

Best Kept Secret

By Queen Johnson

Until July of this year, I had never heard of the California Senior Legislature (CSL). Senior Senator Ted Kagan encouraged me to apply for membership in this very important, non-partisan volunteer organization, representing California's 4.5 million seniors. For more information on CSL, visit their website at: www.4csl.org.



I began representing San Diego County as a Senior Assemblymember at the 32nd session of CSL, held in the State Capital in Sacramento on October 29, 2012. This was one of the most profound experiences I've encountered. Any questions I had seemed to be anticipated by Janice Bailey and Elizabeth Thorstad, two personable staff members. My fellow Senate and Assemblymembers

quickly volunteered information about protocol, policy and procedure.

As a member of CSL, I have taken a sworn oath to abide by the purpose of CSL:

- To identify priority senior concerns
- To develop legislative proposals in response to these concerns
- To advocate for the inclusion of these concerns in legislative proposals of the State Legislature
- To influence others to become more effective in influencing public policy on behalf of seniors

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Affordable Housing

By Joe Gavin

In my frequent walks around the downtown area, it is not unusual for me to take notice of the many senior HUD Section 202 buildings that dot the skyline. These residences, such as Westminster Manor, Luther Tower, and San Diego Square are places that many of you call home. As I gaze upon the facades of the edifices, a thought always pops into my head, these buildings all look like they were constructed in the '70s. Now I like to think that the '70s weren't that long ago, but, alas, almost four decades have passed, so I ask myself, why is there nothing new?

Bill Kelly, president of Stewards of Affordable Housing for the Future, provided this quote in a recent article in *Affordable Housing Finance* that gives a clue. "The Section 202 program has gone from a very large program to a small program to nothing," Kelly stated. From a program highpoint in the '70s when tens of thousands of units were built for seniors to today's reality of a 2012 HUD budget that eliminated funding for new construction, development through this federal initiative has stagnated. The House passed a bill that authorized \$59 million for Section 202 expansion for fiscal year 2013, but that amount remains in jeopardy as the continuing resolution passed by Congress in September delays budgetary decisions for six months.

According to Administration on Aging and U.S. Census data, in 2011 San Diego County was home to over 520,000 people 60 years of age and older, by 2030, that figure is estimated to balloon to 930,000 individuals. The demand is growing, the supply is not. An applicant to

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Senior Centers Without Walls

New FREE Program for Homebound Seniors

Senior Community Centers is happy to introduce a new **free** program for homebound seniors aimed to increase social activity and reduce isolation and loneliness. We are partnering with *Senior Centers Without Walls*, located in Northern California, to provide a social community that offers an assortment of classes and support groups to seniors who find it difficult to go to a community senior center. Everything is done from the comfort of your own home through the telephone. You can choose what classes to take, when to participate, and how much you want to be involved. Join in on activities such as brain exercises, movie club, bingo, discussion groups, and more. With over 40 classes to choose from, you are bound to find a class for you! Share your stories and have a friendly discussion with other homebound seniors in a safe and enriching community! For more information, contact **Laura Stevens 619.487.0739**.



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SeniorScene is published by the volunteers of the Civic Engagement Group (Senior Advocacy Team) at the Gary and Mary West Senior Wellness Center.

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Editor's Note

HAPPY NEW YEAR to all. It is the beginning of another wonderful year at The Gary and Mary West Senior Wellness Center. I know we had a great year last year, but we have another terrific and better year in the coming months. We will have some of the familiar games and events, but we will also have a number of new activities for the center. Check our activities calendar monthly.



Peggy Shannon

I know I have not been at the center as much as I was before October. I am working for a few hours a week down at Senior Citizens Services at the Civic Center. Come by and say hi. I am also at the Senior Lounge in Balboa Park on Tuesday. I am still at the Center on Wednesdays for the Civic Engagement meetings and the newsletter committee meetings.

We had some very important people at our center in November. GSA members were in San Diego for a conference on senior issues and came by to see our wonderful center. They were very impressed and I was so proud to be a part of the civic engagement group to give our vision of the center and what we have achieved in the last 2½ years. Thanks again to Gary and Mary West for making this center come alive.

Call for Submissions

SeniorScene welcomes submission of ideas and articles of interest to downtown San Diego seniors. If you would like to submit an article or idea to be considered for inclusion in our publication, please email us. We publish quarterly; our next issue will appear in April 2013.

For more information on publication guidelines and deadlines, please email:

sdseniorscenenews@gmail.com

Bud & Esther's Cyber Cafe

By Julie Brossy

When Social Security (SSA) notified Rafael it would withhold \$200 from his monthly check of \$947, worry gripped him. Rafael's rent was \$600, which meant he would have less than \$5 per day to live on. Worse, SSA would deduct an additional \$99.90 for Part B after the initial cut. "How will I survive?" he asked.

Rafael found help through the Cyber Café staff at the Gary and Mary West Senior Wellness Center. Referred by an SCC social worker, Rafael met with a Consumer Health Advocate who discovered the problem stemmed from termination of his Med-Cal benefits. Rafael reapplied for Medi-Cal and was reinstated, allowing him to regain eligibility for the Medicare Savings Program, which paid the Part B premium.



Assistance with health care is one of many services provided at the Cyber Café, which is managed by the Intergenerational Health Advocacy Project, (IHAP) and funded by the West Foundation. IHAP is a program of the Consumer Center for Health Education and Advocacy, the health care team of the Legal Aid Society of San Diego, Inc.

Besides Medicare and Medi-Cal, IHAP advocates offer support with issues ranging from public benefits to assistance with housing, immigration and other legal problems. IHAP is staffed by Program Coordinator Julie Brossy, Consumer Health Advocate Yency Rosa and Administrative Assistant Laura Tellez.

Ten volunteers and seven interns from SDSU and local high schools help run the Cyber Café and offer individualized computer tutorials. Additionally, IHAP operates computer labs at the SCC's Potiker Family Residence and City Heights Square. We are enormously grateful to our incredibly talented, hard-working and dedicated volunteers.

Dining Room Staff

Jessica Velarde is a quiet but diligent member of the dining room staff at the West Center. Jessica has been a Food Service Worker for Serving Seniors Centers (SCC) for three years. She divides her time between the West Center and Potiker dining rooms. She says, "In addition to being fast and efficient, it is also important to be honest and sincere in your work" She is one member of a great dining room team.



Theresa, Jessica and Kathleen

Theresa Duran is the Dining Room Coordinator. She oversees all the details that go into making sure everything is ready to serve nutritious

meals to our seniors every day of the year. Theresa manages a kitchen staff of 10 employees and volunteers. She is very proud of her team, saying, "We maintain a positive atmosphere because we have a good, hardworking team. Everyone works together to make sure we get the job done." Theresa enjoys being of service, "I like giving back to my community."

Kathleen Montgomery is the Senior Lead in the dining room. She checks in seniors for meals, serves on the line and checks inventory, and data. Kathleen says, "I just love my seniors... starting every morning with a big smile for them to start the day means the world to me!"

Other members of the Dining Room Team include Maria Velasquez, Irma Davila, Blas Reyes, Edgar Davila, Elisa Ruis and rotating staff.



Dining Room Staff

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Best Kept Secret

- To that end, my mission is to further empower seniors through local advocacy, and by taking part in writing proposals to be submitted to the legislature

During January 2013, I will have Suggestion/Comment forms available and I welcome your input regarding your concerns.

I would also like to thank each of you who signed the petition to place my name on the ballot for CSL.

Let's get it done through positive actions and seniors working together.

Facts about CSL

- The first CSL session was convened by the State Legislature in 1981.
- CSL is comprised of 40 Senior Senators and 80 Senior Assemblymembers, age 60 or older, elected by their peers. These members are chosen throughout the state.
- Each year, in October, CSL convenes a legislative session. Members adopt 10 state and four federal priorities that receive special attention throughout the year.
- Senior legislators then seek state lawmakers to author the priority proposals. CSL has an excellent track record; more than 45% of its priority proposals have been enacted into law.

Civic Engagement: The Key to Advocacy

Reflecting on how proud I am to have been chosen as a Senior Assemblymember, I would be remiss if I did not mention the catalyst which opened the door to enhancing my advocacy skills. It was as a member of the Civic Engagement group at the Gary & Mary West Senior Wellness Center when I became aware of how important the need is for seniors to explore all measures that lead to proactive and progressive solutions that identify and develop programs that address the concerns and needs of the senior population.

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Affordable Housing

Section 202 housing faces an average waitlist duration of two years. For towns over 50,000 people, there are 11 applicants for every available unit. There is a growing body of research that indicates that affordable housing in conjunction with a network of support services such as the programs offered by Senior Community Centers' Gary and Mary West Senior Wellness Center provides ripple-effect benefits to not only older adults, but to their community and the strained public payer mechanisms as well.

Many of you know first-hand the vital role affordable housing has in society. Working for others so that they may enjoy the same as you is a wonderful thing. I ask you to do your part; advocate, engage, spread the word, write to your councilperson, write to your congressperson and senator; take on a worthy cause. Become a voice for affordable housing. Your fellow senior needs your support as do the many that will be walking through the doors of the West Center in the coming years in a downtown San Diego whose skyline is dotted, one hopes, with a few more building cranes.

The Power of Forgiveness

By Fred Davis

The power of forgiveness is immeasurable. We are challenged to forgive those who have wronged or hurt us. That may not seem so hard, but anyone who has struggled with pain and anger, knows how much it takes to really forgive, to lay aside the offense and reach out to the offender with mercy and love. On the other hand, forgiveness can release the offender from guilt, and even alter the course of the person's life. Forgiving is powerful, liberating and healing... It is your choice.

Center Activities



KPMG Accounting sponsors the Ice Cream Social



Autumn wreath making



Sculpting Class, Instructor Cynthia Fatica [Rooster Apron]

Senior Spotlight

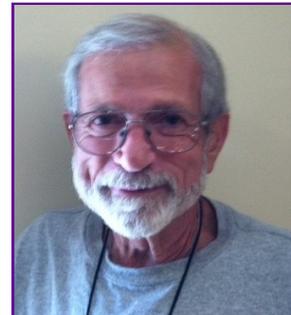
By Rebecca Taylor

Do, Doing, Done

Meet Mohamed-Seif Azzazi, winner of the “2011 Halloween Gary and Mary West Senior Center costume contest” and known as “Mo” around the center. When asked if he had any important life lessons to pass on, Mo replied “Never give up on your dreams, keep them alive!” As the distribution manager for our newsletter and member of the Civic Engagement group he is keeping his dream alive by “being able to give back to my community and staying active mentally and physically.” In 2009, Mo moved to San Diego and like so many others found himself at the bottom of waiting lists for housing. Luckily, he found the West Center by accident during his housing search. To Mo, the center is, “more than a place to eat. It is a place for seniors

to socialize, do activities and learn in conferences.”

Born and raised in Egypt, Mo has worked hard his entire life to achieve his academic goals. After acquiring a BS in Chemistry and Geology, he worked for 15 years and received a full scholarship from his second job to earn his MS at the Metallurgical Institute in Cairo. Next, he immigrated to Minnesota and after two decades of working decided to, “finish what he started in Egypt” by earning his MS in Engineering Quality Control just before his 60th birthday. When asked why, he responded emphatically, “the education cycle never stops - since we are born from the womb till we die in the tomb!” At 71 years old, Mo is a prime example of successful aging.



Mohamed-Seif Azzazi

Senior Buzz

Please don't forget to check the Activity Calendar for possible additions and changes



PAWS: Free pet food for dogs and cats every **third** Thursday and Friday of the month. Open to all seniors, must sign up at the Gary and Mary West Wellness Senior Center.

World Traveler: Every Thursday, come travel around the world without leaving your seat in the Lifelong Learning Room. Take-off is at 11:40 am.

Civic Engagement: Come and join Civic Engagement and make a difference. Voice your opinion about current issues that are affecting seniors in our community. Civic Engagement meets at:

- **West Center** every Wednesday at 1:30 pm in the Lifelong Learning Room.
- **City Heights** every other Tuesday at 1:15 pm.
- **Potiker Senior Residence** every Thursday at 2:00 pm.

Cooking Class: Once a month (check activity calendar), come and see what's cooking at The Wellness Center. Learn to create delicious meals in this hands-on cooking class. Sign up in advance at the front desk.

Transportation: Need a ride? The San Diego County Volunteer Drive Coalition can help. The coalition offers free and low-cost transportation services for seniors, for more information call (619) 282-0073.

Balboa Park Walk: Come and get your walk on every Thursday morning beginning at 10:00 am. Free of charge; meet in the Senior Lounge at Balboa Park. For more information (619) 236-0262.

Free Museums at Balboa Park: Every Tuesday of the month, explore Balboa Park's free museums. It is different each Tuesday. It is FREE for city and county residents only (with ID).

Senior Lounge in Balboa Park, located between the Natural History Museum and the Lily Pond in room 105, is open seven days a week from 9:30 am to 3:30 pm.

Free Food Distribution: The Jewish Family Services Hand Up Youth Food Pantry distributes free food to the public once a week at St. Paul's Cathedral, 2728 Sixth Avenue (the corner of Sixth Ave and Olive Street), every Thursday from 1:00 pm-3:00 pm.

Senior Citizens Services at the Civic Center is on the first floor. It is sponsored by City Parks and Recreation Department and Aging and Independence. Find out about great trips and events you can go on for a nominal fee. Check *The Scroll* for phone numbers and everything coming up in the next three months.

Bud & Esther's Cyber Café has 12 computers for use by our seniors. The Café hours are Monday through Friday 8:00 am to 3:30 pm and weekends 8:30 am to 1:30 pm.

A big thanks to Mike and Anne of Minuteman Press Downtown



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