

AGING & independence

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

COMMUNITY GARDENS GROW NEW CONNECTIONS

By Jennifer Bransford-Koons
Director, Aging & Independence Services

It's twilight on a Monday evening and the new Linda Vista Community Garden is abuzz with activity. A family with young children strolls in to tend to their vegetable garden. Nearby, a group of college students from the University of San Diego circle around their professor to discuss ways in which the garden could be featured in their anthropology class's upcoming digital storytelling project. And down the path, older adults gather to plant in communal garden beds. Brightly colored signs and painted rocks adorn this calm and joyous space.

Located at the edge of Linda Vista Park and built and operated by Bayside Community Center, the new Linda Vista Community Garden site is a far cry from what it was just a few years ago. Previously a vacant and forgotten field, the land had been used as a dumping ground for grass clippings and mulch. Fortunately, visionaries such as Amy Zink, Program Manager with Bayside Community Center's



Environmental Learning Center, saw potential. She was on the lookout for a new home for the community garden that had previously been housed at Bayside but had been uprooted due to redevelopment of the property. Amy and her colleagues realized that having



Amy Zink (second from left) coordinates gardening activities for older adults and people of all ages at the Linda Vista Community Garden. She is joined by Nicole (on left), Maria (second from right), and Mary (right).

the garden within a public park would increase visibility and accessibility for the community while creating a long-term home for the reestablished garden. They set out to work with the City of San Diego, the San Diego Parks Foundation, Council Member Raul Campillo's office, Carpenters Union Local 619, and others to make their dream a reality.

But the dream took time—four-and-a-half years to be exact. Bayside Community Center was the first to navigate the process, but several community partners helped get the project to the finish line, including the County of San Diego's Aging & Independence Services (AIS). Using

Older Adults Recovery and Resilience

(OARR) funding from the California Department of Aging, AIS purchased a variety of supplies for the garden, including picnic tables, umbrellas, benches, fertilizer, shovels, trowels, a greenhouse, garden sheds, first aid kits, and class supplies. In addition, the funding was used to hire a Lead Garden Educator and Garden & Nutrition Instructor, Kim Hansen, who has been coordinating and conducting gardening activities and educational opportunities. AIS staff have also provided support and guidance regarding programming efforts, such as the intergenerational garden workdays that tapped into community members of all ages to support the construction of the garden.

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This past June, the garden officially opened and was unveiled to the community. The space has transformed into a lush oasis of greenery, produce, and flowers. But plants are not all that's growing in this refuge; social connections and friendships are being fostered as well, and these relationships will sustain gardeners perhaps as much as the food they grow.

Mary is one of the gardeners who has committed to cultivate and volunteer at the garden. She shares Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant communal garden planters with a handful of other older adult budding gardeners. The team, with education support from Amy Zink, also a horticultural therapist, takes turns to tend to the plants and will share the produce when it's time to harvest. Mary shares, "I'm brand new to gardening except for houseplants. It is a nice social space to garden together and learn. It will get me out the door."

Mary recently moved into the Levant Senior Cottages affordable housing development just down the street. She has gotten to know one of her neighbors, Red, not from bumping into him as they come and go from their homes, but because they are both working at the garden. Red is a clay artisan and longtime urban farmer who recently downsized his living situation from his ranch in Campo. At the garden, he has found a new place for his passion projects. Red has volunteered to help regenerate the soil for the garden's in-ground farm plot while passing on this knowledge to interns from the University of San Diego. The clay that he is extracting in the process will be used for future art workshops with garden participants. Mary is also getting to know other gardeners, such as Nicole and Maria (pictured on Page 1).

It is one of Amy's goals to ensure the Linda Vista Community Garden is a true community gathering spot. Amy explains, "the sky's the limit...there is so much that can be done here in the way of community art, food production for low-income Linda Vista residents, and community connections. We want the community to find their passion and place in the garden." Amy and Kim have already held several intergenerational events covering topics such as healthy soils, water conversation, and winter gardening. They have also hosted a rock painting party and seed sowing party. On November



Red, a volunteer, has been sharing his expertise at the Linda Vista Community Garden.

1, there was a Día de Los Muertos-inspired community potluck for the existing gardeners to commune, share food, and honor their loved ones. Based on participant feedback, future classes may cover community composting, growing mushrooms, pollinator homes, herb cultivation, cooking with garden produce, and more.

Amy and Kim invite new participants and volunteers to become part of the community. All are welcome, and the garden was built to ADA standards with accessible pathways, planters, and picnic tables to accommodate wheelchair users. To learn more about the classes & workshops at the Linda Vista Community Garden, please join the email list: <https://tinyurl.com/Garden-Info>. Read more about Bayside Community Center's programs at www.baysideecc.org and Bayside Environmental Learning Center at www.baysideecc.org/belc. To reach out directly, email Amy Zink at azink@baysideecc.org.



People of all ages enjoy gardening activities at the Salvation Army/Door of Hope Intergenerational Garden (left) and the Spring Valley Community Center Intergenerational Garden (right).

FIND AN INTERGENERATIONAL GARDEN NEAR YOU!

AIS has supported 19 intergenerational gardens around the county with OARR funding, as well as additional gardens in our region through other state funding. If you are interested in learning more about a garden near you, please contact Pam Plimpton, Intergenerational Coordinator, at pam.plimpton@sdcounty.ca.gov.

In the COMMUNITY

HICAP AVAILABLE FOR CONSULTATION DURING MEDICARE ANNUAL ENROLLMENT PERIOD

The Medicare Annual Enrollment Period is from October 15th through December 7th. During this time, you can join, change, or drop a Part C Medicare Advantage plan, or Part D prescription drug plan. Any coverage change you make will take effect January 1st. Operated by Elder Law & Advocacy, the Health Insurance Counseling & Advocacy Program (HICAP) provides free and unbiased help to Medicare beneficiaries. HICAP Counselors are available by phone at **(800) 434-0222** (toll free) or **(858) 565-8772**, Monday - Friday, 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Both phone and in-person appointments are available. For more information, visit www.elaca.org/gethelp.

APPLY FOR MONTHLY NUTRITION (CALFRESH) BENEFITS

Older adults, including those who receive income from SSI/SSP, may be eligible for monthly nutrition benefit assistance through CalFresh! CalFresh recipients receive extra money for nutritious food each month. There are also other benefits, such as reduced cost access to museums, discounted Amazon Prime membership, and more! To learn more about CalFresh, including eligibility, visit www.getcalfresh.org. You may also call **2-1-1** to apply.

Would you like some extra support with completing your application? AIS Outreach & Education staff are available to assist you! Please contact Matthew Parcasio at **Matthew.Parcasio@sdcounty.ca.gov** or **(858) 505-6435**.

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, Mandarin, Farsi, Korean, Somali, Tagalog, and Vietnamese. To request a print copy, e-mail **AISAlzheimer.HHSA@sdcounty.ca.gov**.

IHSS RECIPIENT OR CAREGIVER? JOIN THE IHSS/PUBLIC AUTHORITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Current or past In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) recipients and caregivers (individual providers) are needed to join the IHSS/Public Authority Advisory Committee. The Advisory Committee provides advice and recommendations to the San Diego County Board of Supervisors and other persons or entities related to the delivery of IHSS services. Meetings are currently held in person or via Zoom on the 2nd Friday of each month at 12:45 p.m. Members receive a \$50 monthly stipend. For more information, please visit: <https://sdihsspa.com/advisorycmte/> or contact Gilberto Contreras-Morales at **(619) 694-3412** or **Gilberto.Contreras-Morales@sdcounty.ca.gov**.

VOLUNTEER OF THE QUARTER



Pauline Lee has been named Volunteer of the Quarter by the Retired & Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP). She was nominated for this honor by Amy Newell, Disaster Program Manager at the American Red Cross of San Diego and Imperial Counties Chapter. Pauline is an exceptional volunteer, actively involved in the Disability Integration team at the American Red Cross. She provides consultation and guidance to regional disaster leadership and has been involved in various projects to aid individuals with disabilities and other access and functional needs. Pauline also works as a hospital aide at Scripps Memorial Hospital and has volunteered an impressive 1,621 lifetime hours, demonstrating unwavering dedication to her community. We are proud to name Pauline Volunteer of the Quarter and extend our heartfelt gratitude for her invaluable contributions.

HONORING VETERAN VOLUNTEERS

In recognition of Veterans Day this November, RSVP would like to give special thanks to volunteers who are Veterans of the US Armed Forces. Here are two volunteers who are making a difference in their communities:

Cathlean Ramsey has been a dedicated RSVP volunteer at the Fourth District Senior Resource Center since 2021, contributing 397 lifetime hours.

Ms. Ramsey served in the U.S. Navy for four years, on active duty during the Vietnam Era. She then served 18.5 years in the reserves, including during Operation Desert Storm. In 1989, Ms. Ramsey won Sailor of the Year at the Balboa Navy Hospital. In 2022, she was awarded as Woman of Distinction by Mayor Todd Gloria from the City of San Diego.

Ms. Ramsey describes feeling a sense of joy in helping others. Her peers describe her as a brave, goal-oriented go-getter who is family-oriented always shares from her heart. Ms. Ramsey believes sharing something about oneself is the greatest reward and a powerful way to connect with others, whether it's a recipe or a statement. We extend our heartfelt thanks to Ms. Ramsey, for your service to our community.



Eugene "Gene" Goldman has been a dedicated RSVP volunteer for the San Diego County Sheriff's Office in Poway and their Volunteer Sheriff Patrol (VSP) since January 2023. Throughout his service, Gene has accumulated 381 lifetime hours. A Veteran of the United States Navy who served during the Vietnam Era, Gene was inspired by his father's service in the Navy during World War II.

In his volunteer role, Gene promotes safety throughout the community and ensures that traffic rules are followed. Gene has always had a talent for helping his community, having served as a scout leader, Freemason, and Little League coach. He finds fulfillment in being part of something bigger than himself and bringing a sense of unity to the community. Gene shares, "Just about every week, I get to spend a few hours in the company of somebody who comes from an entirely different background, with different experiences and different outlooks on life, and we get to work together doing something good."

His service has also inspired his family. Gene notes, "My grandchildren love the fact that I put on my uniform every week and go out to help make Poway better. I have worked with some exceptional people, and we all have one thing in common: we are members of the VSP." Thank you, Gene, for your service and dedication to the community!

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 older adults easier, but in some cases it allows the person to remain living at home. In-Home Supportive Services (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:

- Be blind, disabled, or age 65-plus
- Have a Medi-Cal eligibility determination
- 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 minimal 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.

MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

Everyone experiences stress, sadness, and anxiety from time to time – it’s a normal part of life. However, if you are feeling overwhelmed, depressed, or unable to do the things you once enjoyed, it may be time to assess your emotional health and talk to a professional. Taking care of your mental health is an important part of managing your overall health and wellbeing. Experiencing mental health challenges can feel lonely, isolating, or hopeless at times. However, many people (1 in 5 adults in the San Diego region) are living with mental health challenges and most of those people recover.

There are a variety of tools that can help you get well, including medication, talk therapy, group support, self-directed wellness plans, and many other options. The sooner you reach out for support and start using the tools that work for you, the better your outcome is likely to be. Free mental health resources and information are available through San Diego County’s It’s Up to Us campaign at <https://up2sd.org/resources>. Help is also available 24/7 through the Access and Crisis Line at **(888) 724-7240**.

NEW TAI CHI CLASSES

Aging & Independence Services is now offering Tai Chi classes at the following locations:

Tai Chi: Moving for Better Balance: **Park De La Cruz Recreation Center**, 3901 Landis St., San Diego 92105 on Mondays and Thursdays from 1:30-2:30 p.m. To register: visit <https://www.sandiego.gov/park-and-recreation/> and click on “Register Online”

Tai Chi for Arthritis and Fall Prevention: **Alga Norte Community Park**, 6565 Alicante Rd., Carlsbad 92009 on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 8:30-9:30 a.m. Appropriate for adults with or without arthritis. To RSVP, visit <https://ca-carlsbad.civirec.com/CA/carlsbad-ca/catalog>.

Tai Chi for Arthritis and Fall Prevention (Part 2): **Pine Valley Community Center & Park (Park Amphitheater)**, 3209 Harding St., Carlsbad 92008 on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 8:30-9:30 a.m. This series is for people who have completed the original program and are looking for a more challenging course. To RSVP, visit <https://ca-carlsbad.civirec.com/CA/carlsbad-ca/catalog>.

For questions, email **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.

CHALLENGE CENTER CLASSES FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES, OLDER ADULTS

The Challenge Center (5540 Lake Park Way, La Mesa 91942) offers a variety of classes and programs to assist older adults and people of all ages with disabilities to transform their quality of life and increase wellness and independence. Some of the Challenge Center’s class options include Balance & Conditioning, Aquatics, and the 5-week Age-ility 360° total fall management class.

The Age-ility class helps older adults to improve agility, power, and balance to reduce their risk of falls and serious injury. A licensed Physical Therapist guides and teaches participants in fall prevention, fall recovery, and falling techniques to reduce the risk of injury should a fall occur. In this class, you will improve power, agility, and balance strategies for fall prevention/management and to confidently expand your life. With the use of “crash mats,” you are able to safely, comfortably, and progressively practice how to fall without injury and how to rise from the floor. By the end of the course, you will see your progress with evidence-based testing of agility and fall risk.

Call the Challenge Center at **(619) 667-8644** for more details, including cost and how to reserve your spot, or visit <https://challengecenter.org>.



COMMUNITY CALENDAR

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

NOVEMBER 16 & 23, SATURDAY 8:15 A.M.-1 P.M.

The two-day **AARP Driver Safety Course** will be offered at the Norman Park Senior Center, 270 F Street, Chula Vista, CA 91910. Register at www.aarp.org/findacourse. Pay online by card or at the beginning of class by check or exact cash. Cost: \$20 for AARP members and \$25 for non-members. Street metered parking. Call (619) 269-1389 for more information.

NOVEMBER 19, TUESDAY 10 A.M.-2 P.M.

Join the Caregiver Coalition of San Diego and partners for a free **Caregiver Awareness Reception** at the War Memorial Building, 3325 Zoo Dr., San Diego 92101. Learn about caregiver resources and enjoy refreshments and opportunity drawings. For details, email matthew.parcasio@sdcounty.ca.gov.

NOVEMBER 21, THURSDAY 11-11:45 A.M.

A class, **UBER/Lyft App Workshop (Course #133)**, will be hosted by San Diego Oasis at the Grossmont Lifelong Learning Center Tech Tank, 5500 Grossmont Center Dr., La Mesa 91942. Learn how to use UBER and Lyft rideshare apps as an alternative to driving. The class will cover how to download the app, create an account, request a ride, and more. Cost: \$8. To RSVP, visit www.SanDiegoOasis.org or call (858) 240-2880.

NOVEMBER 22, FRIDAY 11:30 A.M.-1 P.M.

A free **Advance Healthcare Planning Workshop** will be offered in both English and Spanish at the Carmel Mountain Ranch Branch Library, 12095 World Trade Dr., San Diego 92128. This workshop will focus on the California Advance Healthcare Directive form and a 'Decision Making Toolkit' created by Compassion & Choices, the workshop's sponsor. RSVP to AdvanceCarePlanning4Us@gmail.com. Also offered on December 6.

DECEMBER 3, TUESDAY 6-7 P.M.

A free **Cognitive Therapy Lecture Series** is held on the first Tuesday of each month at Sharp Mesa Vista Hospital, 7850 Vista Hill Ave., San Diego 92123. You may also attend online. Hear from a clinician how cognitive behavioral therapy can help treat a variety of concerns including depression, anxiety, anger, relationship problems, grief, and more. Visit www.sharp.com/classes or call (800) 827-4277 to register.

DECEMBER 11, WEDNESDAY 2-3:30 P.M.

A free **Mindful Journaling Webinar** will be offered by Sharp Grossmont Hospital. This workshop offers simple writing techniques that use a reflective method. Participants will learn to foster healthy boundaries for expressing thoughts and emotions, relieve stress, and re-orient thinking in stressful situations. To register, (800) 827-4277 or visit www.sharp.com/classes.

DECEMBER 20, FRIDAY 11 A.M.-12:30 P.M.

A free class, **How to Talk About Memory Loss**, will be offered by Alzheimer's San Diego at the Pacific Beach/Taylor Library, 4275 Cass St., San Diego 92109. Learn how to plan for successful, lower-stress family discussions about difficult topics like memory changes, driving, and living alone. To RSVP, visit www.alzsd.org/classes or call (858) 492-4400. For details, email info@alzsd.org.

DECEMBER 31, TUESDAY 2-4 P.M.

Join other adults age 50+ for an afternoon of rhythm and fun at the **Mingle and Move: New Year's Eve Dance** gathering at Encinitas Community and Senior Center, 1140 Oakcrest Dr., San Diego 92024. Cost: \$8 for residents and \$12.70 (plus processing fees). To RSVP, visit www.encinitasparksandrec.com. Call (760) 943-2250 for more information.

JANUARY 7, TUESDAY 11:45 A.M.-12:15 P.M.

Chair Yoga will be held at the Serra Mesa-Kearny Mesa Library, 9005 Aero Dr., San Diego 92123. Work on flexibility, building strength, and quieting your mind at this free class. Participate at your own ability. Chairs provided. RSVP not required. For details, call (858) 573-1396 or email smstaff@sandiego.gov.

SEND IN YOUR ITEMS

We welcome your contributions to this calendar. Email: sarah.jackson@sdcounty.ca.gov.



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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:

- Older adults
- People with disabilities
- Elders and dependent adults experiencing abuse

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) 510-2020**
www.aging.sandiegocounty.gov

If calling from an area code out of
San Diego County, call: **(800) 339-4661**



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