

AGING & independence

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

Respite Program Helps More Caregivers Take a Break

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

There is a love that has been going strong for over 65 years. Alyce (82) and Paul DeGrasse (84) were high school sweethearts. They built a happy life together, getting married three days before Alyce's eighteenth birthday in their home state of Maine. Paul joined the army and later became a commercial airline pilot. Alyce became a devoted wife and mother to three children, and the family eventually settled in Southern California.

After Paul retired, Alyce and Paul enjoyed many lovely years together. They did square dancing and went on cruises. In 2012, however, Paul suffered a severe heart attack. Fortunately, he beat the odds and survived. Life returned to normal—sort of. Alyce started to notice some cognitive problems in Paul. Over time, she found herself assuming more and more of the daily tasks. Today, she is a full-time caregiver.

Ask anyone who has ever done it—caregiving is hard work. Caregivers are often “on the clock” 24/7. “For a long while, I was waking up every morning at 3 a.m.,” Alyce explains. “He started having sores and I had to get up every two hours to change him. I wasn't sleeping. I'd lie awake.”

Although caregiving is difficult on families of all types, middle-income families often struggle the most to find support. While high-income families have the resources



Alyce DeGrasse

to hire as much help as they need, and low-income families may find support through In-Home Supportive Services or other programs, very little infrastructure exists to support other families.

Concerned about this gap, County Supervisor Dianne Jacob wanted to do something to help those being squeezed in the middle—particularly those who are caring for loved ones with Alzheimer's disease or dementia. In 2019, at the request of Supervisor Jacob, the Board of Supervisors approved a respite care voucher program for caregivers of those living with dementia so that they would have an affordable way to hire help and be able to take a break from their

duties. Respite services are offered by County-contracted providers. The program is based on a cost-sharing model and allows caregivers to receive a limited amount of home care, adult day health care, or over-night assisted living care. The County covers approximately half of the cost of care and the caregiver pays the remaining portion. The affordability makes it possible for more caregivers to invest in some time for themselves.

The extra support from the County's respite voucher program has been a blessing for Alyce, who has resolved to care for Paul at home for as long as possible. “He took care of me for 64 years,” Alyce explains. She prides herself in giving him the best possible care. “Everyone says I feed

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him so well and his care team is amazed at how well he eats,” Alyce beams. “Fruit at lunch and veggie soup...it takes an hour to feed him.”

But while it is fulfilling to give back to the loving man who cared for her, Alyce finds that caregiving takes a toll. “I’m surviving. I was fine, but recently I’ve broken down a couple of times,” she admits. “There is not much time for myself.” Now that she has been able to make use of the respite voucher program, however, Alyce gets a little more time to herself. “I get four hours where I can. It comes in handy.” While friends and family encourage her to go out and have fun, Alyce finds that having time to take care of errands and just go to the grocery store is what she needs the most.

In addition to the support of home care, Alyce has been able to rely on assistance from her neighbors. One takes her trash cans in and out, another offers to pick up groceries. And, during the fires in North County last fall, her neighbors offered to help her evacuate. “It is good knowing I have some nice people around,” Alyce says. Being a caregiver takes a village.

In addition to the time commitment of caregiving, there are also emotional impacts, such as grief. Alyce has to reconcile how the man she shared her life with has changed. “Paul loved boating. He went to Catalina every week and he had his own-boat building company. This is why it is so sad to see this. He could do everything. Now I’m left to do everything. He is a wonderful man...it is so sad to see him like this.”

While it is painful to reflect on how much Paul has changed, Alyce still finds simple joys, such as “seeing that smile when he wakes up.” She also enjoys just talking with him and getting him to laugh. “He’ll pat my face. He still loves me.”

For now, caregiving consumes her days, but Alyce knows that inevitably the day will come when she’ll lose her beloved husband and her time as a caregiver will come to an end. She plans to focus on volunteering her time. “I want to give back, especially to hospice. They’ve been so good to me.” She also plans to spend more time with her daughter, who is moving to San Diego this month.

In the meantime, Alyce’s dedication to Paul is unwavering. “I’m happy just taking care of him,” Alyce explains. “The kids say, ‘Mother, we are going to have two beds in here if you don’t slow down!’”

Alyce’s message for other caregivers is to “get as much help as you can and try to get out as much as possible.” She is grateful that she connected with the respite program and is able to receive extra support that allows her to continue caring for Paul. “It means everything to me that I can care for him at home,” Alyce says. “He’s been everything to me. I wouldn’t want it any other way.”

For more information on the County’s cost-sharing respite program, call the Aging & Independence Services Call Center at **(800) 339-4661**. Call Center social workers can also provide information on other caregiver services, including respite, for caregivers of those who are not living with Alzheimer’s disease or dementia.

CAREGIVER WORKSHOPS

Friday, February 14 from 10 a.m.-12 p.m.: *Safety at Home* will be held at Scripps Miramar Ranch Library, 10301 Scripps Lake Dr., San Diego 92131. Learn important home safety tips to keep people living with memory loss safe at home. Reduce the risk of wandering, falls, household injuries, medication errors, and more. To RSVP, visit www.alzsd.org or call **(858) 492-4400**.

Sunday, February 16 from 2-3 p.m.: *Understanding and Responding to Dementia-Related Behaviors* will be held at the Chula Vista Public Central Library, 365 F St., Chula Vista 91910. Learn to decode behavioral messages, identify common behavior triggers, and discover strategies to help intervene with some of the most common behavioral challenges of Alzheimer’s disease. To RSVP, call **(800) 272-3900** or visit www.alz.org/events.

Friday, March 6 from 11:30 a.m.-12 p.m.: *Caregiver Webinar-Hoarding Disorder: Characteristics and Treatment* will be offered online at www.caregivercoalitionsd.org. Topics will include characteristics and behaviors of those struggling with hoarding, treatment of hoarding disorder, and how to assist someone to receive treatment. Visit www.caregivercoalitionsd.org and click on “For Caregivers” and then “Webinars” to RSVP.

In the COMMUNITY

LET'S GET READY FOR THE 2020 CENSUS!

Every ten years the federal government is mandated by the U.S. Constitution to count all persons living in the United States through the decennial census. A Census undercount for a region could result in the loss of precious dollars for public services for a decade. From schools, to transportation, to representation in Congress, our participation can shape the future of the San Diego region for the next 10 years.

Starting in mid-March 2020, each household will begin to receive correspondence in the mail from the U.S. Census Bureau informing them of the options for filling out the Census questionnaire, including online, by phone, or by a requested paper form. The letters will include your unique ID number that must be used to fill out the questionnaire.

Be counted in 2020. Help ensure our community receives crucial funding by participating in the U.S. Census.

Learn more at 2020census.gov or CountMe2020.org.

SPRING INTO HEALTHY LIVING

A free senior health and technology fair, *Spring into Healthy Living*, will be held on **Wednesday, March 4 from 9 a.m.-12 p.m.** at the McGrath Family YMCA, 12006 Campo Rd., Spring Valley 91978.

Hosted by the East County Action Network (ECAN) and other community partners, the event will feature health screenings, presentations, community resources, and opportunity drawings. There will also be prescription drug take-back from 9:30-11:30 a.m. Attendees will receive free breakfast.

Registration starts February 1 and will be open through March 3. To register, call **(877) 926-8300**.

All attendees must bring a photo ID to enter the YMCA building. For more information, email Hazel.Quinones@sdcounty.ca.gov.

'GRANNY FLAT' SYMPOSIUM

Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs), commonly known as "granny flats," are one housing option that allow older adult homeowners to earn additional income through renting, or benefit from living in close proximity to friends or family.

An *Accessory Dwelling Unit Symposium* will be held on **Saturday, March 7 from 10 a.m.-12 p.m.** at the Spring Valley Community Center, 8735 Jamacha Blvd., Spring Valley 91977.

Hosted by Aging & Independence Services and the County's Planning and Development Services, the Symposium will help attendees learn: common benefits and concerns regarding ADUs; tips to get started with construction, building costs, and unit design; County permitting, planning, and fees; budget considerations; and more!

Although the Symposium will focus on the unincorporated areas, all San Diego County residents are welcome to attend to learn general information about ADUs. For information or to register, please contact Christy Patch at **(858) 495-5037** or Christina.Patch@sdcounty.ca.gov.



SENIOR VOLUNTEERS

VOLUNTEERS OF THE MONTH

Monte Turner, the Board President of Senior Gleaners of San Diego County, nominated two special volunteers as Volunteers of the Month for February 2020: Daryush Bastani and Margaret Burton.

Senior Gleaners glean surplus food from fields, backyards, stores, and restaurants and distribute the food to non-profit agencies throughout the county that feed the hungry, such as the San Diego Food Bank. Margaret is the crew leader and Daryush is the substitute crew leader of a group of seniors who pick fruit in Clairemont and the surrounding areas, primarily from backyard picking sites. Their crew is one of five that cover all of San Diego county.

Along with their typical fruit gleaning duties, both volunteers have taken on additional roles, such as coordination and crew support. Margaret drives an extended cab pickup truck to the picking sites, which she uses to transport volunteers, equipment, and supplies. She also transports boxes of produce to drop-off locations after the picking session. Daryush hauls produce when needed as well. They work together to facilitate carpools or pick up crew members who don't drive. They help foster social connections by including stops for coffee or treats along the way.

Daryush and Margaret also both assist with outreach and promotion. They have attended numerous events and festivals to represent Senior Gleaners at an information table in order to recruit new volunteers and fruit donors. They even appeared on a local morning talk show to promote the Gleaners. In addition, last year Daryush and Margaret teamed up to design, order, and sell Senior Gleaners shirts and baseball caps. Margaret machine embroiders each item with the Gleaners' logo while Daryush handles sales and distribution. Both contribute financially to support the Gleaners as well. For two years in a row, Margaret has recruited more sponsors than any other volunteer.

Daryush and Margaret stand out for their motivation and eagerness to help with new projects and extra assignments. Once given a project, they take full responsibility without needing extra help or guidance. They are very welcoming to new crew members and inspire caring and



Daryush Bastani and Margaret Burton

camaraderie among all their fellow volunteers. Their enthusiasm for the Gleaners' mission is contagious. Daryush and Margaret each have a strong work ethic and great sense of humor. They are infectiously positive and wonderful ambassadors for Gleaners.

In addition to what they each do for San Diego Senior Gleaners, they both volunteer for other organizations. Daryush volunteers with San Diego Canyonlands and Jewish Family Service, while Margaret volunteers at Vitas Hospice. The Gleaners (and San Diego County) are lucky to have these two wonderful volunteers. Thank you, Daryush and Margaret, for all your hard work and dedication to the community!



SENIOR VOLUNTEERS
IN ACTION



Give. Grow. Volunteer.

Are you looking for a flexible volunteer opportunity to feed your mind, body, and spirit while serving the community? Aging & Independence Services can help! Through Senior Volunteers in Action (SVA) and the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), you can make an impact in rewarding fields such as law enforcement, senior services, youth mentorship, museums and the arts, and more. Contact the senior volunteer programs office today at **(858) 505-6399**.



PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

CHULA VISTA WALKS: THRIVE BY WALKING

Chula Vista Walks, a dynamic, peer-led walking program currently sponsored by the City of Chula Vista, empowers mature adults to improve their physical and mental wellbeing through walking. They are a proud *Live Well San Diego* Partner. Founded in 2015 as part of a National Institutes of Health and University of California at San Diego School of Family Medicine & Public Health initiative, the program helps over 40 South Bay seniors thrive by walking.

Currently, older adults are the least active population group in the U.S. Additionally, many are not meeting the National Physical Activity recommendations of 150 minutes of moderate intensity activity per week. National data show that less than 3% of older adults meet Physical Activity guidelines

Yet, research has shown that an increase in physical activity, even in the most frail, can have immediate and profound effects on health. Physical activity can improve physical, mental and social health, as well as decrease depression and many chronic diseases.

Unlike jogging and many high-intensity exercise classes, walking is low impact, which is especially suited to older adults. Because walking is a weight-bearing exercise, it helps build bone mass. Walking is free and requires no expensive sporting equipment, exercise machines or specific locales (like a baseball diamond, a gym or a tennis court, etc.), just a pair of comfortable walking shoes.

A recent publication by Harvard University found that walking reduced the risk of cardiovascular events by 31% and cut the risk of dying by 32%. Walking also was found to improve cardiac risk factors such as high cholesterol, high blood pressure, diabetes, obesity, vascular stiffness and inflammation, and mental stress.

Chula Vista Walks members meet twice a week, rain or shine, to walk all over San Diego County. The adjacent column highlights some of the group's walkers and how their consistent walking is helping them thrive.

Start Thriving! For more information about Chula Vista Walks, or to start a walking group in your neighborhood, contact Khalisa Bolling at kbolling@ucsd.edu or Diana Milburn at luismom@me.com.

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.

Thriving Chula Vista Walkers



Deanne: Age 73; Initial number of daily steps: 2,230; Now: 6,000 steps (roughly 3 miles)

Self-Reported Benefits: Deanne has more endurance, fewer aches and pains, and greatly diminished back pain. She also reports no longer needing diabetes medication and being able to reduce her gout medication intake. Deanne loves the opportunity to socialize while walking.



Amy: Age 87; Initial number of daily steps: 3,200; Now: 6,500 steps (roughly 3.25 miles)

Self-Reported Benefits: Amy reports feeling much better in general, as well as having more energy, fewer aches and pains, and most importantly, she has not fallen since she began the program. Amy really enjoys her new walking group friends.



Richard: Age 72; Initial number of daily steps: 300; Now: 3,000 steps (roughly 1.5 miles)

Self-Reported Benefits: Richard has a better sense of balance and less chronic pain. He also experiences less anxiety. Richard looks forward to walk days with friends and organizes post-walking coffee and breakfast gatherings.



John: Age 80; Initial number of daily steps: 4,000; Now: 7,000 steps (roughly 3.5 miles)

Self-Reported Benefits: Due to his walking program, John reports that he is no longer pre-diabetic. His improved fitness allowed him to resume his walking regimen within two weeks of receiving a heart stent. John says that he feels happier, more robust, and has improved mental clarity and balance. John enjoys keeping his fellow walkers motivated by telling jokes.

STILL TIME TO GET A FLU SHOT

Flu season typically peaks between December and February most years, but it can last as late as May in the United States. The best way to prevent catching the flu is to get the flu vaccine every year. If you have not yet received your flu vaccine, it is not too late! The vaccine is available at many retail pharmacies and physician offices. To find a site for a flu shot, call **2-1-1** or visit www.sdiz.org.



CHECK YOUR BLOOD PRESSURE ON VALENTINE'S DAY

Love Your Heart is an annual event in which organizations from across the U.S. and Mexico join together to provide FREE blood pressure screenings to the public on Valentine's Day, February 14.

Last year's Love Your Heart event helped over 43,000 people get to know their blood pressure numbers and take charge of their own heart health.

The only way to know if you have high blood pressure is to have your blood pressure checked. Heart disease can be prevented when people make healthy choices and manage their health conditions.

Visit LoveYourHeartSD.org for more information and to find a screening site near you.



HEALTHIER LIVING CLASSES

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

Healthier Living with Chronic Conditions:

February 11-March 17 (Tuesdays), 9-11:30 a.m. at Paradise Village, 2700 E. 4th St., National City 91950.

Healthier Living with Diabetes:

February 19-March 25 (Wednesdays), 9:30 a.m.-12 p.m. at Alvarado Hospital Medical Center, 6645 Alvarado Rd., West Tower, Ste. 230, San Diego 92120.

Healthier Living with Chronic Pain:

February 24-March 30 (Mondays), 10 a.m.-12:30 p.m. at Los Acros Senior Apartments, 12740 Gateway Park Rd., Poway 92064.

Visit www.HealthierLivingSD.org, or call **(858) 495-5500** to leave a message and learn more.

NEW TAI CHI CLASS!

Improve your balance and mobility with Tai Chi! A new class, ***Tai Chi for Arthritis***, will be held at Silvercrest San Diego, 727 E St., San Diego 92101. All are welcome to attend this free class.

Additional Tai Chi classes are offered in the communities of Imperial Beach, South San Diego/South Bay, Linda Vista, and Tierrasanta.

All classes are sponsored by Aging & Independence Services.

Visit www.HealthierLivingSD.org, or call **(858) 495-5500** to leave a message.

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

FEBRUARY 13, THURSDAY 10-11 A.M.

A class, *Maintaining a Healthy Heart Class: Know Your Risk Factors*, will be held at the Pt. Loma/Hervey Branch Library, 3701 Voltaire St., San Diego 92107. Learn what may put you at risk for developing heart disease and the steps you can take to maintain a healthy heart, including the crucial role of nutrition and exercise. The effects of stress, hypertension, diabetes, obesity, and cholesterol will also be covered. RSVP to www.sharp.com/classes or (800) 827-4277.

FEBRUARY 13, THURSDAY 1-3:30 P.M.

The Parkinson's Association of San Diego is hosting its free *Good Start Program* at the Tri-City Wellness Center, 6250 El Camino Real, Carlsbad 92009. Designed for newly diagnosed patients and care partners, attendees will learn about maintaining a positive attitude, understanding Parkinson's, common medications, and more. RSVP at (858) 999-5671 or parkinsonsassociation.org.

FEBRUARY 14, FRIDAY 8 A.M.-12 P.M.

Attend a free *Blood Pressure Screening* as part of Love Your Heart Day at St. Paul's PACE in El Cajon, 1306 Broadway, El Cajon 92021. Get a blood pressure reading and receive educational materials. For details,

call (619) 551-7400 or email Lizette at ljalindo@stpaulseniors.org. Visit LoveYourHeartSD.org for other screening locations.

FEBRUARY 18, TUESDAY 12:30-1:30 P.M.

Mind-Body Fitness for Older Adults will be held at the La Jolla/Riford Library, 7555 Draper Ave., La Jolla 92038. This restorative and contemplative class is designed to promote physical and emotional balance, release stress, and create greater inner awareness through Hatha Chair Yoga. Call (858) 552-1657.

FEBRUARY 22, SATURDAY 9:30 A.M.

Seniors Computer Group of San Diego meets every Saturday morning at 9:30 a.m. at Wesley Palms retirement community in Pacific Beach, 2404 Loring Street, San Diego 92109. Individual and group instruction on how to get more from computers and smart phones. Open to beginners and "geeks" as well. No charge to visitors. Free coffee, tea, juice, and cookies. Learn more at www.scgsd.org.

FEBRUARY 25, TUESDAY 10 A.M.-12 P.M.

Living with Memory Loss, a class designed for people living with early-stage memory loss and their care partners, will be held at Alzheimer's San Diego, 6632 Convoy Ct., San Diego 92111. Learn strategies for adapting to

daily challenges, enhancing health and wellbeing, and planning for the future. To register, visit www.alzsd.org or call (858) 492-4400.

FEBRUARY 27, THURSDAY 12-3:30 P.M.

Ballroom Dance Lessons and Live Entertainment will be held at the Balboa Park Club Ballroom, 2150 Pan American Road West (off of Park Blvd. and Presidents Way), San Diego 92101. Celebrate Mardi Gras and march, dance, and shimmy with friends to the rhythms of "Janet Hammer Band." There is a \$5 charge at the door, which includes dance lessons from 12-1 p.m., live entertainment, refreshments, and prizes. For details, call the City of San Diego's AgeWell Services at (619) 525-8247.

FEBRUARY 29, SATURDAY 2-3:30 P.M.

A free presentation, *Aggressive Medical Treatment: If Only Someone Had Warned Us*, will be held at Vision, 4780 Mission Gorge Place, Ste. H, San Diego 92120. One-third of elderly patients over 70 leave the hospital in worse shape than when they arrived. The presenter will be Dr. Hoeffler, Chief Medical Officer of Sharp HealthCare's outpatient palliative care program, who co-developed an evidence-based disease management program to keep chronically ill people with late stage illness in their homes as long as possible. For details, call (619) 233-4418.

ADVISORY COUNCIL

The AIS Advisory Council will meet on Monday, February 10 at AIS: 5560 Overland Ave., 3rd Floor, San Diego 92123.

SEND IN YOUR ITEMS

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



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