

AGING & independence

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

IHSS RECIPIENTS AND IHSS CAREGIVERS: A PARTNERSHIP IN CARING

By Kimberly Gallo
Director, Aging & Independence Services

It's a light-hearted question most people haven't heard during a job interview: "Do you like Tom Jones?" But when In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) recipient Demra, 57, interviews potential care providers, she is sure to ask—and to her, the topic is serious business.

Fortunately, Marissa "Rissa" Chavez, 44, passed the "Tom Jones test"—in addition to having caregiving experience under her belt—and became Demra's long-term care provider. The two have been a team now for twenty years.

The IHSS program provides homemaker and personal care assistance to eligible individuals who are receiving Supplemental Security Income or meet all Medi-Cal income eligibility requirements and need help in the home to remain independent and avoid the need for out-of-home care. IHSS includes domestic and related services, as well as help with personal care such as bathing and grooming, housecleaning, shopping, meal preparation, and more. In San Diego County, over 39,000 recipients receive services from approximately 34,400 caregivers (also known as "individual providers"). IHSS recipients can hire a loved one who meets certain qualifications to be their caregiver, or they can hire a professional caregiver

from a registry. The IHSS Public Authority (PA) is the entity that manages the registry. The PA also assists caregivers with completing the State-mandated enrollment process and offers training and payroll assistance.

Demra relies upon IHSS to assist with home and personal care needs so that she can live as independently as possible—a life where she can call the shots. And while the relationship started out as purely professional between two strangers, over time the two have become like family. In the beginning though, it wasn't always easy. Rissa wasn't sure if she was going to be able to do this type of work. "I had to look inside and ask," she explains. "Demra and I even went to counseling because I wanted to provide her with the best support and learn how to work better together. She was trying to tell me something and I didn't understand." Fortunately, with help from Demra's family and other support people, Rissa and Demra

learned to work together, and the relationship flourished. Eventually, Rissa moved into Demra's home and became her live-in provider.

In addition to day-to-day caregiver tasks, Rissa sees part of her role as being an advocate. She helps Demra to achieve her goals and ensures that Demra's entire

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Demra (left) and her IHSS provider Rissa (right) enjoy a special outing to Super Nintendo World at Universal Studios.

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care team, including physicians or additional caregivers, is dedicated to her wellbeing. For instance, Rissa helps Demra to interview supplemental caregivers who provide support on weekends. Sometimes interviewees struggle to understand Demra's speech so Rissa will help convey her message. She will also observe Demra's reactions. "I learned that Demra shares all of her emotion in her face. She wrinkles her face up if she doesn't like something. I can look and see where she is at," Rissa explains. Rissa is also careful to observe how the candidate interacts with Demra. Do they not speak directly to Demra? Do they direct all of their attention at Rissa? These are red flags she'll keep in mind. Using her observations and intimate knowledge of Demra's needs and preferences, Rissa supports Demra to make decisions.

Rissa's advocacy efforts extend beyond Demra's household. Both Demra and Rissa have been involved with the IHSS/Public Authority Advisory Committee. The Committee advises IHSS, the Public Authority, and the San Diego County Board of Supervisors on issues related to IHSS. Demra served as a representative for IHSS recipients for several years, while Rissa currently serves as vice-chair. By participating in the Committee, Rissa can contribute to the program she respects so much: "I like to make sure IHSS is well-rounded. I am a huge clients rights advocate." Plus, she adds, "I am nosy and like to know what's going on! I also like to make sure that people with disabilities are 'in the know' just like anyone else."

Most people who become caregivers have a natural inclination to help others. Looking after oneself, however, can sometimes take practice. Caregivers who struggle to prioritize their own wellbeing often are not able to provide optimal care and may suffer from burnout or depression. Rissa does her best to practice regular self-care. "I've been on a health kick," she explains. "I have a good diet. I love to cook, grow vegetables, and visit friends." She also gets a boost from learning new things and sharing that knowledge. For instance, Rissa assists with providing online self-advocacy trainings for the State Council on Developmental Disabilities. She enjoys talking and connecting with others. "I have a big mouth, but I use it for good," Rissa laughs. She also stays balanced pursuing meaningful activities outside of her direct caregiving role: she works at GiGi's Playhouse Down Syndrome Achievement Center, is taking online business management courses, and takes part in the San Diego People First organization's activities, such as movie night.

Rissa has the following advice for providers who may be experiencing chronic stress or caregiver burnout: "Take a step back and try to self-reflect. Try to get to know yourself. What's one thing that puts a smile on your face?" When Rissa is feeling stressed, she looks to things that bring her a spark of joy: "I love silly things...garden gnomes, cows." She acknowledges, however, that there are times when a caregiver might need to turn to a professional for help or take some time off to decompress.

While providing care can be hard work even under the best of circumstances, there is also time for fun. For many years, Demra would save up for an annual trip to Las Vegas, and Rissa would accompany her. The pair have been on various other road trips, such as to Big Bear, often with Tom Jones blaring from the speakers. Rissa and Demra go to Disneyland, Universal Studios, or some other special destination for Demra's birthday each year as well. Demra even helps to plan birthday parties for Rissa.

For Rissa, being an IHSS caregiver and working in the field of disabilities is a fulfilling career. "I enjoy what I do," she explains. "Not that I can't do anything else, but I wouldn't want to. It is probably one of the best jobs I have ever had. It may not pay the most, but it is so rewarding." Working with Demra has been especially gratifying: "When I come home and Demra is excited to see me, [I realize] that not only are you providing care, but the person is providing care back at you."

And when it comes to Tom Jones, Rissa admits, "I shouldn't know as many songs as I do, but Demra is living her best life!"

To learn more about opportunities to become an IHSS caregiver, visit the Public Authority website at www.sdihsspa.com or call (866) 351-7722. For information on IHSS, including eligibility, visit www.aging.sandiegocounty.gov or call the AIS Call Center at (800) 339-4661. For more information about the IHSS/Public Authority Advisory Committee, visit www.sdihsspa.com/advisorycmte.

The IHSS program compensates caregivers for their work providing assistance with activities of daily living for IHSS recipients. Over time, some caregivers and recipients, such as Rissa and Demra, spend additional time together engaging in recreational activities outside of the authorized IHSS hours.

In the COMMUNITY

BECOME A PROFESSIONAL CAREGIVER

Help older adults and disabled individuals who receive In-Home Supportive Services 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.sdihsdpa.com/regapp. For more information about the Public Authority, visit www.sdihsdpa.com.



PUBLIC AUTHORITY
In-Home Supportive Services
San Diego County

CARE MANAGEMENT: MULTI-PURPOSE 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.

AIS BULLETIN IS GOING QUARTERLY: STAY INFORMED

The Aging & Independence Services Bulletin is moving to a quarterly publishing schedule beginning with this Summer edition. There may be additional special editions released throughout the year. To stay up-to-date with County and community-sponsored events and programs, you may enroll in the Gov Delivery email subscription service at bit.ly/AISGovDelivery. To enroll, complete the following steps:

- 1) Visit bit.ly/AISGovDelivery
- 2) Log on with your desired email address. (From there you can password protect your preferences, change your email address, or remove yourself at any time by accessing your subscriber preferences page.)
- 3) Select any or all topics listed under Aging & Independence Services.
- 4) Save your changes and look for a confirmation via email verifying the updates you made.
- 5) Click the subscriber preferences link, and select Email Delivery Preference (immediately, daily, or weekly) under the Preference tab. It is recommended to set your email preference to receive emails immediately.

Organizations wishing to share community event information pertinent to older adults and persons with disabilities via the AIS Gov Delivery Listserv may email HHSA.Ais-CAN@sdcounty.ca.gov to submit a request. The AIS Outreach & Education team will determine if the submission can be released through the GovDelivery system based on factors such as the specifics of the submission and how many submissions on similar topics have been made.



VOLUNTEERS OF THE MONTH

Frances Story was nominated as Volunteer of the Month for July 2023 by Rosemary Pope, Executive Director of the Fourth District Senior Resource Center (FDSRC). Frances has been a Volunteer with RSVP since April of 2022, averaging 95 hours per month with 1,520 lifetime hours.

Some of Frances' volunteer roles include: Special Events Coordinator, Telephone Reassurance Peer Advocate, Front Desk Receptionist, Member of the FDSRC Board of Directors, Outreach/Recruitment Coordinator, and Nutrition and Health Specialist. Among her many responsibilities, Frances has helped organize monthly food distribution events to help those facing food insecurity. Frances has also helped organize fundraisers to support FDSRC. Recently, Frances assisted FDSRC as the organization proudly held their 27th annual Juneteenth Event. Frances has been at the center as early as 4 a.m., assisting with Fish Fridays, and has stayed as late as 11 p.m., helping with accounting and administrative work. There have been weeks that Ms. Frances has dedicated over 50 hours to volunteer service!



Frances Story

"Frances's winning smile and pleasant demeanor earn her much respect, love, and praise. She performs these volunteer services with little or no recognition yet gives us life's most precious commodity...her time," says Rosemary Pope. Congratulations, Frances! Thanks for all that you do for your community.



Stan Vander May

Stan Vander May was nominated as Volunteer of the Month for August 2023 by Captain Ronald Sheffer from California Highway Patrol (CHP) Oceanside Area 650. Stan joined the Senior Volunteer Program (SVP) in 2014 and has completed over 4,500 service hours. Stan was an SVP Administrator for four years and was a huge asset during the COVID-19 pandemic, during which he helped lead his station through some difficult times.

Stan has served as a Field Trainer for new volunteers, ensuring they are well-equipped to conduct their road shifts safely and efficiently. Stan has also been responsible for administration, public affairs, recruitment, and SVP child safety seat program coordination. He participates in special events such as parades, DUI checkpoints, and toy distributions.

Stan's favorite part of volunteering is the combination of meaningful community service and connecting with fellow volunteers. Stan's character is an example for his peers. He is a professional leader, an excellent manager, and a calm, level-headed person. Stan's colleagues note that he has the ability to identify situations that may need attention and take appropriate action before there is escalation. Ron Sheffer, CHP SVP Administrator shares, "Stan always gives 100% to all the activities he volunteers for with the SVP organization. The senior volunteers and CHP Officers recognize his leadership, management, and teamwork abilities." Congratulations, Stan, and thank you for the service to your community!

VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION

Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) and Senior Volunteers in Action (SVA) participants were honored at four recognition events held across the county in May. We want to extend a special thank you to all the station administrators and volunteers who attended. We appreciate all your continued support. Visit www.seniorvolunteersd.org to view the slide show of this year's annual recognition event. To learn more about volunteer opportunities, call (858) 495-5039 or email Erika.Sosa@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.

COOL ZONES FOR HOT DAYS

Each summer, older adults are encouraged to beat the heat by visiting Cool Zones throughout the county. These air-conditioned sites welcome older adults and persons with disabilities free of charge. Some offer social opportunities, meals, or other resources. The effects of heat can be greater on older adults and their bodies may not provide the same warning signs as they did at younger ages. Visit www.CoolZones.org or call **2-1-1** to locate a Cool Zone near you.



People in San Diego County unable to get to a Cool Zone location without transportation assistance, such as older adults, people with disabilities, or people who are homebound, can call **2-1-1** to be connected to a transportation or rideshare service at no cost.

Homebound individuals may not be able to take advantage of traditional Cool Zone sites. To help community members who are unable to leave home to beat the heat, the County of San Diego, in partnership with SDG&E, provides free electric fans to those who are 60 years of age and older, or disabled, living on limited incomes. Please be advised it is not recommended to rely on electric fans for cooling if temperatures exceed 90 degrees. To fill out an eligibility survey, visit www.CoolZones.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.



RESOURCES FOR CAREGIVERS OF THOSE LIVING WITH DEMENTIA

If you are caring for someone living with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias, there are resources that can support you in your important role as a caregiver:

Caregiver Handbook: a collection of information and tools to help caregivers address common needs, communicate with healthcare providers, access valuable local resources, prioritize self-care, and much more! To download the handbook, visit www.caregivercoalitionsd.org/resources.

Dementia-Friendly Activities Toolkit: includes activities and resources that support the needs of people living with dementia and make it easier for them to remain engaged in pleasurable and interesting activities. To download the toolkit, visit www.livewellsd.org/dementiafriendly.

Communication Tip Card: designed to help caregivers facilitate positive and compassionate interactions between the person with dementia and members of the community. To download, visit www.livewellsd.org/dementiafriendly.

All of these materials are available in English, Spanish, Arabic, Tagalog, and Vietnamese. To request a print copy, e-mail AISAlzheimer.HHSA@sdcounty.ca.gov.

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

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

AUGUST 21, MONDAY 1-2 P.M.

San Diego Oasis will offer a free class, **Digital Safety with Cox Communications (Course #622)**, at the Grossmont Lifelong Learning Center, 5500 Grossmont Center Dr., Ste 269, La Mesa 91942. Join Cox Communications for an overview of online safety tips. Learn what to do if you ever become victim of a digital scam. To RSVP, visit www.SanDiegoOasis.org or call (619) 881-6262.

AUGUST 23, WEDNESDAY 2:30-4:30 P.M.

A free **Caregiver Basics Workshop** will be offered at the Grossmont Healthcare District Conference Center, 9001 Wakarusa St., La Mesa 91942. Learn how to care for your loved ones and yourself from a team of Sharp HealthCare providers. To register, visit www.sharp.com/health-classes or call (800) 827-4277.

AUGUST 26, SATURDAY 9 A.M.

A free class, **Senior 101 (Course #2176)**, will be held at San Diego Oasis at the Rancho Bernardo Lifelong Learning Center, 17170 Bernardo Center Dr., San Diego 92128. Hear about the many resources available for seniors and their families, including aging in place, senior living options, legal and financial tools, and many more. To RSVP, visit www.SanDiegoOasis.org or call (760) 796-6020.

AUGUST 26, SATURDAY 10 A.M.-12 P.M.

A free presentation by the Solana Center on **Backyard Composting and Bokashi Basics** will be held at the Rancho Santa Fe Library, 17040 Avenida de Acacias, Rancho Santa Fe 92067. Learn about traditional composting and bokashi, a fermentation method that will allow you to compost all your food waste, including, meat, dairy, and liquids and will improve your soil biome. Call (858) 756-2512 for more information.

AUGUST 29, TUESDAY 10-11:30 A.M.

Do you love to play the ukulele? Come play with **The Merrie Ukes** at the Bonita-Sunnyside Library, 4375 Bonita Rd., Bonita 91902. Have fun learning some songs and playing in a group. Beginners are welcome. For details, call (619) 475-4642 or email bonitalibrary@sdcounty.ca.gov.

AUGUST 31, THURSDAY 10-11:30 A.M.

A free seminar, **Cash Flow in Retirement**, will be held at the Grossmont Healthcare District Conference Center, 9001 Wakarusa St., La Mesa 91942. Learn about the Home Equity Leverage Program (HELP) as an alternative to a reverse mortgage. To register, visit www.sharp.com/health-classes or call (800) 827-4277.

SEPTEMBER 5, TUESDAY 11:45 A.M.-12:30 P.M.

Chair Yoga will be held at the Serra Mesa-Kearny Mesa Library,

9005 Aero Dr., San Diego 92123. Work on your flexibility, build strength, and quiet your mind with functional movement practice. Participate at your own ability. Wear flexible clothing and bring any preferred yoga equipment. Chairs provided. Suitable for adults of all ages. Free. For details, call (858) 573-1396.

SEPTEMBER 9, SATURDAY 2:30-4 P.M.

A fun presentation, **Richard Lederer and Bill Shipper: Dances with Words**, will be held at the Mission Hills/Hillcrest Library, 215 W. Washington St., San Diego 92103. Bestselling author Richard Lederer and comedian Bill Shipper will perform a wordplay show of puns and limericks, rhymes and tones, music and laughs! Free. Contact Stephen Wheeler at sjwheeler@sandiego.gov or call (619) 692-4910 for details.

SEPTEMBER 13, WEDNESDAY 1:30-3:30 P.M.

Join the **Crafters' Paradise** gathering at the Alpine Library, 1752 Alpine Blvd., Alpine 91901. Bring your own portable project and relax in good company while keeping your hands busy. If you don't have your own project, not to worry! At Crafters' Paradise we will teach you how to crochet or knit and even provide the yarn for free! For details, call (619) 445-4221.

SEND IN YOUR ITEMS

We welcome your contributions to this calendar. Email: 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



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Interim Chief Administrative Officer
 Helen Robbins-Meyer

Interim Director, Health & Human Services Agency
 Dr. Eric C. McDonald

Director, Aging and Adult Services
 Aging & Independence Services
 Kimberly Gallo

Editor, Sarah "Sally" Jackson
sarah.jackson@sdcountry.ca.gov

Calendar information is welcome and must be submitted by email to: sarah.jackson@sdcountry.ca.gov

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