

# AGING & independence

April 2010

## Creating a Senior Center with an Attitude

BY PAMELA B. SMITH

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Paul Downey has a dream and part of that vision is being realized this month. This president and CEO of Senior Community Centers (SCC) is adept at turning his hopes into reality, having created the successful Potiker Family Senior Residence downtown and a similar low-income housing model in City Heights, called City Heights Square. These sites are national models, providing homes for previously homeless seniors that integrate social, health and mental health services.

During the past year, Paul has set his sights on creating a new senior center. Not only a new location for SCC's downtown center, but a new attitude. Wanting not just a place for older adults to mingle, have lunch and get help, but for seniors to thrive. Not just a hang out where others do for them, but a site that participants can make their own, full of learning, new challenges and inspiration.

"We are going to promote civic engagement," he says. "We want to give as much responsibility for the center to the participants as possible. We're going beyond providing basic needs to focusing on greater fulfillment."



PAUL DOWNEY IN FRONT OF THE NEW GARY AND MARY WEST SENIOR WELLNESS CENTER

Paul found two important partners who shared this vision: Gary and Mary West. This couple has been putting their philanthropic dollars to enormous benefit for older adults in San Diego County. A \$3 million gift from their foundation helped SCC secure a property at the corner of Fourth Avenue and Beech Street. Even more important, the Wests wanted SCC to create something special.

"They have challenged us to make this center a model for the rest of the country," Paul says.

On April 21, the doors will open to the Gary and Mary West Senior Wellness Center. On the first floor, visitors will walk into a dining room/community room twice the size of the one at the Broadway and Ninth location. Senior nutrition has been a core service for SCC for 40 years. When Paul started with SCC in 1995, meals were available five days a week. Now 2,000 meals are served every day of the week (lunch

and breakfast), including to homebound seniors in the area. Paul says the new dining room can hold 196 people, so he envisions two full seatings at lunch and maybe a third.

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“One of the big advantages to this location is that we have three senior high-rise buildings within walking distance and there’s great transit access,” he says. “About 85 percent of our existing clients take the bus or walk.”

The new center also has a Cyber Cafe for computer users, complete with coffee and snacks. Art created by center participants will decorate the Cyber Cafe walls. A Lifelong Learning Institute will offer free or low-cost educational programs. There’s the Gathering Place, similar to a large living room, for multiple activities to increase social interaction.

The site includes a holistic Center for Healthy Aging. The focus of the wellness programs will be on prevention, intervention and education. One space has been labeled the “Mind, Body and Spirit Room” and will be a site of such classes as yoga and Tai Chi.

“We’ve been challenged to meet the needs of today’s older adults, but also to create programs and services that will attract baby boomers,” he says.

SCC is also developing partnerships with different health and social service disciplines at local universities and health care settings so students can work with professionals to provide services as they learn about the needs of older adults.

Since Paul never stands still when it comes to innovative projects, he’s already dreaming ahead, to building upon what will be created at this downtown center. He envisions similar state-of-the-art wellness centers in other parts of the county, with floors of low-cost residential housing built on top of the centers.

“These centers could be a resource for the whole community to use,” he says. “The Wests have allowed us to blow up the senior center model and do something new.”▲

## GOOD REASON TO GET RID OF OLD PILLS

**D**o you know what you have in your medicine cabinet? Or are there rows of forgotten pill bottles from past maladies that have been there for a while? Most of us would be surprised to do an inventory.

Sadly, our grandchildren and/or their friends might be doing that inventory for us and taking some of those old pills, especially pain medications. Law enforcement and the District Attorney’s Office are seeing an increase in teens and young adults overdosing on OxyContin and similar drugs. They’re not getting prescriptions for these drugs; instead, they’re stealing pills from the medicine cabinets of family members and neighbors.

If there’s any chance that your stockpiled pills could be used in this way, it’s time to clean out that cabinet. The problem is, what do you do with those medications?

Putting pill bottles in wastebaskets can mean that dumpster

divers might get those drugs and sell them. Plus drugs can be an environmental hazard at landfills. There would be the same hazard in tossing your pills into the toilet, putting those drugs into our water system.

So how can you safely dispose of these pills?

The San Diego County Sheriff’s Department in partnership with Board of Supervisors Chairwoman Pam Slater-Price and the Oxy Task Force of San Diego County will be hosting a Take Back Day from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, April 17, at six regionally located sites throughout the county. You can simply drop off any unused prescriptions at one of the sites. Each location will also have drug prevention and treatment professionals available to answer any questions. The sites are:

County Administration Center, 1600 Pacific Hwy, SD.  
South Bay Courthouse, 500 Third Ave., Chula Vista  
El Cajon Courthouse, 2500 E. Main St., El Cajon.  
Tri-City Medical Center, 4202 Vista Way, Oceanside.  
Poway Sheriff’s Station, 13100 Bowron Rd., Poway  
Scripps Memorial Hospital, 354 Santa Fe Dr., Encinitas.  
For more, call the Meth Hotline at (877) 662-6384. ▲

## REGISTER NOW: AGING SUMMIT 2010

**R**egister now by phone or online for Aging Summit 2010 on Technology, which will be held June 3 in the Grand Exhibit Hall at the Town & Country Convention Center, 500 Hotel Circle North in Mission Valley.

The Aging Summit will provide a taste of technology in such areas as health and caregiving, social networking, tech basics and the benefit of gadgets.

Speakers will include Dr. Gary Small, director of the UCLA Center on Aging and researcher on memory training programs and technology; Bruce Bronson with Trilogy, which has been creating specialized Web sites for older adults, veterans, caregivers and others; and Bruce Pechman, the “Muscleman of Technology,” who will demonstrate a variety of fun and practical gadgets. Also featured will be representatives from the Gary and Mary West Wireless Health Institute, one of the first medical research organizations dedicated to advancing health and well-being through the use of wireless technologies.

Aging Summit 2010 will be held from 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Thursday, June 3, at the Town & Country Convention Center. The only fee will be \$5 for onsite parking. Register online at <http://agingsummit2010.eventbrite.com>, or call the AARP registration line at (877) 926-8300. For additional information, including how to be a sponsor or exhibitor, see [www.AgingSummit2010.org](http://www.AgingSummit2010.org). ▲

# HONORING



## RETIRED AND SENIOR VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

### VOLUNTEER OF THE MONTH

Gary Condrey, nominated by Don Agostino, volunteer coordinator with the San Marcos Sheriff's Senior Volunteer Patrol, is our RSVP Volunteer of the Month. Gary has been an RSVP volunteer for almost six years and has served more than 5,300 hours. Gary's volunteer duties have included YANA visits to homebound seniors, enforcing parking regulations around city hall and vacation home checks.



GARY CONDREY

Gary served as coordinator for the Patrol's Senior Fraud, Scams and Cons presentations and has served with the San Marcos Sheriff's Station volunteer homicide detail. Gary has been the assistant administrator for the patrol and has assisted with numerous San Marcos events, including the San Marcos Holiday Parade and San Marcos Street Fair. He is always willing to help the San Marcos deputies with crime scene protection, major traffic collisions and any incident requiring additional support.

Congratulations, Gary. Your dedication to volunteering is making a difference in North County.

### RSVP VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Public, nonprofit and health agencies seek volunteers in their communities. Potential volunteers can call RSVP at (858) 505-6399 for information on the following opportunities:

**San Diego Youth Services** needs child care aides, foster care case assistants and mentors.

**Samahan Senior Center** needs nutrition aides.

**Travelers Aid Society** needs information and referral volunteers.

**North County Adult Day Health Care** is seeking caregivers.

**Santee Senior Center** needs nutrition aides and office clerks.

**Jacob Health Care Center** needs care providers, facility helpers, gift shop clerks and receptionists.

### GOODBYE TO A GOOD FRIEND

A long-time friend of RSVP, Carole Miller, died on Feb. 23. She had worked with RSVP from February 1996 through June 2005 and again June 2007 through February 2008. As a part-time program assistant, Carole answered the phone, recorded volunteer hours in our database and processed mail. She always took great pride in her work.



CAROLE MILLER

A favorite story about Carole is her early arrival one morning years ago when she came to work in the downstairs Call Center and set off the security alarm. It only took a short time for the police to arrive and check on the disturbance. Carole met the officer at the door, but would not let him enter because he did not show proper identification.

Carole never missed work from illness and always arrived 45 minutes early, driving 19 miles from East El Cajon to the AIS/RSVP office in Kearny Mesa. She was always a positive person who had a knack for relating well with everyone. She left her mark on RSVP and will be remembered and missed.

### SALUTING OUR VOLUNTEER HEROES

On May 11, RSVP will host the 15<sup>th</sup> Annual RSVP Volunteer Recognition Brunch from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Town and Country Resort, 500 Hotel Circle North in Mission Valley. RSVP volunteers with a minimum of 50 hours of recorded volunteer service in 2009 will be invited to attend free of charge. Guests are welcome at \$35.

## TAI CHI CLASSES BEGIN THIS MONTH

San Diego is one of four communities in the nation to launch a new Tai Chi program designed specifically for older adults. The Centers for Disease Control is sponsoring this initiative, which has been proven to prevent falls.

“Tai Chi: Moving for Better Balance” is a simplified version of Tai Chi Chuan (only eight postures instead of the usual 24) geared to improving balance.

Two classes are beginning in April, with another class beginning in May:

- Starts Friday, April 15, at the Spring Valley Community Center, 8735 Jamacha Blvd., Spring Valley 91977. Will be held from 10 to 11 a.m. Tuesdays and Fridays.

- Starts Wednesday, April 21, at the La Mesa Adult Enrichment Center, 8450 La Mesa Blvd., La Mesa 91942. Will be held from 1 to 2 p.m. Mondays and 10 to 11 a.m. Wednesdays.

- Starts Monday, May 17, at the Gary and Mary West Senior Wellness Center, 1525 4th Ave., downtown San Diego. The classes will be held from 1 to 2 p.m. Mondays and Thursdays.

Call (858) 495-5998 to register. ▲

## PHYSICAL AND FINANCIAL SELF-DEFENSE

Learn to defend yourself from being attacked physically or financially by attending one of our award-winning “Senior Expo: Protect Yourself & Your Wallet” events:

**April 16** (Friday) at the Coronado Public Library, 640 Orange Ave., Coronado 92118.

**May 7** (Friday) at the County Library, Poway Branch, 13137 Poway Rd., Poway 92064.

**July 8** (Thursday) at the Chula Vista Public Library, Civic Center Branch, 365 F St., Chula Vista 91910.

**Sept. 10** (Friday) at the Ramona Senior Center, 434 Aqua Lane, Ramona 92065

**Oct. 21** (Thursday) at the Lawrence Family Jewish Community Center, 4126 Executive Dr. (UTC area), La Jolla 92037.

All events run from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. with lunch provided. To RSVP, call (800) 510-2020 and press “4.” Leave your name, phone number, plus your desired date. ▲

## MAIL YOUR 2010 CENSUS FORM

You should have received your Census 2010 form last month. The U.S. Constitution requires a count of our population every 10 years. There are only 10 questions, relating to the number of people in the household, relationships, ages, gender, ethnicities and whether they are renters

or homeowners. Your answers to these questions will only be used for statistical purposes and are kept confidential and protected by law. The data from these forms provides critical information for local planning decisions and directly affects how more than \$300 billion in federal funding is distributed to state and local governments. Through July, Census workers will visit households that have not returned a form by mail. For more information, see [2010census.gov](http://2010census.gov). ▲

## ‘AGING WELL’ TRAINING AVAILABLE

The Aging Well project is a new educational program developed by UCSD Extension, funded by the Prop. 63 Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) and administrated by the County of San Diego Mental Health Services. The goal is to inform older adults, caregivers, and healthcare professionals about mental health needs and services.

There will be a free two-hour training for older adults and caregivers available at senior centers and other local sites. There will also be a free one-hour training for healthcare professionals offered at hospitals, healthcare agencies and other requested sites. To locate an existing training or if you want to schedule a training for a group, contact Teresa Poole at (858) 964-1306 or [tpoole@ucsd.edu](mailto:tpoole@ucsd.edu). ▲

## MEET THE PHARMACIST DAYS SCHEDULED

Bring your current medications to one of two upcoming Meet the Pharmacist Days. Review your prescriptions, over-the-counter drugs, vitamins and supplements with local pharmacists. These professionals can advise of any potential negative drug-drug interactions or drug-food interactions. They can also make sure you are taking the medications properly. These events also include presentations, lunch and a free Vial of Life for all participants.

- April 13 (Tuesday) from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the George L. Stevens Senior Center, 570 S. 65<sup>th</sup> St. (off Skyline Dr.), San Diego 92114.

- May 5 (Wednesday) from 9 a.m. to noon at the Solana Beach Community Senior Center, Solana Beach Presbyterian Church, 120 Stevens Ave., Solana Beach 92075

Reservations are required for each event; call the AARP registration line at (877) 926-8300. ▲

## HONOR FOR AIS COUNCILMEMBER

John Acosta was recently recognized as a California Senior Leader by the UC Berkeley School of Public Health. He is on the AIS Advisory Council and created the Azteca Project to benefit the often-neglected elderly gay and Latino population. ▲

## SEND IN YOUR ITEMS

This monthly calendar welcomes your contributions. Just send items by the 10th of each month preceding the issue date to: Denise G. Nelesen, editor, Aging & Independence Services, 9335 Hazard Way, San Diego, CA 92123-1222. Or fax to: (858) 495-5080. Or you can e-mail to: [denise.nelesen@sdcounty.ca.gov](mailto:denise.nelesen@sdcounty.ca.gov).

### APRIL 6, TUESDAY

**2:30 P.M.**

“Winning in Tough Financial Times,” a presentation by the nonprofit Money Management, Inc., formerly Consumer Credit Counseling, will be held at Catholic Charities, 1455 2nd St., San Diego 92101. A second session is set for April 20 at same time and location.

### APRIL 10, SATURDAY

**10 A.M. TO 2 P.M.**

“Strategies for Successful Aging” will be held at the First United Methodist Church, 2111 Camino Del Rio South, San Diego 92108. Learn about care options, fall prevention strategies, aging-in-place modifications and more. Lunch provided. Registration required by April 6; call (619) 297-4366.

### APRIL 13, TUESDAY

**9 A.M. TO 2 P.M.**

Meet the Pharmacist Day will be held at the George L. Stevens Senior Center, 570 S. 65th St. (off Skyline Dr.), San Diego 92114. Bring your medications and supplements to this free event and consult one-on-one with a pharmacist. There will also be speakers, lunch and free Vials of Life. Reservations required by April 8; call the AARP registration line at (877) 926-8300.

### APRIL 16, FRIDAY

**11 A.M. TO 1:30 P.M.**

“Senior Expo: Protect Yourself & Your Wallet” will be held at the Coronado Public Library, 640 Orange Ave., Coronado 92118. Reservations required; call (800) 510-2020, press “4” and leave your name, number and say “April 16.”

### APRIL 17 SATURDAY,

**9 A.M.**

“Fighting Parkinson’s Step by Step” 5K Walk and Fun Run will be held at NTC Park at Liberty Station in Point Loma. RSVP at [www.parkinsonswalksd.com](http://www.parkinsonswalksd.com) or call (858) 273-6763.

### APRIL 17, SATURDAY

**9 A.M. TO 1 P.M.**

“Prescription Drug Take Back Day,” where people can bring their old prescription drugs for disposal, will be held at six locations countywide. For more information, call (877) 662-6384.

### APRIL 17, SATURDAY

**10 A.M. TO 2 P.M.**

“Paws in the Park,” a family dog fair and benefit for the Foundation for Senior Care, will be held at Live Oak Park, 2746 Reche Rd., Fallbrook 92028. Register your dog for various contests. Cost is \$4 per event. For more information, call (760) 723-7713, or see [www.foundationforseniorcare.org](http://www.foundationforseniorcare.org).

### APRIL 21, WEDNESDAY

**2 TO 3 P.M.**

Laughter Yoga is held the third Wednesday of every month at LiveWell San Diego, 4425 Bannock Ave., San Diego 92117. For more, call (858) 483-5100.

### APRIL 22, THURSDAY

**6:30 TO 8:30 P.M.**

“Aging -- Gracefully with Purpose” to be presented at the Carlsbad Senior Center, 799 Pine Ave., Carlsbad 92008. RSVP: (760) 602-4654.

### APRIL 28, WEDNESDAY

**9 A.M. TO 2 P.M.**

“Solutions in Sight,” lectures on vision problems, will be held at the Braille Institute, 4555 Executive Dr., San Diego 92121. RSVP: (858) 404-5000.

### MAY 1, SATURDAY

**9 A.M. TO NOON**

A two-mile “Walk for Rides” event for ITNSanDiego will begin at LiveWell San Diego, 4425 Bannock Ave., in Clairemont. For more call, (619) 282-0073 or see [www.ITNSanDiego.org](http://www.ITNSanDiego.org).

### MAY 5, WEDNESDAY

**9 A.M. TO NOON**

Meet the Pharmacist Day to be held at the Solana Beach Presbyterian Church, 120 Stevens Ave., Solana Beach, 92075. RSVP: (877) 926-8300.

### MAY 7, FRIDAY

**11 A.M. TO 1:30 P.M.**

“Senior Expo: Protect Yourself & Your Wallet” at the County Library, Poway Branch, 13137 Poway Rd., Poway 92064. Reservations required; call (800) 510-2020, press “4” and leave your name, number and say “May 7.”

## ADVISORY COUNCIL

The AIS Advisory Council will meet at noon Monday, April 12, at AIS, 9335 Hazard Way, SD 92123.