial services, professionally facilitated support groups, caregiver and community education and outreach, and specialized information & referrals. All services are FREE and available in Spanish and English.

SCRC has collaborated with numerous agencies over the years to expand the breadth of services to families. SCRC has also implemented innovative award-winning evidence-based programs like REACH2Caregivers which teaches family caregivers how to



better manage challenging symptoms often associated with dementias, helps caregivers reduce stress and anxiety, and incorporates breathing exercises and guided meditation.

SCRC also offers Operation Family Caregiver (OFC) an evidence-based skill building program that teaches family caregivers how to problem solve and develop techniques to better manage challenges related to caring for a service member or veteran living with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), or physical disabilities. Most recently, to help reach “sandwich generation” caregivers--those who are employed and caring for children in the home while also caring for an older relative-- SCRC began producing one-minute caregiver tip videos, live streaming educational workshops, and the monthly podcast “Let’s Talk Caregiving” that is pushed out through social media and can be viewed at your leisure.

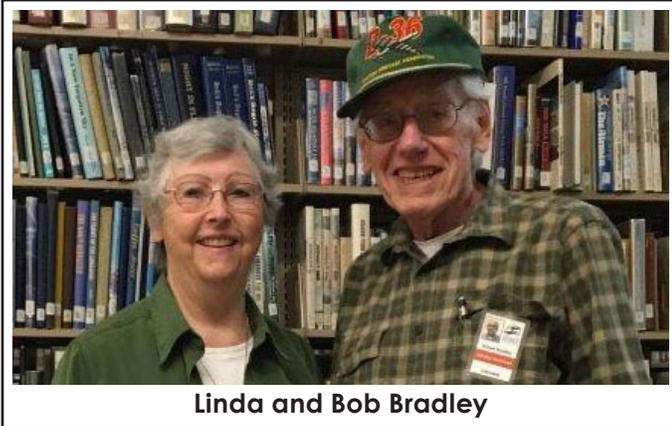
Without help, a majority (60%) of family caregivers end up experiencing clinical depression or other health problems because of caregiver responsibilities. Roberto adds, “I’m proud to say that SCRC provides comprehensive support services, through master’s level professional staff, that are proven to help families remain healthy, employed, and keep their loved ones safe.”

To learn more about SCRC or connect to services, please go to www.caregivercenter.org or call (800) 827-1008.



SENIOR VOLUNTEERS

VOLUNTEERS OF THE MONTH



Linda and Bob Bradley

Bob and Linda Bradley, a married couple, are the Volunteers of the Month for May. They were nominated by Katrina Pescador at the San Diego Air and Space Museum. Bob has been with the museum for over 20 years. His wife joined as a volunteer almost two years ago and has also become a valuable asset. The Bradleys perform library research, archival collection maintenance, and special collection processing. Their past career activities have allowed them to contribute important skills as volunteers.

Bob was an engineering specialist in cost analysis for Convair Space Systems. He is now responsible for processing one of the museum's largest archival collections, which features items from this aviation company. As a former employee, he has been valuable in assisting with identifying and organizing the materials.

Linda was an Executive Assistant for publishing firm Harcourt, Brace and Jovanovich. Before she became a museum volunteer, she assisted Bob by typing up from home items contained within the Convair archives he helped manage. Since joining the team, Linda has helped process several large collections, including the Pacific Southwest Airlines collection.

Bob and Linda are impeccable with their research and organizational skills. By working on larger, more complex collections, they have helped the museum to be able to open up these collections to researchers. Despite both being highly accomplished, the Bradleys are described as "lovely people, low key and unassuming."

Congratulations, Bob and Linda, and thank you for all of your hard work!

ENCINITAS SHERIFF SEEKS VOLUNTEERS

Would you like to give back to your community and have fun doing it? The Encinitas Sheriff Senior Volunteer Patrol is looking for volunteers. Eligible participants must be 50 years or older and are required to attend a two-week training academy and commit to volunteer a minimum of six hours per week.

The volunteer's responsibilities would include various duties, including: administrative work, patrolling neighborhoods, writing disabled parking violation citations, and generally assisting the Sheriff deputies. The Senior Volunteer Patrol also conducts vacation home checks. In addition, they schedule regular visits to the elderly, as well as to the homes of people with disabilities. These are the types of volunteer tasks that make you feel good and really make a difference to the recipients. If you would like to learn more, contact the senior volunteer programs office at **(858) 505-6399** or **MaryAnne.Briggs@sdcounty.ca.gov**.

VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION EVENTS

The Retired & Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) and Senior Volunteers in Action (SVA) annual recognition events will take place in May. Although the official deadline to register has passed, volunteers may still contact the senior volunteer programs office to see if they can be accommodated. Contact **(858) 505-6399** or email **MaryAnne.Briggs@sdcounty.ca.gov**.



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**.

PREDIABETES: HALF OF ADULTS AT RISK

In San Diego County, nearly 46% of adults are estimated to be prediabetic, but most don't even know it. Prediabetes is a condition in which blood glucose levels are higher than normal. Those with prediabetes are at a higher risk for developing type 2 diabetes. The good news is that people with prediabetes can reverse their risk of developing type 2 diabetes by pursuing healthy lifestyle changes. Visit www.PreventDiabetesSD.org to learn more, take a risk test, and find a diabetes prevention lifestyle change program near you.

HEALTHIER LIVING CLASSES

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

Tomando Control de Su Salud (Healthier Living in Spanish): June 1-July 6 (Fridays), 10 a.m.-12:30 p.m. at the Alzheimer's Association, 5075 Shoreham Place, #240, San Diego 92122.

Healthier Living: June 5-July 10 (Tuesdays), 9-11:30 a.m. at Alvarado Hospital Medical Center, 6655 Alvarado Rd., San Diego 92120.

New class dates and locations are added regularly. Visit www.HealthierLivingSD.org, or call (858) 495-5500.

THE FEELING FIT CLUB: A PROVEN APPROACH

Word is getting out on the street—the Feeling Fit Club, a free functional fitness program for older adults, has been proven effective! San Diego State University researcher, Dr. Susan S. Levy, conducted a scientific study, which found that the Feeling Fit Club helped older adults to improve their aerobic endurance, mobility, upper and lower body strength, and balance. Results of the study were published in the *Journal of Applied Gerontology*.

With more than 30 locations across San Diego County, there is sure to be one near you. For class schedules and locations, visit www.HealthierLivingSD.org or call: (858) 495-5500.

CAREGIVER WORKSHOPS

Wednesday, May 9 from 10-11 a.m.-*Holding a Family Meeting* will be held at Southern Caregiver Resource Center, 3675 Ruffin Rd., #230, San Diego 92123. Learn how to create a care plan involving family members, friends, and providers. Discover communication strategies to help you facilitate these discussions, and learn how to facilitate a family meeting. RSVP to (800) 827-1008 or visit www.caregivercenter.org.

Thursday, May 10 from 1-3 p.m.-*Caregiver Skills Clinic: Fall Prevention* will be held at the San Marcos Senior Activity Center, 111 Richmar Ave., San Marcos 92069. Learn practical skills and techniques in a fun and interactive setting. Free on-site respite is available (pre-registration required). Register online at www.alzsd.org or call (858) 492-4400.

Wednesday, May 16 from 5:30-6:30 p.m.-*Understanding and Responding to Dementia-Related Behavior* will be held at Villa Bonita Senior Living, 3434 Bonita Rd., Chula Vista 91910. Learn to decode behavioral messages, identify common behavior triggers, and learn strategies to help intervene with some of the most common behavioral challenges of Alzheimer's disease. Light lunch provided. RSVP to (800) 272-3900.

Thursday, May 17 from 2-3:30 p.m.-*Resources and Tools for Family Caregivers* will be held at Sharp's Brier Patch Campus, 9000 Wakarusa St., Classrooms 13/14, La Mesa 91942. Are you helping a loved one with socialization, finances, transportation, or meals? Find out about community and health resources. To RSVP, call (800) 827-4277 or visit www.sharp.com/classes.

Thursday, May 24 from 10-11:30 a.m.-*Maximizing Brain Health* will be held at Congregation Beth Israel, 9001 Towne Centre Drive, San Diego 92122. Learn about the latest research on brain health and lifestyle changes that may reduce the risk of dementia. Register online at www.alzsd.org or call (858) 492-4400.

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

MAY 10, THURSDAY 10 A.M.-2 P.M.

Free workshops on health and exercise demonstrations will be offered at the *Vibrant Aging & Summer Smiles* event at Oasis, 5500 Grossmont Center Dr., Ste. 325, La Mesa 91942. Giveaways, prizes, and more. No RSVP required. For details, call (619) 881-6262.

MAY 10, THURSDAY 1-2 P.M.

Remembering Our Parents will be held at the Peninsula Family YMCA, 4390 Valeta, San Diego 92107. Learn about the unique aspects of parent loss, identify skills to cope with grief, and discover a sense of hope for Mother's Day and Father's Day. RSVP to (800) 827-4277 or www.sharp.com/classes.

MAY 11, 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. Free health screenings, prescription consultations, community resources, and more. No RSVP required. For details, call (619) 740-4214.

MAY 12, SATURDAY 9:30 A.M.

The *Seniors Computer Group of San Diego* meets every Saturday in Wesley Palms retirement community, 2404 Loring St., San Diego 92109.

Learn how to use computers and technology, such as smart phones, effectively and safely. Open to all ages. Free to visitors. For details, call Tom at (858) 459-9065 or visit www.scgsd.org.

MAY 19, SATURDAY 8:30 A.M.-2:15 P.M.

The South County Mental Health Fair, *Changing Minds-Minds Matter*, will be held at Chula Vista High School, 820 4th Ave., Chula Vista 91911. Join Sharp Chula Vista Medical Center and more than 40 community resource partners for a day of learning intended to inspire and empower. Topics include: substance use, dementia, suicide prevention, and more. No RSVP required. For details, visit www.sharp.com/changingminds.

MAY 19, SATURDAY 10 A.M.-1 P.M.

A *Senior Resource Fair* will be held at the San Diego LGBT Community Center, 3909 Centre St., San Diego 92103. Visit educational booths staffed with representatives from local senior services organizations. Lunch provided free to the first 125 attendees age 50 and over. For details, call LaRue Fields at (619) 692-2077 or email seniors@thecentersd.org.

MAY 22, TUESDAY 12-3 P.M.

A health and wellness fair, *Engage at Every Age*, will be held at the Skyline

Hills Branch Library, 7900 Paradise Valley Rd., San Diego 92139. Learn about opportunities to stay healthy and involved in local service activities. For details, contact Melissa Martin at (858) 552-1655 or MMartin@sandiego.gov.

MAY 23, WEDNESDAY 9 A.M.-12 P.M.

St. Paul's Senior Services is hosting a *Senior and Family Resource Fair* at St. Paul's Villa, 2340 Fourth Ave., San Diego 92101. More than 35 exhibitors specializing in senior services and a special panel presentation with tips and advice on downsizing and the benefits of moving into a community. For details, call (619) 677-3800 and ask for Lizette Galindo.

MAY 24, THURSDAY 2:30-4 P.M.

Right-Sizing Your Life in Retirement will be held at Oasis, 5500 Grossmont Center Dr., Ste. 325, La Mesa 91942. Hear from a panel of experts who can help you navigate the financial, location change, and emotional issues that are part of transitions in our lives. To RSVP, call (619) 881-6262.

MAY 27, SUNDAY 1:30 P.M.

Join the San Diego Folk Song Society for a *song circle* at the Serra Mesa-Kearny Mesa Library, 9005 Aero Dr., San Diego 92123. Sing along and bring your own songs to share! For details, call (858) 573-1396.

ADVISORY COUNCIL

The AIS Advisory Council will meet at noon Monday, May 14 at AIS: 5560 Overland Ave., Third Floor, San Diego 92123. Meetings are open to the public.

SEND IN YOUR ITEMS

This monthly calendar welcomes your contributions. Just send items by the 1st of each month preceding the issue date to: sarah.jackson@sdcounty.ca.gov.

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Whether the need is for assessment, service referrals, or follow-up, with just one phone call, you or a loved one can receive help for:

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- Disabled adults
- Abused adults
- Those requiring home-based care to prevent institutionalization

As a public agency, we provide comprehensive information and impartial assistance free of charge to county residents. Since 1974, people have been turning to us at Aging & Independence Services. You can too.



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www.aging.sandiegocounty.gov

If calling from an area code out of San Diego County, call: **(800) 339-4661**



HOME-BASED SERVICES ▪ INFORMATION AND ASSISTANCE



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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