

AGING & independence

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

Great Plates Program Supports New Beginning

By Kim Gallo
Director, Aging & Independence Services

When John, 30, was dropped off at his dad's house one weekend in 2020, it seemed like it would be a weekend like any other. As an adult living with autism, John had a full-time caregiver who would bring him to his dad's house for a monthly visit. This time, however, was different. John's dad, Curtis, discovered a note in his son's backpack from John's caregiver. The note said, "I'm done. I can't do this anymore. Don't contact me." And just like that, John lost his home and the relationship with his primary caregiver. Curtis soon discovered that all of John's benefits, including Medi-Cal and Social Security had lapsed. "I didn't know what to do," Curtis admits, "but I'm his dad and had to do something."

For the first two weeks, John was disoriented. He would pack his bags every morning waiting to go back home. Sadly, there was no longer a home to go to. Curtis got to work on the difficult task of making John feel at home in his new environment and also connecting him with resources and supports. Navigating different social service systems can be challenging in ordinary times, but as the pandemic was just beginning, it was next to impossible. Many agencies didn't have the means to provide online services and programming yet, and staff were shifting to remote work. Curtis urgently needed to gain conservatorship at a time when the courts were closed.

Curtis was also trying to keep John busy and as happy as possible. At first they would check books out from the library, but soon the library closed and there was

no way to return books. The two would go for walks along the river in Mission Valley. Then one day, the pair discovered that the walking path was closed off with yellow caution tape. Curtis struggled to get John to return home that day.

The more places that shut down, the more the walls of Curtis's two-bedroom condo seemed to shrink. John started having outbursts and engaging in self-injurious behaviors—something he had never done before. "Every day was a major crisis for him—and then it became one for me," Curtis explains.

Curtis didn't give up. He pursued every possible program and resource to help John. He was able to get John's benefits reinstated and got John treatment for depression. One day he came across an ad for the Great Plates Delivered program.

Using funds from FEMA, as well as state and local funding sources, the Great Plates program matched eligible older adults with a local restaurant that prepared and delivered meals each day at no cost. The program provided a lifeline to local restaurants while ensuring that recipients could stay safe at home while having access to nutritious meals. In August 2020,



John is enjoying a new chapter of life after a rough time of transition.

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LIVE WELL
SAN DIEGO
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the San Diego County Board of Supervisors voted to create a new version of the program, Great Plates 2.0: Dinner Delivered. The new program expanded eligibility to adults of all ages living with a disability or health condition that made obtaining or preparing meals difficult.

Both John and Curtis, a disabled Veteran, qualified for the program. They soon began receiving a daily meal. Great Plates ended up being an enormous help for the family. Curtis admits, “It was a Godsend. I was just trying to make it through each day. To come up with nutritious meals for John and myself was not easy to do.”

In addition to the delicious, plant-based and Mediterranean food, Curtis found the delivery aspect helped fill a need for social connection during a very isolating time. “It made me feel good to have someone show up at my door...it meant something. They delivered a lifeline,” Curtis says.

As the pandemic dragged on, Curtis managed as best he could, always grateful to know that a healthy meal would show up at his door, regardless of whatever else the day would bring. His older son and daughter would come by and give him a few hours of respite care, but Curtis was still exhausted.

John needed more stimulation than he was able to get at home. He started eating items that weren’t food, such as craft beads, and became increasingly agitated. John would lash out at Curtis and break things in the house. Eventually, Curtis had to call 911 and have John admitted in the hospital for psychiatric care.

The next several months were a nightmare. John suffered a severe allergic reaction to a medication he was given, leading to shock and renal failure. He was intubated and lost 50 pounds in 4 months. Upon discharge, Curtis had to nurse John back to health.

But one day, things began to look up. Curtis was informed by the San Diego Regional Center that a spot was available for John in a group home up in Vista. Curtis asked John, “would you like to go to a house to live with other kids?” John said that he did. On move-in day, as John arrived at his new home, he immediately ran inside and sat beside the other residents. “Say goodbye, Dad!” he called out.

Today John is “living the dream...it went from the worst year of his life to the best year of life,” Curtis says. John has blossomed since moving to his new home. He is well adjusted, enjoys trips to the park, and has the opportunity to start school, something he is thrilled about.

While Curtis would never have wished for the trauma of the pandemic and John losing his home, Curtis is grateful for the time he had to really get to know his son. “I worked all of John’s life. I’m better because I got to know my son,” Curtis explains.

As Curtis reflects back on the past couple of years, he is almost in disbelief to have made it through to the other side. Staff at John’s new home say, “How did you take care of a level IV client (someone requiring around the clock care) on your own?” Curtis recognizes how much of a toll it took being John’s only caregiver but was able to survive because “I made a decision early on to ask for help. It took all my mental faculties, organization, patience, and learning that I could muster...and reaching out.”

Curtis now is able to focus on his own needs and goals. “I can quietly read,” he says. “There are no cartoons, no screaming, no wildness. I’ve got my life back. I’m exercising and reaching out to friends.”

As he reflects back on that “awful season,” Curtis remains grateful for the support he received from the Great Plates program. “The one thing I needed was to have a meal,” he says. “That program gave me hope.”



The Great Plates Delivered: Home Meals for Seniors and Great Plates 2.0: Dinner Delivered programs collectively served over 9,200 older adults and adults with disabilities from June 2020 until January 2021. Nearly 50 local restaurants were contracted to provide home delivered meals so vulnerable residents could stay safe at home during the time when COVID-19 vaccines were not yet available.

In the COMMUNITY

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 and 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.

REGISTRAR OF VOTERS TO HOLD PUBLIC CONSULTATION SESSION

Seniors and persons with disabilities are invited to join the San Diego County Registrar of Voters (ROV) at a virtual public consultation session on **Tuesday, January 11 from 10 a.m.-12 p.m.** Join the session via the Zoom online platform to learn more about the Voter's Choice Act and how you can provide input on the voting model. For more details, visit **www.sdvote.com**. If you require accommodations, please call Rosie Rascon at (858) 505-7217 or email Rosa.Rascon@sdcounty.ca.gov.

Zoom details: **<https://sdvote.zoom.us/j/97973196123>**

Webinar ID: 979 7319 6123

Join via telephone: **833 548 0282** (TollFree)

GET HELP CHANGING MEDICARE PLANS

Most Medicare enrollees know about the Annual Enrollment Period in the fall, but did you know about the Medicare Advantage Open Enrollment Period in January, February, and March each year? Medicare Advantage enrollees can change coverage one time during this period. The Health Insurance Counseling & Advocacy Program (HICAP) provides free and unbiased help comparing Medicare coverage options. HICAP Counselors are available in-person, by phone, or by email to help. Call **(800) 434-0222** (toll free) or **(858) 565-8772** (local), Monday - Friday, 8am - 5pm or email **dweil@seniorlaw-sd.org**.

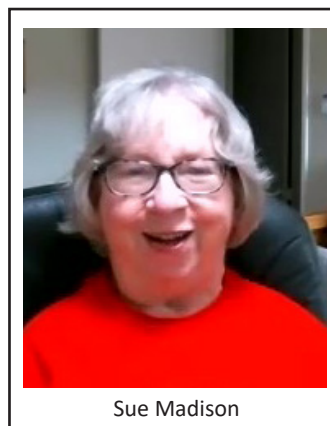
IHSS RECIPIENT OR CAREGIVER? JOIN THE IHSS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Current or past In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) recipients and caregivers (individual providers) are needed to join the IHSS 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 over Zoom or phone on the 2nd Friday of each month at 12:45 p.m. Members receive a \$50 monthly stipend. For more information, please contact Julie Lara at **Julie.Lara@sdcounty.ca.gov** or **(858) 495-5047**.

VOLUNTEER OF THE MONTH

Sue Madison of the American Red Cross of Southern California is the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) Volunteer of the Month for January 2022. She was nominated by Kaley Hearnberger, the Senior Recruitment Specialist for Volunteer Services. Sue is a relatively new volunteer who was connected with the Red Cross in January 2021 by RSVP Assistant Manager, Myles Jonathan Field. Sue has been working as the Disability Integration Lead for Disaster Services and is extremely passionate about providing these services.

Sue and her team ensure that Red Cross services are equitable and accessible. Values such as a respect for diversity, equity, and inclusion are put into practice through Sue's work to serve communities with unique needs that are impacted by disasters. For instance, her team educates Red Cross staff about the access and functional needs community (e.g., those who may be living with a disability) and their challenges. She helps create solutions to ensure there are no barriers to accessing Red Cross services during a disaster.



Sue Madison

Over the past year, Sue has volunteered about 10 hours each week. In this time, she has helped improve services for clients with access or functional needs and has ensured that people affected by disasters have equal access to services and appropriate accommodations in shelters. Red Cross staff are grateful to have Sue on the team. Kaley Hearnberger notes, "Sue brings incredible experience and skills into her role. She is what compassion looks like. We are extremely lucky to have her at the Red Cross."

Congratulations, Sue, and thank you for your service to the community!

VIRTUAL VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES WITH THE RED CROSS

The American Red Cross of Southern California offers a variety of volunteer opportunities, many of which can be done strictly from home with access to Internet, a computer, and a phone. The Red Cross supports volunteers with technology with step-by-step resource guides, video tutorials, peer-to-peer support, and an on-call IT Support Team.



American Red Cross
Southern California Region

Blood Services Volunteer Engagement Lead: Provide support with onboarding and training. Assist with scheduling, reinforce the shift cancellation policy, provide customer service, and build team support. Virtual work includes, phone calling, emailing, and Microsoft Teams virtual meetings. Commitment: 2-4 hours per week for 1 year.

Reconnection Workshop Facilitator: Licensed mental health professionals are sought to facilitate workshops over Zoom to military, veterans, and their families in various community-based settings. Commitment: 10 hours per month for 1 year.

Hero Care Caseworker: Provide sensitive customer service support to military families in need of help. Connect clients with information and resources tailored to their situation and eligibility. Training required. Commitment: One 2-4 hour weekly shift for 1 year.

Virtual Preparedness Presenter: Bilingual Spanish speakers who are tech-savvy and comfortable hosting presentations on Zoom and Microsoft Teams are needed to provide disaster preparedness presentations to different groups, such as seniors and elementary school children. Training on curriculum content is provided. Team leaders are also needed to coordinate team schedules, organize presentation sites/hosts, and recruit new partners.

The AIS Senior Volunteer Programs are excited to offer virtual opportunities to allow for more flexibility when serving the community. For more information on these and other virtual opportunities, please email RSVP's, Assistant Manager Myles Jonathan Field at Myles.Field@sdcounty.ca.gov or call (858) 495-5039.



AGE-FRIENDLY FILM FESTIVAL-NOW ONLINE

This fall, the Media Arts Center San Diego, in partnership with AARP, The San Diego Foundation and the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency, Aging & Independence Services, celebrated the completion of the Emerging Filmmaker Fellowship by hosting the Age-Friendly Film Festival.

The four-month fellowship provided youth participants with a cash stipend, filmmaker training, and mentorship to produce short films highlighting local efforts to build age-friendly communities where people of all ages can be healthy and thrive. Films from the festival can now be found online at www.mediaartscenter.org/age-friendly.



Age Well San Diego AGING + EQUITY WORKSHOP

LEARN
ABOUT EQUITY
AND HOW
WE CAN
CREATE AN
EQUITABLE
REGION FOR
ALL AGES

AIS hosted a virtual Aging+Equity workshop this past fall that brought together over 135 attendees, dozens of organizations, and a diverse set of speakers to talk about equity, and how we can tie this concept into older adult-related work, including the County's Age Well Initiative and Aging Roadmap. Presentations included *Defining Equity and Its Importance*, *Commitment to Equitable Communities*, *Equity in Action: Climate Equity Index*, and *Introducing the Government Alliance on Race & Equity*.

The Aging + Equity Workshop was recorded with interpretation provided in Spanish and Arabic for the entirety of the event. To view the recorded sessions, visit www.livewellsd.org and click on the "Topics" menu button at the top of the page, and then "Aging."

NOT TOO LATE TO GET YOUR FLU SHOT

Influenza (“the flu”) is a contagious illness that can be severe and life-threatening, especially for older adults. The flu can make existing health problems worse and is particularly dangerous for people with chronic health conditions, like heart disease and diabetes. The best way to prevent catching the flu is to get the flu vaccine every year. Flu shots may be received at the same time as COVID-19 vaccinations or booster doses. The flu 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**.

COVID-19 BOOSTER SHOTS NOW RECOMMENDED FOR ALL ADULTS

Following the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the California Department of Public Health’s (CDPH) recommendation, the County is urging eligible San Diegans to get a COVID-19 vaccine booster shot. Adults ages 18 and older **should** receive a booster shot. Getting vaccinated and continuing to wear a mask indoors in public places will help protect against severe illness from the new Omicron variant.

The time frame for getting a booster depends on which vaccine you received. If you received either the Pfizer or Moderna two-dose vaccine series, you are eligible to receive a booster shot six months after you received your second dose. If you received the one-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine, you may receive a booster two months after the primary dose. You can get a booster through your medical provider, a retail pharmacy, or a site operated by the County. For additional details or where to obtain a vaccine, visit **www.coronavirus-sd.com** or call **2-1-1**.

HEALTHIER LIVING CLASSES

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

Healthier Living with Diabetes (virtual): January 6-February 10 (Thursdays), 10 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Hosted by Aging & Independence Services via the Zoom virtual platform. OK to start with the second class session. To register, visit **<https://bit.ly/32cdpid>** or call **(619) 495-5500**.

Healthier Living with Chronic Pain (in-person): February 16-March 23 (Wednesdays), 9-11:30 a.m. Hosted by the San Marcos Senior Activity Center, 111 Richmar Ave., San Marcos 92069. To register, call **(760) 744-5535 x3600** or email **joverman@san-marcos.net**.

INCLUSIVE DANCE CLASSES

Do you like to dance? The Wheelchair Dancers organization invites people of all abilities to join in a free Ballroom/Latin dance class on Tuesdays from 10:30-12 at Park de La Cruz gym, 3911 Landis St., San Diego 92105. This class is open to both wheelchair users and standing/walking people. No dance experience necessary. For more information, visit **www.wdoinclusivedance.org** or call **(858) 573-1571**. Register in class.

F.A.L.L.S. CLASS WITH THE CHALLENGE CENTER

The Challenge Center is hosting a 10-session pilot program to help adults 60+ reduce falls. The Falling Abatement & Learning Landing Strategies (F.A.L.L.S.) class is a 90-minute, in-person class that is socially distanced and held outdoors that teaches fall prevention, falling techniques to reduce injury, and how to maximize your home’s safety. You will practice how to fall and recover safely on an 8-inch thick “crash mat” and getting up safely from the floor under the guidance of a licensed physical therapist. After the last class, you will receive a “report card” on your fall risk and improvement over the course of the program. Cost: \$25 for 10 sessions. For details on upcoming sessions and to register, contact **(619) 667-8644** or email **info@challengecenter.org**.

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

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

JANUARY 13, THURSDAY 10:30 A.M.-12 P.M.

Healthy Living for Your Body and Brain, a free, online class, will be offered by the Alzheimer's Association. Learn about research on diet and nutrition, exercise, cognitive activity and social engagement, and use hands-on tools to help you incorporate these recommendations into a plan for healthy aging. To register, visit www.alz.org/sandiego/events and click on "Educational Programs" or call (800) 272-3900.

JANUARY 20, THURSDAY 11 A.M.-12 P.M.

A free webinar, **Coping with Personality & Behavior Changes**, will be hosted by Alzheimer's San Diego and ElderHelp. Learn why people with Alzheimer's disease and other dementias experience behavior and personality changes, what those changes mean, and how to respond. To RSVP, visit www.alzsd.org/classes or call (858) 492-4400.

JANUARY 25, TUESDAY 1-2 P.M.

An in-person class, **Becoming More Confident!** (course #508), will be hosted by San Diego Oasis at the Grossmont Lifelong Learning Center, 5500 Grossmont Center Dr., Ste. 269, La Mesa 91942. Do you want more self-confidence? Are you missing out on life because you do not take initiative to move forward? Explore different methods of increasing your self-confidence and learn practices

and tools that will increase your confidence and well-being. Cost: \$12. Visit www.sandiegooasis.org or call (619) 881-6262 to RSVP.

JANUARY 26, WEDNESDAY 10-11 A.M.

Wellness Wednesday: A Peek Into Prediabetes will be held at the Herrick Library at 9001 Wakarusa St., La Mesa 91942. A virtual option is also available. Join in for a fun and interactive journey to the inside of your body. Find out what really causes prediabetes, a serious health condition where blood sugar levels are higher than normal, but not high enough yet to be diagnosed as type 2 diabetes. Discover the role your diet plays. Call (619) 825-5010 or email info@herricklibrary.org.

JANUARY 27, THURSDAY 10 A.M.-12 P.M.

Fun & Games for Seniors, a drop-in opportunity to play a variety of board games, will be held at the Scripps Miramar Ranch Library, 10301 Scripps Lake Dr., San Diego 92131. All participants shall wear masks and must be fully vaccinated. For details, call (858) 538-8158 or email srstaff@sandiego.gov.

FEBRUARY 2, WEDNESDAY 9-10 A.M.

Join the Santee Branch Library and the San Diego Archaeological Center for a presentation, **The Science of Archaeology: How We Know What We Know**, at Santee City Hall, 9225 Carlton Hills Blvd #17 Santee 92071. Learn about absolute and relative dating methods; how geology plays a role in understanding the past; and

how an archaeological site can inform about gender roles, economy, and even what was for dinner. For details, call (619) 448-1863.

FEBRUARY 7, MONDAY 6:30-7:30 P.M.

A Virtual Friends of the Library Virtual Author Talk: Matt Coyle will be hosted by the Point Loma/Hervey Branch Library. Matt Coyle is the author of the best-selling Rick Cahill crime novels. This discussion will focus on his latest book *Last Redemption*. To register, visit www.sandiego.librarymarket.com. For details, email postaff@sandiego.gov.

FEBRUARY 14, MONDAY 5:30-6:45 P.M.

A free **Healthy Hearts Webinar** will be offered by Sharp. Take a heart smart approach to improving your health. Learn practical tips for nutritious, low-fat cooking, shopping, and dining out. Visit www.sharp.com/classes or call (800) 827-4277 to register.

FEBRUARY 18, FRIDAY 10 A.M.-12 P.M.

An in-person class, **Conquering Your iPad** (course #567), will be offered by San Diego Oasis. Maximize the usefulness of your iPad, including how to use the settings, manage multiple pages, access contacts, and more. The last thirty minutes will be used to answer your questions. Cost: \$12. Visit www.sandiegooasis.org or call (619) 881-6262 to RSVP.

SEND IN YOUR ITEMS

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

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