

# AGING & independence

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

## Life's Second Act: Time to Live a Dream

By Naomi Chavez  
Acting Director, Aging & Independence Services

Dr. Thomas Graham, 80, dreamed of working in law enforcement ever since he served as a proud member of the safety patrol at Dunbar Elementary in Tampa, Florida. He recalls local police officers saluting the school's fifth and sixth graders as they went about their duties. "That impressed me," he explains. He felt so proud! Despite a tour of duty in the U.S. Air Force and enthusiastically being ready to serve, Dr. Graham encountered resistance when he attempted to join the police department training academy. He was told he had problems with his eyesight which, upon outside evaluation, turned out not to be the case. Dr. Graham's dream was put on hold.



Dr. Thomas Graham (left) and his wife of 59 years, Barbara Graham (right)

Instead, he pursued a successful career with the United Parcel Service (UPS) and enjoyed a happy family life with his wife and three children, deciding to settle in the San Diego area. He filled his working years with numerous civic engagement activities, such

as coaching and working as a Little League umpire, volunteering with the American Red Cross, assisting with the establishment of the 4th District Senior Resource Center, and working on behalf of a variety of causes that uplifted the local community, including work in his church and on behalf of the black community. "I always tried to give back," Dr. Graham says.

In 1996, Dr. Graham retired from UPS. Suddenly, he had a lot of time on his hands—but not for long! He was in Jack in the Box one day and was asked by a member of the San Diego Police Department's Senior Volunteer Patrol if he was retired. He replied that he was—and the rest was history.

It may not have been as he initially envisioned it, but Dr. Graham finally had the chance to pursue his dream of working with law enforcement. At last, he too could be a civilian in uniform, serving his

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### FAREWELL AND THANK YOU TO FORMER AIS DIRECTOR KIMBERLY GALLO

After 24 years of service, Kimberly Gallo has retired from the County of San Diego. Most recently serving as Director of Aging & Independence Services (AIS), Kimberly oversaw the tremendous growth of the department, helping to secure the staffing needed to serve our region's rapidly growing older adult population. Among her many accomplishments is the creation of the Aging Roadmap, the County's comprehensive framework for aging services. AIS thanks Kimberly for her service and wishes her the best in retirement.



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community. Dr. Graham relished his time assisting with crime prevention, supporting officers, and assisting with traffic control, among the many duties he provided to the department. He eventually retired as the administrator of the San Diego Police Department's Senior Volunteer Patrol in 2014.

Dr. Graham took a break from law enforcement work for a few years to focus more deeply on ministerial activities and earn his Doctor of Theology degree. But before long, he found himself back in uniform. In 2018, Dr. Graham began serving with the San Diego County Sheriff's Department Rancho San Diego Station. His role as a Senior Volunteer Patrol member is different this time around. Now Dr. Graham serves on a team that visits clients in the YANA (You Are Not Alone) program. Homebound elderly or disabled adults enroll in YANA to gain the peace of mind that someone will be checking on them regularly.

Dr. Graham explains, "We call and make home visits. Sometimes we are the only visit they have received in a while." He continues, "We try to get them engaged and see that they are healthy." Dr. Graham and his colleagues share resources if a client is in need. In addition, Senior Volunteer Patrol members are on the lookout for warning signs of possible elder abuse. Dr. Graham notes, "We ask questions. We educate them on scams and tell them to let answering machines get their calls [from unknown numbers]. They do open up to us and I like that openness." If something doesn't seem right, patrol members alert the deputies who will investigate further.

Dr. Graham's volunteer service with the San Diego County Sheriff is one of the many volunteer opportunities through Aging & Independence Services (AIS) and the Retired & Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP). RSVP is an AmeriCorps program that seeks to engage Americans aged 55 and older in service to meet critical community needs. AIS also administers the Senior Volunteers in Action (SVA) program which connects those aged 50 and older to a variety of service activities. Older adults who volunteer through the AIS senior volunteer programs enjoy benefits such as personalized assistance selecting an opportunity that fits their talents and interests, supplemental insurance, and an invitation to participate in annual recognition events. In addition to helping the community,

volunteering has positive impacts on older adult volunteers' physical and mental health. Research studies have shown that volunteers experience reduced rates of depression, anxiety, and heart disease. They even have lower mortality rates.

Dr. Graham looks forward to many more years of service to the community through the Sheriff's Department and RSVP. Regardless of age, Dr. Graham urges others to continue to tap into their own strengths and resources to serve. He notes that people do not have to be in high-energy leadership roles to make a difference in their communities; there are many ways to be involved. For instance, Dr. Graham has always had an interest in local politics. By working with elected officials and discussing concerns he has had regarding his community, Dr. Graham has worked to reduce the number of new business licenses for organizations that arguably were over-represented in the neighborhood and were not contributing to the best interest of the community. He shares "I've found that it helps a lot for our council members to have people out in the audience at the meetings, supporting their efforts, just sitting out there." Sometimes helping out is as straightforward as simply showing up.

While living purposefully has required a lot of Dr. Graham's time and commitment, the rewards have also been great. Currently, Dr. Graham feels a deep sense of gratification not only through his law enforcement role, but also through his ministry activities. He served for many years as a senior pastor and now focuses on mentoring young ministers and connecting with pastors from different faith backgrounds to bring people together. Dr. Graham reaps the rewards of a lifetime of community connections he has built, from big successes to small moments of laughter; there are Little Leaguers who will still come up to him all these years later and exclaim, "That was NOT a strike!"

As Dr. Graham reflects on his journey, especially his retirement years, he advises others: "Stay involved as much as possible. We all have something that we can give. We all have a story to tell."

There may even be a dream inside waiting to be lived.

To learn about volunteer opportunities available through the RSVP and SVA programs, or to sign up for YANA, contact Armida Martinez at **(858) 505-6448** or **armida.martinez@sdcounty.ca.gov**.

# In the COMMUNITY

## WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Aging & Independence Services (AIS) is working to ensure that our communities are places where older adults and persons with disabilities can thrive. As the Area Agency on Aging for San Diego County, AIS creates an Area Plan every four years. The Area Plan outlines programs and services to meet the needs of our region's diverse aging population. Public feedback helps us focus on what's most important to the community.

We want to hear from you! Tell us what would improve your quality of life now and what you imagine might be needed in the future. There are a variety of ways to share your thoughts:

**Online:** Visit the Engage platform at <https://engage.sandiegocounty.gov/ais2024-28areaplan> (from Nov. 10-Dec. 10).

**Email:** Send feedback to [ais.getconnected.hhsa@sdcounty.ca.gov](mailto:ais.getconnected.hhsa@sdcounty.ca.gov) (through Dec. 10)

**Phone:** Leave a voicemail message at **(858) 495-5500** through Dec. 10 (note: feedback will be recorded, but you may not receive a call back. You may call the AIS Call Center at **(800) 339-4661** if you require customer service assistance regarding Adult Protective Services, In-Home Supportive Services, case management, or other resources).

**Mail:** Send written feedback to Aging & Independence Services, c/o Community Unit, PO Box 23217, San Diego, CA 92193-3217 (Postmark by Dec. 10).

## SERVE AS A LONG-TERM CARE OMBUDSMAN

Long-term Care Ombudsman program volunteers advocate to improve the quality of life for older adults and people with disabilities who are residents of nursing homes and residential care facilities. Volunteers engage in a variety of tasks, such as: visiting facilities to monitor and address issues, meeting with residents to offer support and assistance, advocating on behalf of residents in the resolution of complaints, and investigating issues of poor care or neglect.

In order to serve as an Ombudsman, prospective volunteers must attend a 36-hour certification training, make a one-year commitment of about five hour per week, have access to reliable transportation, and pass a physical and background check. For more information about volunteering, email [AIS\\_LTCOP@sdcounty.ca.gov](mailto:AIS_LTCOP@sdcounty.ca.gov) or call **(800) 640-4661**.

## JOIN THE AIS ADVISORY COUNCIL

The Aging & Independence Services (AIS) Advisory Council assists AIS staff members on policy and program needs related to its role as the Area Agency on Aging for San Diego County. There are nearly 30 members of the Advisory Council who meet the second Monday of each month at noon at the County Operations Center (5560 Overland Ave., San Diego 92123). The Council is currently seeking to fill open positions and is particularly seeking representation from those age 60 and older. Individuals from all ages and backgrounds are welcome. For more information on the Advisory Council or to apply to join, visit [www.aging.sandiegocounty.gov/AISadvisorycouncil](http://www.aging.sandiegocounty.gov/AISadvisorycouncil), email [AIS.AdvisoryCouncil.HHSA@sdcounty.ca.gov](mailto:AIS.AdvisoryCouncil.HHSA@sdcounty.ca.gov), or call **(858) 495-5858**.

## BECOME A PROFESSIONAL CAREGIVER

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

## VOLUNTEER OF THE QUARTER

Robert “Bob” Petrin was nominated for Volunteer of the Quarter by Meals on Wheels San Diego County Manager, Vivian Grifantini. Meals on Wheels relies on volunteers to deliver meals to older adults throughout the county. Bob delivers meals on two routes twice per week and has been an enormous help with delivery in the South County, a region that currently has fewer volunteers to meet the needs of clients. Bob began his volunteer journey with Meals on Wheels in 2018 and has completed over 463 hours of service.

Bob has been eager to help with annual fundraising and has helped raise funds for the Meals on Wheels Gala for the past two years. He participated in the Star Light Parade by painting his face and wearing a Grinch costume. Bob has been a hit with the children every year and also with the Meals on Wheels staff who continue to affectionately refer to him as “the Grinch.”

Bob is known by staff and volunteers as a person who gives from the heart. The older adults on his route love seeing him and look forward to each meal he delivers.

Vivian Grifantini is quick to celebrate Bob’s contributions to Meals on Wheels: “We so appreciate Bob! He is very active in helping the community and volunteers at other organizations.”

Bob has recently expanded his volunteer service through RSVP by joining Chula Vista Police Department, Senior Volunteer Patrol.

Congratulations, Bob, and thank you for serving your community!



Bob Petrin



## RSVP/SVA ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS NEEDED

Are you dedicated to volunteerism? Are you looking for ways to make a difference in your community? Do you have experience working with volunteers in a non-profit setting? Do you enjoy working with older adults?

If you answered ‘yes’ to one or more of these questions, consider applying to be part of the Retired & Senior Volunteer Program and Senior Volunteers in Action (RSVP/SVA) Advisory Council.

The Council meets once a month to provide support and direction to RSVP/SVA, often through active participation in volunteer programs and events. Activities include co-sponsoring annual RSVP/SVA volunteer recognition events with RSVP/SVA staff, annually assessing RSVP program performance, helping to promote RSVP/SVA in the community, and providing ongoing guidance and assistance to staff. As a bonus, you will meet other involved community members and become part of an amazing team of people!

All applications will be reviewed. Acceptance into the RSVP/SVA Advisory Council requires a majority vote by current council members. For more information, please contact Armida Martinez at (858) 505-6448 or [armida.martinez@sdcounty.ca.gov](mailto:armida.martinez@sdcounty.ca.gov).



## Get the Support You Need to Live Safely at Home... with Help from IHSS.



### SERVICES PROVIDED

Having help with tasks around the house not only makes the lives of seniors easier, but in some cases it allows the person to remain living at home. IHSS includes domestic and related services, and help with personal care such as: bathing and grooming, dressing, housecleaning, shopping, meal preparation/clean up, and more.

### ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible for IHSS, an individual must:

- Fall within financial eligibility guidelines
- Be blind, disabled, or age 65-plus
- Meet eligibility requirements for full-scope Medi-Cal
- AND be unable to live at home safely without help

### HOW TO APPLY

An applicant, or any person acting on behalf of an applicant, may submit an application to Aging & Independence Services (AIS) requesting an evaluation for IHSS. If eligible for services, applicants may hire a family member or loved one to assist with their care, or select a provider off a professional list for little or no cost.

Call the AIS Call Center at **(800) 339-4661** for information and to apply. Learn more about IHSS at [www.aging.sandiegocounty.gov](http://www.aging.sandiegocounty.gov).

## BECOME A 'DEMENTIA FRIEND'

In honor of National Alzheimer's Awareness Month, AIS is hosting a virtual Dementia Friends Session on **Friday, November 17 from 2-3 p.m.** In this interactive one-hour session you will learn: common signs and symptoms of Alzheimer's disease and related dementias, what it is like to live with dementia, tips on communicating with someone living with dementia, and how you can join efforts to make San Diego County a more dementia-friendly region. To register for the event visit, <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/virtualDFS>.

## FREE TAI CHI CLASSES-NEW LOCATION

In partnership with the City of San Diego, Aging & Independence Services is offering free *Tai Chi Moving for Better Balance* classes at the Southcrest Recreation Center (4149 Newton Ave., San Diego 92113) on Mondays (1:30-2:30 p.m.) and Thursdays (2-3 p.m.). This program was designed especially for older adults to reduce their risk of falls. Evidence suggests participating in the program reduces falls and fear of falling, and increases functional balance and physical performance. Walk-ins welcome.

For questions, email [HealthierLiving.HHSA@sdcounty.ca.gov](mailto:HealthierLiving.HHSA@sdcounty.ca.gov) or call **(858) 495-5500**. To learn about additional Tai Chi classes held throughout the county, visit [www.healthierlivingsd.org](http://www.healthierlivingsd.org).

## TOOL TO LOCATE QUALITY ASSISTED LIVING

Accepting that a loved one can no longer be safely cared for at home can be difficult. For those who are looking to identify quality assisted living facilities, Choose Well may be able to help.

Choose Well is a free, innovative, web-based tool sponsored by the County of San Diego that helps older adults and their families make informed decisions when selecting assisted living facilities. Visit <https://ChooseWellSanDiego.org> to discover specially evaluated Choose Well facilities that have voluntarily agreed to be scored on 11 measures of quality.



## CARE MANAGEMENT: MULTIPURPOSE SENIOR SERVICE PROGRAM

Sometimes staying independent in one's home means getting help. That extra help with bill paying, shopping, laundry, and other tasks can keep someone from needing to live in a nursing home. If you or a loved one are age 65+, eligible for Medi-Cal, and need assistance to continue living safely at home, consider applying for the Multipurpose Senior Services Program (MSSP). MSSP care managers work with the client, family members, and medical team to find and coordinate services in the home. Through the timely use of services, MSSP protects frail older adults and helps them live at home for longer.



Care management services include: a comprehensive health and psychosocial assessment; care planning with the client and family; arrangement of services; coordination of care with other community agencies; some limited payment of in-home services; monthly phone contact; quarterly home visits; and ongoing monitoring/phone contacts as needed.

For more information on MSSP or to apply, contact the AIS Call Center at **(800) 339-4661** M-F from 8 a.m.-5 p.m.

# COMMUNITY CALENDAR

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

## NOVEMBER 29, WEDNESDAY 3 P.M.

**Tech Help** will be available at the Serra Mesa-Kearny Mesa Library, 9005 Aero Dr., San Diego 92123. Bring your tablet, phone, or laptop for general questions and hands-on learning with your device. Call ahead to be sure time is available. Also available on other Wednesday afternoons and some Saturday mornings. Free. For details, call (858) 573-1396.

## DECEMBER 2, SATURDAY 10 A.M. - 1 P.M.

An event for gardeners, **Stop and Swap: Seeds, Plants, Veggies, Fruits, and Flowers**, will be held at the Rancho Peñasquitos Branch Library, 13330 Salmon River Road, San Diego 92129. Bring your garden's extras to share with other gardeners in the community. Garden Exchange is scheduled on the first and third Saturdays and takes place on the front patio. For more information, call (858) 538-8159 or email Adrienne Peterson, [akpeterson@sandiego.gov](mailto:akpeterson@sandiego.gov).

## DECEMBER 4, MONDAY 1:30-2:30 P.M.

A class, **Downsizing Made Easy**, will be held at the Lawrence Family JCC, 4126 Executive Dr., La Jolla 92037. Presenter Jami Shapiro comes from a family with hoarding disorder and chronic disorganization. She knows firsthand how difficult it is to part with

things and how clutter affects our mental and physical health. In this informative and humorous talk, she'll share tools and resources you need to declutter, organize, and "rightsized" for yourself or a loved one. Cost: \$10. JCC Members: Free. For more details or to register, visit [www.lfjcc.org/seniors/home.aspx](http://www.lfjcc.org/seniors/home.aspx) or call (858) 362-1141.

## DECEMBER 6, WEDNESDAY 6-7 P.M.

A free virtual class, **Healthy Living for Your Brain and Body**, will be presented by the Alzheimer's Association. Learn about research in the areas of diet and nutrition, exercise, cognitive activity and social engagement. Use hands-on tools that will help you incorporate recommendations into a plan for healthy aging. For details and to RSVP, visit [www.alz.org/events](http://www.alz.org/events) and click on "Educational Programs."

## DECEMBER 14, THURSDAY 1-2 P.M.

A class, **Kindness, Peace, Community: Goodness Around the Globe (Course #2199)**, will be hosted by San Diego Oasis at the Rancho Bernardo Lifelong Learning Center, 17170 Bernardo Center Dr., San Diego 92128. Hear from TEDx speaker Marilyn McPhie: a story from Scotland about a mother who provides not only food but principles; a story from the Thirty-Years War in Germany; magic to share from Kazakhstan, and more! Stories from many countries, and peoples to inspire the best in all of us. Cost: \$15. To RSVP, visit [www.SanDiegoOasis.org](http://www.SanDiegoOasis.org) or call (760) 796-6020.

## DECEMBER 15, FRIDAY 2 P.M.

**A Live International Folk Music Performance** with Aegean Echo and Tzidia will be held at San Diego Oasis, 5500 Grossmont Center Dr., Ste. 269, La Mesa 91942. This performance will feature two San Diego area bands. Tzidia will play music from the Balkans and beyond and Aegean Echo will play music from Greece and Asia Minor. Cost: \$20. Register for class #1372 at [www.SanDiegoOasis.org](http://www.SanDiegoOasis.org) or call (619) 881-6262.

## JANUARY 2, TUESDAY 1-2 P.M.

Free **Brain Health and Memory Screenings** will be offered in English and Spanish by the Sharp Neurocognitive Research Center at the San Ysidro Library, 4235 Beyer Blvd., San Diego 92173. For details and to reserve your spot, email [Esteban.Gonzalez@sharp.com](mailto:Esteban.Gonzalez@sharp.com) or call the library at (619) 424-0475. For additional screening locations and dates, visit [www.sharp.com/health-classes](http://www.sharp.com/health-classes).

## JANUARY 4, THURSDAY 1-2 P.M.

A free weekly **Drop-In Writing Group** will be held at the La Jolla/Riford Library, 7555 Draper Ave, La Jolla 92037. This fun group will write to a prompt and then read work aloud (if desired). Bring a pen and paper and let the creativity flow! Please arrive on time; doors close at 1 p.m. For details, contact Diane Malloy at [ljstaff@sandiego.gov](mailto:ljstaff@sandiego.gov) or (858) 552-1657.

### SEND IN YOUR ITEMS

We welcome your contributions to this calendar. Email: [sarah.jackson@sdcounty.ca.gov](mailto:sarah.jackson@sdcounty.ca.gov).





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## When You Don't Know Where To Turn Turn To Us!



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:

- Seniors
- 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.



Call Toll Free: **(800) 339-4661**  
[www.aging.sandiegocounty.gov](http://www.aging.sandiegocounty.gov)



COMMUNITY ENRICHMENT ▪ HEALTH INDEPENDENCE SERVICES

HOME-BASED SERVICES ▪ INFORMATION AND ASSISTANCE

▪ INFORMATION AND ASSISTANCE ▪ PROTECTION AND ADVOCACY ▪



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