

AGING & independence

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

Older Adults Learn Strategies to Eat Smart, Live Strong

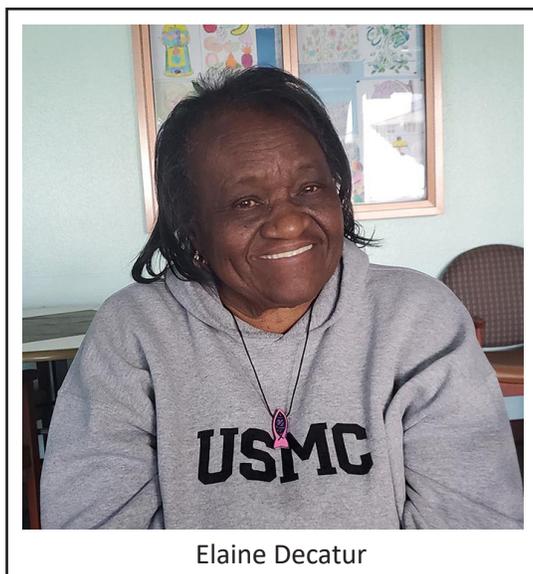
By Kim Gallo
Director, Aging & Independence Services

It was a brush with mortality that jolted Elaine Decatur, 73, to take her health seriously. After a stroke in 2009, she abruptly stopped smoking. “I put the cigarettes down and the beer down on the same day. I’ve never picked up another cigarette,” she explains.

Elaine decided to make other changes, too—she started walking for exercise and resolved to get out of the house more. One of her first stops was the Salvation Army El Cajon senior dining center. During her visit, someone invited her to join them for church services on Sunday. She accepted the invitation and discovered a whole new community of support. Elaine also began serving others by assisting at food distribution events as well as support groups for those recovering from addiction.

Today Elaine lives at the Silvercrest Senior Residence in El Cajon, a HUD Housing complex run by the Salvation Army. She receives caregiving assistance from her daughter, who works for her via the In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) program.

One day Elaine saw a posting in her apartment complex’s elevator for the Eat Smart, Live Strong class, a CalFresh Healthy Living program offered by Aging & Independence Services. “They had stuff going



Elaine Decatur

on down there in the community room,” Elaine explains. “I was being nosy really, and went to see what was going on.”

The Eat Smart, Live Strong curriculum is part of a 10 session program that aims to help participants make positive changes to their diet that they can maintain for the long run. Participants learn how their behavior affects their health and how to reach their health goals one step at a time. They discuss the importance of eating more fruits and vegetables, as well as getting regular physical activity.

Together they anticipate challenges that could get them off-track and brainstorm solutions.

While Elaine had made some positive health changes in the years since the stroke, her diet and activity levels had room for improvement. The Eat Smart, Live Strong program put her on a new path. Elaine notes, “I became aware of how important a healthy diet is to my life, especially at my age.” She adds, “Before, I didn’t really care about what I ate.” As Elaine became more conscious of what she was eating, she resolved to consume more fruits and vegetables. Elaine also became more consistent with exercise. Prior to taking the program, she walked a little bit. Now she makes an

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effort to walk for a full 30 minutes, most days of the week. If the weather isn't conducive to walking outside, she simply walks in the hallways of her apartment complex. Since starting the program, Elaine is proud to have lost 20 pounds.

At the end of the Eat Smart, Live Strong class, Elaine attended the supplemental program sessions on community change. Participants looked for ways they could make modifications to their environment that would benefit health and wellness. During the session, Elaine admitted that sometimes she feels excluded as the only African American living at the apartment complex. She reported that English-speaking and Arabic-speaking residents do not intermingle much and there is a missed opportunity for more cohesion. Elaine is a very social person and craves the opportunity to connect with others. "I have to be around people," she says. "I wouldn't be good on an island!"

To help promote the social atmosphere at her complex and encourage people to come out of their apartments, Elaine helped come up with the idea of hosting regular "Afternoon Delight" sessions, which would be an afternoon of games where people of different cultures could come together. Although the effort has yet to start, Elaine is hopeful that residents can break down barriers to connection.

In the meantime, Elaine is doing all she can to stay healthy. In addition to watching her diet and exercising, Elaine makes sure she is connecting with others. Research suggests that loneliness is as damaging to one's health as smoking fifteen cigarettes a day. Elaine enjoys regular visits from her son, daughter, and teenage grandchildren. She reaches out to others in her building who are homebound and could benefit from a friendly visit.

Elaine keeps her mind active too. One of her favorite hobbies is writing poetry. She enjoys the challenge of selecting a word and then crafting a poem based on it. Two poems quickly came to mind:

Health: I'm not very famous, I don't have wealth, but one thing I do have is my good health.

Community: Where you live, do you have good unity? You could be really happy if you involve the community!

Elaine recently shared her poetry with 40 other women in a women's group. A friend did a reading of her work and made the poems come alive. "I got a standing ovation," Elaine says proudly. Her next project is to make greeting cards that feature her poetry.

Elaine understands that each new day is an opportunity to make positive health choices. She is impressed at the impact the six-week Eat Smart, Live Strong program has had in changing her life for the better. Elaine recalls some of the key take-aways from the program: "Monitor your food, watch what you eat, and more or less eat in moderation. You can have a piece of cake but not seven pieces of cake!"

The lessons have stuck, but Elaine admits it isn't always easy. She reaches into her pocket and pulls out a handful of hard mint candies. She laughs, "If I could just leave these alone, I'd be fine!"

Funding for the CalFresh Healthy Living program is provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the California Department of Aging. The program is offered in select communities around San Diego County. To get more information on the next Eat Smart, Live Strong class, please call **(858) 495-5998**.

GRANDPARENT AND RELATIVE CAREGIVER SYMPOSIUM

Grandparents raising grandchildren and other relative caregivers are invited to attend a free conference on **Saturday, March 21 from 8:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m.** at STEAM Academy, 1001 Leland St., Spring Valley 91977. The theme of the symposium is "Building Skills for Healthy Families." Learn from informative and dynamic speakers, discover helpful resources, and build a strong support network. Plus, enjoy prizes and giveaways! Translation is available in Spanish and Arabic. Lunch and childcare are provided. To RSVP, call **2-1-1** or visit **www.211sandiego.org/grandparents**. Walk-ins will be accepted. For details, call **(619) 401-3782**.

In the COMMUNITY

AIS ADVISORY COUNCIL—PUBLIC HEARING

Did you know that there are older adults in the community who represent your needs on the AIS Advisory Council? Come check out a meeting to learn more about the work they do. At the next meeting on **Monday, April 13 at noon**, there will be a public hearing regarding the Area Plan, the document that guides the goals and priorities for AIS over the next four years. The plan incorporates community feedback, including that which was received at the countywide public feedback forums held in January 2020. The meeting will be held at AIS, 5560 Overland Ave., Ste. 310, San Diego 92123.

JOIN THE AIS ADVISORY COUNCIL

The 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. The Council is seeking to fill open positions and is particularly seeking representation from those who are 60 years or older. Adults of all ages and backgrounds are welcome to apply. For more information on the Advisory Council or to apply to join, contact Renée Sherrill at Renee.Sherrill@sdcounty.ca.gov or (858) 505-6541.



NORTH COUNTY INTERGENERATIONAL GAMES

Join the fun! Intergenerational (IG) Games offer adults 50+ and youth the opportunity to connect while having fun engaging in easy fitness and wellness activities such as paddle tennis, nutritional bingo, and ultimate Frisbee.

The next IG Games event will be held on **Thursday, April 9 from 8:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.** at the San Marcos Senior Activity Center, 111 Richmar Ave., San Marcos 92069.

To register, visit www.san-marcos.net/adults50+ or call (760) 744-5535. All adult participants will receive a t-shirt and lunch at this free event.

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.

SENIOR VOLUNTEERS

VOLUNTEERS OF THE MONTH

Gail Clarkin is the RSVP Volunteer of the Month for March 2020. She is part of the Senior Volunteer Patrol (SVP) at the Coronado Police Department and was nominated by John Meyers, the Coronado Police Department's Volunteer Coordinator.

Gail started volunteering with the Coronado SVP in 2013. She began by conducting regular patrols, but quickly advanced to take on additional roles. For instance, Gail coordinates



Gail Clarkin

essential SVP trainings and ensures that training requirements are completed. She reviews and compiles a host of the statistical data that is critical to supporting ongoing SVP and police department operations. Gail is also in charge of the Fourth of July memorial, which honors the Coronado SVP members who have died in the past year.

Gail always finds time to assist at special events and help with the monthly SVP meetings. She is now also one of the organizers for the annual recognition dinner honoring SVP members. In addition, Gail serves on the board that oversees and directs SVP activities, and helps ensure that the SVP team provides the best possible support to the police department and the residents of Coronado.

When Gail is not in Coronado at the station, you might find her across the bridge, where she volunteers in San Diego with homeless women at Rachel's Women's Center, which she has done for more than twenty years. Gail was also Catholic Charities' "Volunteer of the Year" in 2011.

Gail has lived in Coronado for over fifty years, raising her two children there. She has been a wonderful addition to the Coronado Senior Volunteer Patrol, as well as to the community at large. Thank you, Gail, for your many valuable contributions!

LIVING COAST DISCOVERY CENTER

Docents needed! Would you like to join a team of volunteers with a passion for promoting conservation and environmental stewardship?



If so, consider becoming a docent at the Living Coast Discovery Center in Chula Vista.

Docents are highly trained volunteers who inspire and help educate adults and children about coastal resource conservation, natural history, and more. Docents lead scheduled tours for children and/or adults. Tour dates and times vary and can accommodate almost anyone's busy schedule.

Beginning in the spring, docent training will be held on Thursdays from 2-5 p.m. at the Discovery Center. For details on volunteer opportunities with Living Coast Discovery Center or other organizations, call **(858) 505-6399** or email MaryAnne.Briggs@sdcounty.ca.gov.



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

BLIND COMMUNITY CENTER OF SAN DIEGO

Since 1949, the mission of the Blind Community Center of San Diego has been to enrich the lives of blind and visually impaired adults by encouraging independence. The Blind Community Center offers classes and activities for individuals with varying abilities and provides a nutritious lunch daily. The Balboa Park facility provides an environment for personal growth, social interaction, and the development of individual skills and talents. Social and recreational activities at the Blind Community Center help to decrease the risk of isolation and loneliness that can lead to depression. Blind Community Center programs promote independence, self-confidence, and self-esteem.

The Blind Community of San Diego is partnering with the County of San Diego's Health and Human Services Agency to host health and wellness workshops. These workshops offer community members opportunities to stay physically and mentally stimulated by learning new things, which helps to keep them active and engaged. By staying healthier longer, the blind and visually impaired continue to be contributing members of the community.

There is lots of fun to be had at the Blind Community Center. Blind and low vision crafters at the Center make crafts all year long, which they sell at December Nights



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.



in Balboa Park, to support their recreation center. In addition, five times each summer, Blind Community Center participants attend the blind water ski program sponsored by the San Diego Mission Bay Boat and Ski Club. There are lots of sighted volunteers and the experience is safe and fun. Many participants go for a ride on one of the speed boats or take a ride on the giant inner tube which is pulled by a speed boat. Everyone has a good time and after a morning on the beach, they head to the clubhouse for lunch.

The Blind Community Center of San Diego is a 501c3 organization with no government support and an all-volunteer management team. All income is from fundraisers and donations from generous individuals and organizations in the community.

The Center holds several fundraising events each year. These events not only raise funds, but also bring the community together. The next event is the ***Pancake Breakfast Fundraiser*** on **Saturday, March 21** from 7 a.m. until noon at the Blind Community Center Auditorium, 1805 Upas St., San Diego 92103. All are welcome.

For more information on the Blind Community Center, please visit bccsd.org, call (619) 298-5021, or email info@bccsd.org.

CORONAVIRUS-BE INFORMED

Coronavirus is a type of virus that causes diseases, ranging from the common cold to more serious respiratory disease. The 2019 novel (new) coronavirus is a new strain of coronavirus that hasn't been identified before in humans. As of early March 2020, San Diego County's general population is considered to be at low risk of contracting coronavirus disease, also referred to as COVID-19. However, the County of San Diego is working to protect the public's health and prevent the disease from spreading locally. You can take steps to protect and educate yourself and prepare in the event of a local outbreak. The following routine preventive actions can help prevent the spread of respiratory viruses:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

The County of San Diego has created a new website to provide up-to-date information and resources on coronavirus disease. To learn more, visit: www.coronavirus-sd.com, and if you have questions, call 2-1-1 to speak to someone.

CAREGIVER WORKSHOPS

Wednesday, March 25 from 1-3 p.m.: *Preparing for the Late Stage* will be held at Alzheimer's San Diego, 6632 Convoy Ct., San Diego 92111. Learn what to expect as Alzheimer's disease progresses, explore ways to stay connected, and get information about options for late-stage care. To RSVP, visit www.alzsd.org or call (858) 492-4400.

Thursday, March 26 from 8:30-11 a.m.: *Dementia Dialogs (Practical Advice for Alzheimer's Care)* will be held at Carmel Mountain Ranch Estate, 14050 Carmel Ridge Rd., San Diego 92128. Join Alzheimer's San Diego at this free educational interview-style seminar for family caregivers featuring: Dr. Daniel Sewell, UC San Diego Professor of Clinical Psychiatry, and Todd Shetter, ActivCare Chief Operating Officer. To RSVP, call (888) 636-5677 or visit activcareliving.com/upcoming-events/.

Tuesday, March 31 from 6-7 p.m.: *Understanding Alzheimer's and Dementia* will be held at the Harding Community Center, 3096 Harding St., Carlsbad 92008. Alzheimer's disease is not a normal part of aging. Learn the difference between Alzheimer's and dementia, stages and risk factors, current research and treatments, and more. To RSVP, call (800) 272-3900 or visit www.alz.org/CRF (select "Alzheimer's Association Programs and Events" and then select "Alzheimer's Education Programs" and enter "Carlsbad, CA.")

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

MARCH 21, SATURDAY
7 A.M.-12 P.M.

A *Pancake Breakfast Fundraiser* will be held at the Blind Community Center Auditorium, 1805 Upas St., San Diego 92103. Help support the Blind Community Center's programs for just \$7 and enjoy a big, delicious breakfast. All are welcome. For details, visit bccsd.org or call (619) 298-5021.

MARCH 21, SATURDAY
9 A.M.-3 P.M.

The *CaregiverSD Community Expo* will be held at the Paradise Point Resort & Spa, 1404 Vacation Rd., San Diego 92109. Sponsored by the San Diego Union-Tribune, this event includes speakers, resources, a relaxation pavilion, and food sampling. For details or to register, visit www.caregiversd.com/expo.

MARCH 22, SUNDAY
2-4 P.M.

Aging with Resilience: Combating Loneliness and Enhancing Your Mental Health will be held at Temple Emanu-El, 6299 Capri Dr., San Diego 92120. Social isolation is one of the most dangerous health risks affecting older adults. Attend this inspiring community event to discover how we can age with resilience. To RSVP, visit www.jfssd.org/calendar/. For details, call (858) 637-3215.

MARCH 26, THURSDAY
6-7:15 P.M.

A presentation, *Know the Law: Identity Theft and Credit Card Scams*, will be given by a local district attorney at the Vista Library, 700 Eucalyptus Ave., Vista 92084. This session will cover types of fraud, mail theft, and identity theft. For details, call (760) 643-5100.

MARCH 27, FRIDAY
11:30 A.M.-3:30 P.M.

Tax Preparation Assistance provided by the AARP Foundation will be held at the Serra Mesa-Kearny Mesa Library, 9005 Aero Dr., San Diego 92123. The service will also be offered on April 3rd and 10th. Walk-in only; sign up in-person for same day service. Call (858) 573-1396 or email smstaff@sanidiego.gov.

APRIL 2, THURSDAY
6 P.M.

The *Coming of Age Film Festival* will take place each Thursday evening in April at the Museum of Photographic Arts-Balboa Park, 1649 El Prado, San Diego 92101. The festival is dedicated to promoting, reinforcing, and celebrating the process and power of aging. Film screenings are free, but seating is limited. To learn more, visit www.mopa.org.

APRIL 3, FRIDAY
1-2:30 P.M.

A class, *Our Search for Meaning*, will be held at the Oasis Grossmont Learning Center, 5500 Grossmont Center Dr., Ste. 269, La Mesa 91942. How do we find meaning in life? How can our life still matter in the face of terrible suffering? Learn about *Man's Search for Meaning* by Holocaust survivor and psychologist Viktor Frankl. Cost: \$15. To register, call (619) 881-6262 or visit SanDiegoOasis.org.

APRIL 8, WEDNESDAY
2-4 P.M.

Learn steps to prevent stroke and how to recognize the signs of a stroke at the *Stroke Prevention and Recognition* workshop. The class will be held at La Vida Real, 11588 Via Rancho San Diego, San Diego 92019. To RSVP, visit www.sharp.com/classes or call (800) 827-4277.

APRIL 18, SATURDAY
1-2:30 P.M.

A class, *Avoid the Annoyances of Aging*, will be held at the Santee Library, 9225 Carlton Hills Blvd. #17, Santee 92071. Growing older is inevitable, but many of the physical and mental challenges are not. Hear from a local doctor how more than twenty health annoyances that range from decreased energy to liver spots can be postponed or even avoided. For details, call (619) 448-1863.

ADVISORY COUNCIL

The AIS Advisory Council will meet on Monday, April 13 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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www.aging.sandiegocounty.gov



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Aging & Independence™ is published monthly by the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency, Aging & Independence Services. The purpose is to inform and recognize older adults, volunteers, and community partners.

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