

AGING & independence

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

REMEMBERING A LOCAL LEGEND: VICKIE VELASCO

By **Kim Gallo**
Director, Aging & Independence Services

Near and far, Vickie Velasco touched thousands of lives. Founder of the County's popular Feeling Fit Club, Vickie Velasco was born in Los Angeles in 1938. She attended San Diego State University and devoted her life and career to serving others. In 1961, when President John F. Kennedy urged fellow Americans, "ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country," Vickie took his words to heart and was inspired to join the Peace Corps, where she served tours in Ecuador and Guatemala. Upon her return, she was hired by the Chicano Federation and helped implement English and Spanish programming all over the county.

In 1975, Vickie joined the County's Office of Senior Citizens Affairs, known today as Aging & Independence Services, or AIS. Serving older adults became her lifelong passion. At AIS, Vickie took on a variety of roles. One of her responsibilities was organizing and managing the County's information and referral program, a precursor to the AIS Call Center. Joaquin Anguera, a member of the California Commission on Aging and Vickie's longtime supervisor, notes that Vickie was a keen problem solver who helped connect older adults to resources that would meet their needs. He explains, "I admired her creativity and resourcefulness. There didn't seem to be any situation without a solution. She would take the most difficult cases and work on them until the caller was completely satisfied."

Vickie really made her mark at AIS while serving as the agency's first Health Promotion manager. She was involved

in creating many innovative services, such as Project CARE, a check-in service which keeps seniors living alone from being totally isolated. Vickie created the San Diego Health Promotion Committee and worked collaboratively with a variety of health professionals in the community to provide quality programming for older adults. She initiated numerous community education programs and events, including the Vital Aging and Finding Balance in Caregiving conferences, and even hosted a local radio show on senior-related issues.



Vickie Velasco, 1932-2020

Vickie is best known, however, as founder of the Feeling Fit Club, a functional fitness program for older adults that also places an emphasis on

social connection. She created the program in conjunction with fitness experts from San Diego State University. What started as a small group fitness class hosted at a handful of

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CORONAVIRUS UPDATES

To view the up-to-date orders, guidelines, and recommendations from the County's Public Health Officer, visit www.coronavirus-sd.com.



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sites has since grown to over 30 sites countywide (although sites are currently closed due to the pandemic). The Feeling Fit Club is shown on local television daily and is accessible on YouTube or by DVD.

Serving as the president of the County Employee Charitable Organization (CECO) was a source of pride for Vickie. She relished the opportunity to identify small community organizations where CECO funds could truly make a difference. She also embraced the opportunity to foster inclusion and build bridges with people of diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Back in the early 1990s, Vickie started taking part in Juneteenth celebrations alongside African American older adults at the Fourth District Senior Resource Center—long before the holiday was widely familiar to those not of African American heritage.

Upon her retirement in 2003, Vickie continued to be an active member of the community. She became a mentor to foster youth and deeply touched the lives of many young people who benefited from her warmth and attentiveness.



Photos: Left Column: (Above) Vickie teaching a Feeling Fit Club class. (Below) Vickie took the time to get to know her students and was a beloved instructor.

Right Column: (Above) Vickie received several awards for her commitment to serving older adults and other important causes. (Below) Vickie loved animals. She is pictured with her dog, Rags.

Vickie also became a volunteer Feeling Fit instructor who inspired hundreds of local older adults to improve their fitness. She was skilled at nudging even the most reluctant participants to be more active. Her encouragement made a dramatic difference in participants' lives. One of her students started out with such limited strength and mobility that she was unable to comb her own hair. Over time, the participant regained the ability to groom herself and more.



Vickie's many accomplishments did not go unnoticed and she was the recipient of many awards, including recognition from Sharp Healthcare, the County's Public Health Champion award, San Diego County Library's Living Legend award, and the Retired & Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) Volunteer of the Year.

And while Vickie amassed a long list of accomplishments, she may be best remembered for her ability to connect deeply and authentically with others—helping others feel joyful and alive. "Vickie made each person she met feel special. She inspired people to live the best life for them," explains Andrea Holmberg, former Coordinator of the Sharp Senior Resource Center and close colleague and friend of Vickie." Vickie's son, Mike, adds, "She was just full of life. . .it doesn't matter what she did. . .she made it into a fun experience. She has just done so much for so many people."

In addition to her work and volunteer work on behalf of others, Vickie enjoyed travel, movies, and spending time with friends. She enjoyed cooking and was a big animal lover.



Vickie's legacy will continue in the minds and hearts of those she has touched, as well as in the crucial programs she helped build to support older adults.

A celebration of life will be scheduled when the pandemic subsides and people can safely gather. To request information on the celebration when it becomes available, email **sarah.jackson@sdcounty.ca.gov**.

In the COMMUNITY

FOOD RESOURCES

A variety of resources are available to ensure that older adults and those with disabilities are able to access healthy, nutritious food during these difficult times. Visit www.aging.sandiegocounty.gov and click on the link at the top of the page titled “COVID-19 Community Resources.”



If you have funds to pay for food, but would like to try commercial delivery options, check out the “Commercial Food Service” link. Learn about how to use online commercial food delivery services, such as UberEats and Doordash, with step-by-step instructional videos.

One featured program is Great Plates Delivered. This program helps older adults during the COVID-19 pandemic by delivering meals to their homes. Following federal guidelines, the program is intended for seniors who are not currently receiving or eligible for any other federal nutrition benefits, such as Cal Fresh or the Senior Nutrition Program. 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 finances are tight, check out the “Non-Profit Food Assistance” page under “COVID-19 Community Resources.” There you will find free food resources, such as the AIS home delivered meal program. You may also call 2-1-1.

Also, please note that CalFresh EBT cards can now be used to pay for grocery delivery. Visit <http://mycalfresh.org> for more information on CalFresh benefits, or you may call 2-1-1.

SOCIAL CALLS: CONNECT WITH OTHERS

The pandemic has disrupted most people’s routines and social networks. Many older adults are experiencing loneliness. Regular check-in calls can help to ease feelings of loneliness and isolation. If you or a loved one could use some extra social contact, there are a variety of phone check-in programs available to older adults at no charge:



Age Well Services Social Call List: Age Well Services staff from the City of San Diego Parks & Recreation department will call you Monday-Friday, between 8 a.m. and 11 a.m. just to check in and say “hello.” If you would like to add yourself or a loved one to the Age Well Social Call List, call (619) 236-6905 or email thescroll@sandiego.gov.

Serving Seniors’ Connections Program: Serving Seniors has developed a new call program to help you or a loved one during the stay-at-home order and beyond. Serving Seniors volunteers offer friendly calls three times a week to check in, listen, and chat. To sign up, call Chania Mitchell at (619) 246-4461 or email chania.mitchell@serving seniors.org. Calls are also offered in Spanish (call Jazmin Garcia at (619) 487-0617 or email jazmin.garcia@serving seniors.org) or in Mandarin (call Nora Tong at (619) 487-0745 or email nora.tong@serving seniors.org).

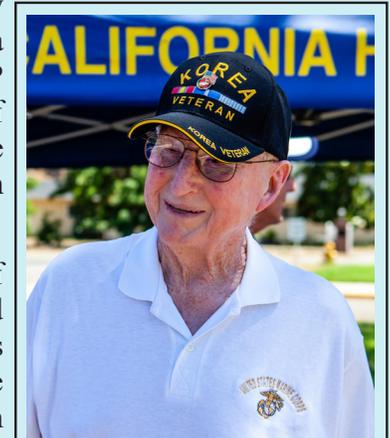
Friendship Line California: Offered by Institute on Aging and the California Department of Aging, the Friendship Line is a vital lifeline for people aged 60 years and older and adults living with disabilities to connect with a caring, compassionate voice ready to listen and provide emotional support. The line serves as both a crisis intervention hotline and a warmline for non-emergency support calls. Call (888) 670-1360. For more information, visit www.ioaging.org/friendship-line-california.



EXEMPLARY CALIFORNIA HIGHWAY PATROL VOLUNTEER RETIRES AFTER 28 YEARS

Bob Weishan, a 28-year volunteer and founding member of the California Highway Patrol's (CHP's) El Cajon Area Senior Volunteer Program (SVP), recently enjoyed a "drive by" parade held in his honor. Hosted by fellow volunteers, El Cajon Area CHP Commander Captain Fouyer, and many CHP officers, the surprise parade went off without a hitch on June 10 at Montgomery Middle School in El Cajon. It was a "drive by" parade in accordance with the social distancing rules that are currently in place in San Diego County due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Bob was told that he was coming to meet with Aging & Independence Services staff to be interviewed for an article about his time as a volunteer. He was happily surprised when he saw many of his family members and found out he was really there to witness the parade. Afterwards, Captain Fouyer presented Bob with a special CHP award, the Division Chief's Commendation. Bob was also awarded a plaque from the El Cajon Squad Club by Officer April Laue, the El Cajon Area CHP SVP Coordinator, and a certificate of appreciation from the Retired & Senior Volunteer Program.



Bob Weishan

Bob has led—and continues to lead—a full and rewarding life. He was born in the Los Angeles community of El Sereno. After high school, Bob enlisted in the United States Marine Corps and was assigned to the 81 Mortars, 1st Marine Regiment, and 1st Marine Division, at Camp Pendleton. On September 15th, 1950, Bob was deployed to the Korean War. He was involved in the invasion of Inchon, the capture of Seoul, and the Epic Battle of the Korean War. He also fought in the famous battles of Punch Bowl, Heartbreak Ridge, and the Battle of the Chosin Reservoir. During his military service, he sustained injuries that resulted in his status as a disabled veteran. On February 9, 1952, Bob married his former 4th grade classmate. The happy couple recently celebrated their 68th wedding anniversary and together enjoy four children, 13 grandchildren, and 13 great-grandchildren.

Bob worked for 11 years in the space industry, testing Rocket Dyne Engines. He was instrumental in the Apollo and Gemini Space Programs. Bob then spent 20 years working for the American Automobile Association (AAA) in accident investigation and litigation. He worked for the National Football League (NFL) as well. From 1985 to 2007, Bob ran up and down the sidelines of the field at the stadium, holding the down and distance markers for every NFL football game, including three Super Bowls.



In 1992, the El Cajon Area CHP started the Senior Volunteer Program and it served as a pilot program for the state of California. As one of the founding members, Bob played a significant role in the success the SVP enjoys to this day. Bob was selected as the Administrator of the program and dedicated many years to that leadership/supervisory role. In addition, Bob served as the Border Division Representative to the State Senior Volunteer Committee. Bob was instrumental in the design of the SVP badge and service pins, recognizing the years each volunteer has contributed.

During his tenure, Bob participated in countless assignments, parades, and programs in the community. He has over 25,000 hours of volunteer service with the SVP and has been a mentor to more than 75 volunteers. His dedication to the program has been invaluable and speaks volumes about

his character. He has left a lasting impact, not only on the El Cajon Area, but also on the entire California Highway Patrol. Thank you, Bob, for making San Diego County—and our country—a better place!



IHSS PUBLIC AUTHORITY

Over 32,000 San Diegans living on a limited income rely on the In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) program so that they can continue to live at home safely. Operated by the County of San Diego, the IHSS program enables older adults or persons with disabilities to hire a caregiver of their choice, who is often a family member.

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.

When an IHSS recipient has no caregiver to serve as their “individual provider,” they can call the IHSS Public Authority. The IHSS Public Authority (PA) is a separate entity from the County, but provides crucial services to support the functioning of the IHSS program, which in turn supports tens of thousands of San Diegans to live healthy, safe, and thriving lives.



PUBLIC AUTHORITY
In-Home Supportive Services
San Diego County

Each month, over 600 new individual providers (IPs) are added to the IHSS program in San Diego County. Each IP is considered to be employed by the IHSS recipient, but the PA manages the enrollment process, including initiating a fingerprint background check and entering the IPs information into the State’s payroll database. This year, all IPs are enrolling in an on-line time sheet system which allows for time sheets to be submitted using a phone or computer. This process change brings with it a significant learning curve for many of the over 28,000 IPs in the county. However, the PA is there to assist each one who needs help.

One of the PA’s primary roles is to maintain a Registry of available IHSS individual providers (IPs) for IHSS recipients who don’t have a person to help them. Providing information and support to IPs, IHSS recipients, and the general public is another primary responsibility of PA staff. Each month, the PA answers more than 18,000 phone calls! The calls vary, and include assisting with time sheet completion, questions about the status of a paycheck, and more.

Training is another component of the Public Authority’s role. The Public Authority provides timely, basic caregiving information to IPs through video trainings as well as in-person sessions (though these sessions are currently suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic). Each November, to recognize and celebrate individual providers (caregivers), the Public Authority hosts a free recognition event. The celebration includes speakers on topics important to caregivers, a resource fair/tables, free lunch, and give aways.

By helping to enroll and support IPs, as well as serve as the employer of record for providers, the Public Authority contributes to this important goal of helping low-income older adults and persons with disabilities to receive the care they need to live at home independently. The IHSS program and the PA empower recipients to be involved in their own care decisions and to maintain as much autonomy as possible. The PA, along with the thousands of dedicated and compassionate IPs, help to make our region a better place where people with diverse abilities can live well. For more information on the IHSS Public Authority, visit www.sdihsspa.com. For questions about eligibility for IHSS, call the AIS Call Center at (800) 339-4661.



Public Authority staff at the set-up for the annual IHSS provider recognition event, held November 2019 (left). Hundreds of IHSS individual providers attended the event and came away with information and resources (right).

2020 LIVE WELL SAN DIEGO VIRTUAL 5K

This year's *Live Well San Diego 5K* is going virtual ...and it's free! In partnership with 2-1-1 San Diego, the event will help celebrate the 10th Anniversary of the *Live Well San Diego* vision, bringing thousands of San Diegans "together" in support of a healthy, safe, and thriving San Diego County. The Virtual 5K Race will be held on **August 16**. Run or walk a 5K on August 16, report your time, and post photos on Facebook and Instagram! For more information and to register, visit www.LiveWellSD5k.com. You will receive a virtual bib to wear while completing the race and a limited edition trucker hat (while supplies last!)



STAY FIT FROM HOME

Physical fitness remains important for everyone as we continue to live under stay-at-home orders and practice social distancing. The Feeling Fit Club can help! Designed for older adults, the Feeling Fit Club is a functional fitness program. While in-person classes are not currently available, older adults can follow along to episodes on TV: Monday – Friday at 8:00 a.m., 1:00 p.m., and 4:00 p.m. on Cox channels 19 or 24, Time Warner channel 85, and U-verse channel 99. The classes can also be accessed online or by DVD. Visit www.aging.sandiegocounty.gov or call **(858) 495-5500** for details. You may also call to request a free stretch band to use at home.

KEEP COOL THIS SUMMER

It is important for older adults to take precautions during summer heat. Here are some tips to keep cool:

- Slow down. Be your most physically active during the coolest part of the day, usually early in the morning and late in the day. Pace yourself when engaging in physical activity.
- Stay indoors as much as possible. If air conditioning is not being used, stay on the lowest floor. Keep shades down and blinds closed, but windows slightly open.
- Electric fans do not cool the air, but they do help sweat evaporate, which cools your body.
- Take a cool shower, bath, or sponge bath.
- Avoid using the oven.
- Wear lightweight, loose-fitting, light-colored clothing. Light colors will reflect away some of the sun's heat.
- Air out hot cars before getting into them.
- Never leave children or pets inside vehicles at any time, even with the windows cracked. Temperatures inside a vehicle can reach lethal levels no matter what the weather is like.
- Drink more fluids than usual even if you do not feel thirsty.
- Water is the safest liquid to drink during heat emergencies. Avoid drinks with alcohol or caffeine; they make the heat's effects on your body worse.
- Eat small meals and eat more often. Avoid foods that are high in protein, which increases metabolic heat.
- Vacuum, clean, or replace air filters regularly for maximum cooling efficiency.
- Call your physician if you feel you may be experiencing a heat-related illness.

A limited number of air-conditioned Cool Zone locations are available this summer. Due to COVID-19, safety measures are in place to protect the health of Cool Zone visitors and staff. Anyone entering a Cool Zone will have their temperature taken. All visitors and staff must also wear face coverings and practice social distancing. Time limits may be in place due to limited capacity. Visit www.CoolZones.org to learn more about hours and locations.

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

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

JULY 30, THURSDAY 10-11:15 A.M.

The San Diego Humane Society is offering a *Virtual Estate Planning Seminar*. This free online presentation will share the do's and don'ts of setting up an estate plan; tips to plan for the future care of your pets; helpful retirement and tax-planning strategies; and how to establish your legacy and care for the people, causes, and pets that mean the most to you. RSVP in advance. To register, call (619) 243-3446 or click [here](#).

AUGUST 1, SATURDAY 10-11:30 A.M.

A virtual class, *Wake Up with Wildlife: Snakes in San Diego*, will be offered by the San Diego Herpetological Society. Learn about venomous and non-venomous snakes native to San Diego County, as well as how to identify them. RSVP in advance by clicking [here](#) or by visiting www.sdhumane.org/events.

AUGUST 12, WEDNESDAY 10-11:30 A.M.

An online class, *Important Conversation: Understanding Police Reform* (course #493), will be hosted by San Diego Oasis. This class is one in a series on current events. Join two experts to understand the complexity surrounding police reform conversations. Shelley Zimmerman was the first woman to ever serve as SDPD Chief of Police and her tenure of 35 years set a service record for sworn female

officers. Marisa T. Darden is a former assistant U.S. attorney and an assistant district attorney in the New York County DA's Office. Cost: \$15. Visit www.SanDiegoOasis.org for information and to register. For questions, call (619) 881-6262.

AUGUST 19, WEDNESDAY 11 A.M.-12 P.M.

An online class, *Let's Get Happier Today!*, will be hosted by Oasis Everywhere, a new collaboration involving Oasis Centers nationwide. In this class, you will learn a few ways to get happier every day by using gratefulness, thankfulness, and consideration. Cost: \$8. Note: class time is advertised as 1-2 p.m. Central Daylight Time. To learn more and register, visit www.oasiseverywhere.org.

AUGUST 20, THURSDAY 10-11:30 A.M.

An online workshop for caregivers, *Managing Resistance*, will be offered by Alzheimer's San Diego. If you're struggling with someone who refuses help, attend this webinar to explore what causes resistance. You'll develop new caregiving strategies to strengthen relationships, build trust, and preserve dignity. To register, visit www.alzsd.org or call (858) 492-4400.

AUGUST 20, THURSDAY 5:30-7:30 P.M.

The virtual *Alzheimer's Association Research Town Hall* will cover the latest groundbreaking discoveries in Alzheimer's research, theories, and studies that will help bring the world closer to breakthroughs in dementia

science. This free event will feature Dr. Carl Hill, Ph.D., MPH and a special group of local researchers. Visit <https://bit.ly/3eRsBTy> to RSVP, or call (800) 272-3900.

AUGUST 27, THURSDAY 12-1 P.M.

An online presentation, *The Hearing & Cognition Connection*, will be offered by Alzheimer's San Diego and Professional Hearing Associates, Inc., with support from the San Diego/Imperial Geriatric Education Center. Hearing loss affects one in three older adults in the U.S. today, impacting personal safety, social connection, and quality of life for many. Learn the primary causes of hearing loss, its relationship to dementia risk and other health conditions, and recent treatment innovations. To register, visit www.alzsd.org or call (858) 492-4400.

AUGUST 28, FRIDAY 11 A.M.-12 P.M.

An online class, *Current Events: August* (course #456), will be hosted by San Diego Oasis. Facilitator Rick LeVine will cover topics based on what's in the news (elections, court cases, law reform, tax cuts, foreign affairs, etc.). Each meeting includes lecture, dialogue, and Q&A. LeVine is an attorney and a former newscaster. Cost: \$10. Visit www.SanDiegoOasis.org for information and to register. For questions, 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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- Those requiring home-based care to prevent institutionalization

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