

AGING & independence

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

GREAT PLATES FEEDS SENIORS, BOOSTS SPIRITS

By Kim Gallo
Director, Aging & Independence Services

When Barbara Merkley, co-owner of Kaminski's Sports Lounge and BBQ restaurant in Poway, heard about the Great Plates Delivered: Home Meals for Seniors program last spring, she leapt at the opportunity to apply to become a meal provider. The COVID-19 pandemic had battered the local economy, and the four-generation, family-owned business was struggling to make ends meet due to the restrictions on inside dining. Meanwhile, some older adults in the community were having difficulty obtaining balanced, nutritious meals. As one of the most vulnerable groups to the effects of the virus, older adults had been—and still are—strongly urged to stay home and avoid interactions with others outside of their households.

To address these concerns, Governor Gavin Newsom announced the creation of the Great Plates Delivered program. Using funds from FEMA, as well as state and local funding sources, the program matches eligible older adults (ages 65+ or 60-64 with certain health conditions) with a local restaurant that prepares and delivers three meals each day at no cost to recipients. Following federal guidelines, the



Kaminski's staff prepare dozens of meals each day to deliver to seniors who have been struggling to access healthy meals.

program fills a gap and serves those who are not currently eligible for federally funded nutrition programs, such as CalFresh. Local restaurants had the opportunity to apply for the procurement and contracts with the County were awarded based on restaurants' ability to prepare a variety of nutritious and delicious meals, provide reliable delivery, source local ingredients, and adhere to safety protocols.

Kaminski's became one of dozens of local restaurants that began serving vulnerable residents last

May. Although they specialize in barbecue, their weekly menus offer a diverse selection of tasty entrées, such as lasagna, crab cakes, and breakfast burritos. The meal deliveries also include fresh fruits and vegetables picked from the restaurant's own garden. At first, Kaminski's served a couple dozen individuals, but now they are up to 70 deliveries each day. The logistics can be tricky—some folks are vegetarian or have special dietary needs. Barbara describes it as a “fun, great challenge” to meet everyone's nutritional needs and preferences.

The program has been a lifeline for local restaurants and older adult participants alike. The economic boost was expected, but involvement with Great Plates has brought so much more. Barbara explains, “Emotionally for us as a staff it has been a huge benefit. The younger staff, the delivery drivers, feel good about helping people and showing them that they care.”

(Continued on page two)



CORONAVIRUS UPDATES:

Visit www.coronavirus-sd.com.



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BOARD CREATES GREAT PLATES 2.0: DINNER DELIVERED

On August 4, the San Diego County Board of Supervisors voted to take the Great Plates program to a new level and create Great Plates 2.0: Dinner Delivered. The new program expands eligibility and provides one hearty meal per day to adults of all ages who have disabilities or health conditions that make obtaining or preparing meals difficult. In addition, the Board voted to increase the enrollment capacity for the original Great Plates program, and also to direct funds to other food programs in the county, such as those offered by Feeding San Diego and the Jacobs & Cushman San Diego Food Bank. Refer to Page 3 for more information on eligibility for the Great Plates programs, or visit www.aging.sandiegocounty.gov.

Testimonial: Great Plates Makes a Difference

"My 80-year-old mother lives in Poway. She has not been able to cook much for the past few years due to severe back problems. The restaurant she was assigned through Great Plates to deliver her meals has been beyond wonderful! Every morning when I call my mom, she is so excited to tell me about the sweet person who delivered her food with a smile, the delicious menu in store for the day, and the adorable notes and artwork from children that came with her delivery. It has not only provided nutritious food, but a real emotional boost to cope with loneliness. I could see such a difference in her mental outlook and physical well-being just from being on the program for a few weeks. We are all so desperate for things to return to some semblance of normal, but for now, our family has seen the Great Plates program as a beautiful silver lining!"

-Daughter of an 80-year-old Great Plates Delivered recipient



Above: Kaminski's Bar-B-Que staff love serving their community. Right: Staff and local children draw pictures and write messages to share with participants.

(Continued from page one)

Seniors look forward to the visits and have gotten to know the delivery drivers—from a safe distance, of course. Some older adults report that the delivery staff have started to feel like family and that they are glad to have them as part of their lives. Staff have put lots of effort into ensuring participants feel a sense of connection and community. Barbara's sister and co-owner Marsha Kaminski, lives in a neighborhood with lots of families. She has enlisted the help of local children to draw pictures and write notes that are delivered with the meals. One participant reported saving the pictures and making a scrapbook. Staff have given participants the option to fill out fun questionnaires that ask about topics such as pets and hobbies. They share the results with all the participants as a way to promote feelings of community among Kaminski's Great Plates participants. In addition, Barbara spends time chatting with participants who call on the phone. She feels fortunate she has the flexibility to take the time to connect. "Not everyone has family," she notes.

One unique aspect of the program is that it has been reaching a lot of folks who have never received social services assistance before. These individuals "have been too proud to accept help," Barbara explains. "They don't want to take assistance when there is someone else who might need it more than them. But, because this program is helping local restaurants, they feel proud to be a part of it because they are helping us as well."

Although the program is temporary with funding extensions dependent on FEMA, Barbara is already starting to think of ways to stay connected to participants once the formal program ends. "It is truly an amazing program," Barbara says, "and we are grateful to be a part of it."

Kaminski's BBQ is one of more than 60 restaurants currently involved in the program. To date, over 2,400 older adults have been enrolled. To learn more about eligibility criteria or to apply, visit www.aging.sandiegocounty.gov or call (800) 339-4661 and select option "7."



In the COMMUNITY

GREAT PLATES PROGRAMS: DELIVERING MEALS TO MORE SAN DIEGANS

Stay home! Eat well! The Great Plates Programs help to keep older adults and adults of all ages with disabilities or health conditions safe during the COVID-19 pandemic. Enjoy tasty, home-delivered meals and support local restaurants by joining one of these free programs.

Great Plates Delivered: Home Meals for Seniors

- Serves older adults 65+ and those 60-64 with certain health conditions
- Provides 3 meals per day
- Initiated by Governor Newsom, and supported by FEMA, state, and local funds.



Great Plates 2.0: Dinner Delivered

- Serves adults of all ages (18+) with health conditions or disabilities
- Provides one hearty meal per day
- Initiated by the San Diego County Board of Supervisors and supported by local allocation of CARES Act funds.



Following federal guidelines, these temporary programs are intended to fill a gap and serve those who are not eligible for any other federal nutrition benefits, such as Cal Fresh or the Senior Nutrition Program (income must be between \$24,981-\$74,940 for a single-person household and \$33,821-\$101,460 for a two-person household). To learn more, visit www.aging.sandiegocounty.gov and click on the “Great Plates Delivered Meal Program” button at the top of the page. Or, call **(800) 339-4661** and select option “7.” If you do not qualify for the Great Plates programs, please call 2-1-1 to discuss additional food resources that may be available to you.

VOTE SAFER SAN DIEGO

The San Diego County Registrar of Voters is committed to ensuring that voters can exercise their right to vote in a safe, secure, and accessible manner during the 2020 Presidential General Election. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, every registered voter in California will receive a ballot in the mail for the upcoming election. Voters are urged to vote from home.

Voting by mail is simple! A mail-in ballot will be mailed to all registered voters starting Oct. 5. Make voting decisions and mark your ballot comfortably at home. Seal your completed ballot in your postage paid envelope. Be sure to sign it, date it, and return it by mail promptly so it is received well before Election Day. Sign your name like it appears on your driver’s license/ID.

In-Person Voting: If you choose to vote in person, polling places will be open for four days, Oct. 31 through Election Day on Nov. 3. There are fewer polling places than in prior elections, so your polling place has likely changed and lines may be long. Ballots will also be accepted at the Registrar’s office beginning on Monday, October 5. Wear a face mask and plan to maintain social distance. Older adults and those with underlying medical conditions are especially encouraged to vote by mail or through early in-person voting to avoid long lines and crowded polling places. To learn more about the upcoming election or register to vote, visit www.sdvote.com.



LAST CHANCE TO COMPLETE THE 2020 CENSUS AND HELP OUR COMMUNITY

Every 10 years, the federal government is mandated by the U.S. Constitution to count all persons living in the United States through the decennial Census. From schools, to transportation, to representation in Congress, our participation can shape the future of the San Diego region. Each one of us who gets counted in the 2020 Census brings an additional \$1,950 in federal resources to California, per year, for the next ten years! If you have not completed the Census, please do so today by visiting my2020census.gov.



VOLUNTEER OF THE MONTH

Joan Tupper is the Senior Volunteers in Action (SVA) volunteer of the month for September. She was nominated by Michelle North, Program Manager at San Pasqual Academy of Neighbors (SPAN). San Pasqual Academy is a high school campus/residence where older adults, 55 years and older, live on campus with foster youth. They enrich the students' lives by serving as surrogate "grandparents" to them.

The "grandparents" are senior volunteers who work with the students to teach them life skills, as well as to provide the youth with a family-type atmosphere. They teach the students skills such as how to cook and paint. They coach them in sporting activities, celebrate holidays with them, and have parties and barbecues with the students. The older adults do the things that families might normally do with a young person; they try to fill in those gaps for the students. The volunteers derive a deep sense of purpose and meaning by helping the youth. Students, in turn, contribute by enriching the older adults' lives with their vitality and energy. And, their resilience is an inspiration. There is much to be learned from one another! These relationships help to prevent depression in both the older adults and the youth—definitely a "win/win" situation.

Joan Tupper is the longest-serving volunteer in the program, starting at its inception in 2003. Joan is known to be a favorite of the students and is consistently rated at a high level in student surveys. In addition to teaching life skills to the youth, she spends time simply connecting with and enjoying the company of the students. Joan watches movies with the youth and plays games with them. She also does the hemming for the students' prom dresses and tuxedos. When Joan was working, she would be sure to leave work early to see them off on that special night.

Joan is fluent in Mandarin Chinese and learned to cook gourmet dishes while living abroad. She shares her travel experiences with the students through cooking and baking with them. Her specialties are Chinese wontons and chocolate truffles. She also shares travel stories with the students and encourages them to expand their horizons however they can, such as by pursuing study abroad programs.

Before retiring from her full-time job in 2018, Joan would come back home to the campus after work and visit a different house each night to spend time with the students. Upon her retirement, Joan had more time to spend with the students and made connecting with them a top priority. Joan was consistent with her visits until the Covid-19 pandemic prevented her from doing so. To stay connected during the pandemic, she makes treats for the youth, which staff deliver to their houses. She also checks in regularly by phone.

Joan truly loves the students, and this is evident in the way she treats them. She always made a special effort to reach out to the youth and particularly to connect with students who are less outgoing. Joan strives to make all the youth at SPAN feel included, important, and special.

Michelle North describes Joan as "positive, helpful, and most of all, kind". Michelle also notes that "the kids love her because she reaches out to them. Joan isn't shy, and she has open arms for all the students. She invites each child into her life". After the students graduate, they often come back to visit the "grandparents," and they are sure to visit Joan.

San Pasqual Academy Neighbors (and their foster youth) are very lucky to have Joan in their midst! Congratulations, Joan, and thank you for all that you do!



Joan Tupper



ST. PAUL'S SENIOR SERVICES

St. Paul's Senior Services has been providing senior care and retirement communities in San Diego for over 60 years. St. Paul's communities are award-winning, and the organization is recognized as a leader in senior care, helping to keep residents healthy, safe, and thriving. Yet, like others in the senior care industry, the COVID-19 pandemic has put St. Paul's to the test. With over 1,400 seniors and 650 employees, the non-profit has been treading new ground over the past five months to provide safety while keeping everyone's spirits high.

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.

St. Paul's has taken a variety of steps to ensure safety, increase morale, and support families during this difficult time. Some of their best practices and suggestions to keep residents happy include:

- **Communication is key!** St. Paul's offers weekly update letters, emails, and videos for staff, residents, and families. Transparency is essential. CDC and State documents are posted at StPaulsSeniors.org for all to see and share.
- **Provide regular employee education.** St. Paul's provides education on symptom control, family safety, reporting, hand washing, and personal protective equipment (PPE)/mask wearing. Screening tools change frequently, so staff receive weekly training. Hygiene and safety information is also communicated to residents and family members.
- **Shift to in-room dining.** For residents' safety, meals are now room-delivered. Staff work hard to ensure that food is interesting and satisfying.
- **Keep them smiling!** St. Paul's brings the entertainment to residents with ice cream carts, happy hour deliveries, musicians heard from the balcony, jugglers, belly dancers – staff are getting very creative!
- **Keep them moving!** Residents can participate in exercise classes in the hallways, from the balcony, and in small safe groups. Staff are encouraging safe walking and helping residents with pets.
- **Offer safe visiting.** St. Paul's hosts fun drive-thru events, such as car parades, for families to wave and say hello to their loved ones from a safe distance. Staff created outdoor visiting stations so families can visit safely. Technology visits with iPads are also available.
- **Involve the community.** St. Paul's encouraged the local community to provide activity books, puzzles, and cards.



Older adults who receive their medical, social, and other services through St. Paul's PACE (Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly), have benefitted from increased home visits and wellness checks. Participants now receive medical care through a mobile clinic that comes right to their home to ensure safety. Telemedicine is also offered for participants to chat with providers.



St. Paul's employees receive a daily wellness email with exercise tips, recipes, encouragement, and more. Employees now receive meals on-site so they don't have to worry about going out to unsafe environments. In addition, the organization created a learning lab for employees' school age children and a child care program for younger children.

To learn more about St. Paul's or to share ideas, advice, and information to keep you, your community, and your family safe, please visit StPaulsSeniors.org or call Amanda Gois at (619) 239-6900.

HEALTH and WELLNESS

FALL PREVENTION AWARENESS WEEK

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 virtual workshops for Fall Prevention Awareness Week. The workshops listed below will be hosted on Zoom and advance registration is required. To register for one or more workshops, or for additional workshop details, please visit www.SanDiegoFallPrevention.org. Also, refer to the Community Calendar on Page 7 for information on a virtual **Standing Strong Fall Prevention** webinar offered by Scripps on **Saturday, September 19 at 10 a.m.**

MON. SEPT 21	TUES. SEPT 22	WED. SEPT 23	THURS. SEPT 24	FRI. SEPT 25
<p>Welcome Session 9–10 a.m.</p> <p>Tai Chi Moving for Better Balance 11 a.m. – 12 p.m.</p> <p>Keeping Your Daily Balance 12:30 – 1:30 p.m.</p> <p>Understanding and Preventing Falls: Perspectives of First Responders 2 – 3 p.m.</p>	<p>Fall Prevention Technology – Its More than Just a Button 9 – 10 a.m.</p> <p>Preventing Falls and Fractures: Tips for Maintaining Physical Function 11 a.m. – 12 p.m.</p> <p>Gait, Movement and Coordination 12:30 – 1:30 p.m.</p> <p>Fall Prevention Conversation Tips for Caregivers 2 – 3 p.m.</p>	<p>Straight Talk with the Home Safety Sisters 9 – 10 a.m.</p> <p>Fall Prevention with Helpful Tips <i>*An event by Caregiver Coalition of San Diego</i> 11 a.m. – 12 p.m.</p> <p>Balance for Parkinson’s 12:30 – 1:30 p.m.</p> <p>Dizziness, Incontinence, and Foot Neuropathy and Their Link to Falls 2 – 3 p.m.</p>	<p>The Role of Vision in Falls 9 – 10 a.m.</p> <p>Medication Management in Older Adults 11 a.m. – 12 p.m.</p> <p>Better Bones for Better Balance 12:30 – 1:30 p.m.</p> <p>Proper Dog Walking Tips: Make Your Next Stroll Falls Free 2 – 3 p.m.</p>	<p>Why Does Dementia Increase Fall Risk? 9 – 10 a.m.</p> <p>Kitchen Safety in a COVID-19 World 11 a.m. – 12 p.m.</p> <p>Mind, Body, Balance 12:30 – 1:30 p.m.</p> <p>Fall Prevention Screening and Getting Up Safely After a Fall 2 – 3 p.m.</p>

SPOTLIGHT ON FALL PREVENTION

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 night-lights, and install strong grab bars and handrails. Our eyes often need more light as we age.

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

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Please note: Due to the coronavirus pandemic, all of the classes and events listed below are offered online.

SEPTEMBER 16, WEDNESDAY 1-2:15 P.M.

An online class, *Medical Miracles Since You Were a Kid* (course #573), will be hosted by San Diego Oasis. Since 1940, three generations of physicians and scientists have performed surgery on infants still in the womb, restored vision and hearing to the blind and deaf, eliminated diseases that killed tens of millions of children every year, and made organ transplants routine. Explore these and other medical marvels. Cost: \$10. Visit www.SanDiegoOasis.org to register. For details, call (619) 881-6262.

SEPTEMBER 16, WEDNESDAY 1-2:30 P.M.

The Caregiver Coalition of San Diego is offering a free virtual conference, *Taste, See, Smell, and Feel in the World of COVID-19*. Held on both Sept. 16 and Sept. 23, this conference will cover topics that will appeal to caregivers, as well as older adults in general, such as scam prevention, building resilience to manage life transitions, food safety/wellness, and more. Each session will include information on community resources and opportunity drawing prizes. To learn more and to RSVP, visit www.caregivercoalitionsd.org and click on "Caregiver Events."

SEPTEMBER 17, THURSDAY 1-2:30 P.M.

A two-session online class, *Relationships: Better with Age?*

(course #591), will be hosted by San Diego Oasis. Strong relationships are key to healthy aging. How we connect with others in this phase of life will play a major role in the wellbeing of our bodies and minds. In this class, participants will assess their current relationships, learn strategies to deal with draining relationships, and explore ways to cultivate more positive ones. Cost: \$15. Visit www.SanDiegoOasis.org for information and to register. For details, call (619) 881-6262.

SEPTEMBER 19, SATURDAY 10 A.M.-12 P.M.

Join Scripps for *Standing Strong*, a fall prevention webinar. Falls are the leading cause of injury-related emergency department visits for older adults. This free, virtual event will feature a panel of experts who will share safety tips, information, and exercises to help you prevent falls. A question and answer session will follow the presentation. To RSVP, call (800) 727-4777.

SEPTEMBER 23, WEDNESDAY 6-7 P.M.

An online class, *Understanding Alzheimer's and Dementia*, will be hosted by the Alzheimer's Association. Alzheimer's disease is not a normal part of aging. Learn about the impact of Alzheimer's, the difference between Alzheimer's and dementia, stages and risk factors, current research and treatments available for some symptoms, and Alzheimer's Association resources. For details or to register, call (800) 272-3900.

OCTOBER 1, THURSDAY 10-11:30 A.M.

An online class, *Maintaining Your Brain Health*, will be offered by Alzheimer's San Diego. Learn about the latest research on lifestyle changes and strategies that everyone can use to maintain their brain health. To register, visit www.alzsd.org or call (858) 492-4400.

OCTOBER 3, SATURDAY 5:30-7:30 P.M.

Music & Healing-A Virtual Evening with Richard Danielpour will be offered by the George G. Glenner Alzheimer's Family Centers, Inc. Grammy award-winning composer Richard Danielpour will provide a rare insight into his personal life experiences and their connection to music as a healing force. He will use insights from his own and Beethoven's compositions as examples. For reservations, questions, and the Zoom link, RSVP to Gloria at gbaker@glenner.org or (619) 997-2707.

SAVE THE DATE! OCTOBER 20-23, TUES.-FRI.

San Diego Oasis, in partnership with Aging & Independence Services will be hosting their first-ever online **Technology Fair** for older adults. Registration will begin mid-September. For more details, visit www.sandiegoasis.org or call (619) 881-6262.

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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