



Next Issue:
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Ask SSG

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January - February 2009

THE MURAL PROJECT AT OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY TRAINING PROGRAM - LA

On January 14th, the OTTP Youth Center held a reception to celebrate the completion of their mural painted by 6 members of their youth group and OTTP staff. The group was led by artist Nichole Blackburn, who owns a non-profit, "Big Sky Countries", which is dedicated to donating murals to children organizations around the world and has completed murals in Thailand, the Philippines, Bolivia, Ireland, New Orleans, and now in Torrance. For 3 months, the mural group developed the ideas for the mural, learned art techniques, as well as improved their social skills in the weekly group. The theme of the mural was called "Creating Our Space", which derived from the group's idea of a safe place and the happiest moments in their lives and to create a safe place for other youth who will come to the Youth Center after them. Images of tree swings, music, beaches, balconies, the night sky and shooting stars are examples of their ideas and were incorporated into the mural.

A news piece was done by the South Bay Time Warner Cable Company showcasing the mural and the OTTP Youth Center. Throughout the day for a two day period in January the piece was aired on CNN Headline News. Congrats to OTTP-LA for an inspiring and exciting project in the community. Please check out the video at: http://www.twcsocalnews.com/index.php?option=com_seyret&task=videodirectlink&Itemid=26&id=1349



l-r Nichole Blackburn, Artist, Michal Berkson, OTTP, Elizabeth Carley, OTTP and Jeri Reeder, So. Bay Time Warner Cable



ROSIE MAE JACKSON RECEIVES CERTIFICATE OF RECOGNITION



Rosie Jackson & Herbert Hatanaka

Rosie Mae Jackson, Project Director, Hurting & Hungry, received a *Certificate of Recognition from the City of Los Angeles* in December 2008. The office of Herb Wesson, Councilmember, 10th District, presented Ms. Jackson with the certificate on behalf of the City. The certificate states:

Thank you for your dedicated service in providing much needed services to our communities. Your sincere desire to assist families in their struggles with poverty, illiteracy, drugs and violence is to be commended. The City of Los Angeles is a better place because of your commitment to helping those in need.

Ms. Jackson has been serving hot meals and distributing groceries to desperately needy individuals and families for over 25 years. She founded Hurting & Hungry, which has been part of the SSG family since 1985. She is recognized throughout the City and County of LA for her dedication and passion for her cause.

SSG NEWS & HIGHLIGHTS

HOPICS AVALON FAMILY CENTER

Sterling Transportation employees made Christmas more joyful for many Center families. Many thanks for your donations - 25 food baskets filled with food from Boston Market; 20 \$50.00 gift cards and for "adopting" three of our most needy families. **Kenny Langie**, one of our Parent Partners at the Center, made the connection with Sterling Transportation. Well done and thank you!



The Avalon Family Center was a recipient of a 25 fruit trees (currently dormant), that were donated by the Tree People, the organizations Fruit Tree giveaway program is sharing 12,000 trees with underserved communities in Los Angeles County. Some trees are planted at our site and other's were given to our families to enjoy. We are looking forward to lots of fruit in the coming years.

The City of LA Mayor's Office Sponsors a Weekend of Social Events in February

Two families along with several staff gathered at the office for snacks before attending a play "Model Behavior" at the 24th Street Theater.



Seven youth, 1 parent and several staff attended "Crips & Bloods: Made in America" at the Laemmle Sunset 5 Theater in West Hollywood. The movie chronicled the history of 2 South LA gangs, moving through destruction and despair to redemption and hope that another generation is not lost. Discussions on how to interact peacefully were held before and after the screening and opened the door for further discussion among our youth.

Many thanks to the staff who helped make these events possible and memorable for our youth.

Valentine Dance



The Avalon Family Center, Going Beyond Boundaries and the City of LA Recreation and Parks cosponsored a Valentines Day Dance on February 13th. The dance was held and South Park Recreation Center and attended by 70

middle and high school students. Parent and staff served refreshments and provided a safe social event for our youth to enjoy.

BENEFITS ASSISTANCE CLIENTS URBAN PROJECT & LIFE CENTER

BACUP's 2nd Annual Bringing In the New Year Party on January 3, 2009 was attended by 50 people. One man brought his accordion, he has been playing since 1963 and entertained us in grand style. The party was hot with conversations about everything under the sun and exciting for all. Much appreciation to all the staff who made it happen!



Inauguration Day, January 20, 2009 was celebrated at BACUP by 20 participants who came to the Center to watch the event on a brand new big screen TV that was donated by the Lions Club.



SSG's Winter Weather Clothing Drive is a Success

Thanks Everyone for Your Generosity!

SSG staff and others who work in the Standard Oil Building donated 135 items that will be distributed to SSG clients who are homeless. Items include: 45 shirts, 41 jackets, 11 hats, 10 blankets, 10 pairs of gloves, 7 pairs of pants, and an assortment of scarves and socks.



Dates to Remember for March & April

- 3/8 Daylight Savings Time Begins and National Working Women's Day
- 3/17 St. Patrick's Day
- 3/20 Spring Begins
- 4/1 April Fool's Day
- 4/7 World Health Day
- 4/9 Passover
- 4/12 Easter
- 4/22 Earth Day
- 4/23 Administrative Professionals Day



SSG NEWS AND HIGHLIGHTS

RE-ENTRY EMPLOYMENT OPTION PROJECT (RMO)

Success Story

Ernest Melendrez is a 35-year old parolee who has been in and out of trouble since his teens due primarily to his struggles with substance abuse. As with many of his peers growing up in South Los Angeles, Ernest dealt routinely with neighborhood violence, poverty and indifference. Ernest went through times of anger, hopelessness and despair

throughout his young adult life. Estranged from his family and in particular his teenage daughter and young sons, Ernest decided it was time for change. It was now or never. He completed all the terms of a residential treatment program offered by Amity Foundation after his last release in 2007. In March 2008, with opportunities closing amid a failing economy, Ernest found the Re-Entry Employment Options Project (REEOP), a project of SSG's Reentry Maintenance Organization (RMO) in South LA. With support from Webber Stan Dowells one of RMO's most experienced Senior Case Managers he participated in 100% of the offered services including classes in financial literacy and job training. He excelled in all. Through the South LA WorkSource Center he obtained a temporary training job with the LA Conservation Corps. He worked closely with another REEOP partner Mum's the Word for legal advice on how to regain custody of his children. Through REEOP he was able to find and maintain stable housing via Community Minded Business, another REEOP partner. During the summer and fall of 2008 he also volunteered in local volunteer efforts for grass-roots mobilization efforts for Barack Obama and the Democratic Party. And finally at the request of Walden House, he found he had tremendous skill to connect with at-risk youth and young adults as a peer leader and motivational speaker. Ernest's life was beginning to come together. On February 1, 2009, he accepted a permanent job as a 'Job Developer' for Skidrow Housing Development. He has regained full custody of his teenage daughter and 2 younger sons. He and his fiancé are working hard to create a stable and loving home and when asked, cannot praise the efforts of REEOP enough. "Without REEOP my life would be without hope. I probably would have returned to being homeless without anything. My children would have been lost from me. I cannot thank them enough. I am amazed at the number of truly caring people who have helped me and my family. We are blessed."

Personal Accomplishments

Chris Minnick, LCSW, CMH has passed his licensure exams and is now a full-fledged Licensed Clinical Social Worker. Chris has been the backbone of Central Mental Health since it was the AB2034 program.

All of us at CMH have been celebrating his success with great pride and joy. Congratulations Chris!

Tania Trillo-Rodriguez, PALS for Health was selected to join the Board of Directors of *The Wall Las Memorias*, Founded in 1993, The Wall Las Memorias has built support for the AIDS monument through its innovative prevention programs, leadership training and grassroots community organizing. We congratulate Tania on this significant accomplishment and look forward to working more closely with The Wall Las Memorias to expand access to HIV/AIDS services to limited English speaking HIV-affected individuals and communities.



Actual Newspaper Headlines

- Police begin campaign to run down jaywalkers
- Two convicts evade noose, jury hung
- William Kelly was fed secretary
- Safety experts say school bus passengers should be belted
- Farmer bill dies in house
- Iraqi head seeks arms
- Queen Mary having bottom scraped
- Panda mating fails - veterinarian takes over
- NJ judge to rule on nude beach

SSG NEWS & HIGHLIGHTS

SSG's INCUBATION PROJECT - SAATH

**Navigating Hope for Cancer Patients in LA:
Saath reaches out To South Asians with
information and services.**

Saath is a newly formed program under SSG's umbrella, that arose from an unmet need: To better serve South Asians who have cancer or are faced with a cancer diagnosis. Saath meaning together, collective action, support or one voice, was started by an unlikely combination of people: a lawyer, a health educator, a community advocate and a cancer survivor - all with a passion to make a difference. The group was inspired by co-founder, survivor, and nationally recognized cancer advocate **Jina Peiris** and her journey with cancer. The founders' personal involvement with cancer, tireless efforts, credibility, strategic and fiscal/administrative support from SSG helped Saath land a grant from the California Breast Cancer Research Program (CBCRP). Through a research partnership with UCLA's nationally re-known **Dr. Roshan**



I-r Lubna Lipton, Loraine Agustin, Zul Surani

Bastani and Dr. Beth Glenn, trained community experts collected data in 2007 to assess needs of South Asians in cancer support, early detection and prevention. The results of this study and

a previous study on health needs of South Asians, both co-authored by **Zul Surani** who also serves as Saath's Director, have helped inform the launch of several culturally tailored cancer education initiatives. **Loraine Agustin**, Saath's Manager of Programs who was trained at USC's MPH program (Biostatistics/Epidemiology) is helping manage and evaluate these programs rigorously so that only effective elements are sustained and further developed. Research is also showing that if you prevent cancer, you are most likely going to help prevent diabetes and heart disease, top diseases affecting South Asians in the US. Saath (www.saathusa.org) invites you to join its efforts to work together to build a healthier community. Please contact Loraine Agustin at lagustin@gmail.com or Saath at 1-866-459-8474.



Recipe Idea

Really Great Brownies



1 c. unsalted butter
2/3 c. flour
2 c. sugar
4 eggs, slightly beaten
1/2 tsp. vanilla
3/4 c. unsweetened natural cocoa powder
1/2 tsp. baking powder
1/2 tsp. salt.
1/2 c. chocolate chips or candy sprinkles (optional)

Heat oven to 350. Butter and flour a brownie pan (11 x 7 or 9" square), tapping out excess flour.

In a microwave safe bowl, melt butter in 15-second increments until just melted. Whisk in sugar, eggs and vanilla. Stir in the flour, cocoa, baking powder and salt. Stir until the batter is smooth and uniform.

Spread the batter into the prepared pan, smoothing it so it fills the pan evenly. Sprinkle on chips and/or sprinkles if using. Bake until a toothpick comes out with just a few moist clumps clinging to it, about 40 minutes. Cool and enjoy.

GLAZE (optional): Combine 1 6-oz. pkg. Chocolate chips, 2 T. butter and 3 T. milk in saucepan; stir over low heat until melted. Off heat add 1 c. powdered sugar. Beat or whisk until smooth, glossy and easy to spread. Add a few drops hot water if needed.



Vote

Primary Elections will be held
March 3rd, 2009
Check out the ballot for the
city where you live.

Some items included on the City of Los Angeles
ballot are:
Mayor's race
City Council seats
Measure B - Solar Energy
School Board Seat

SSG HUMAN RESOURCES DEPT.

Adding/Changing Your Beneficiary/ies

You may revoke your beneficiary designation/s at any time by completing and filing out a new beneficiary designation form with SSG's HR Department. Please be reminded that for the Defined Benefit Pension Plan, the Spouse's Waiver must be completed and notarized if you are married and designating a primary beneficiary other than a spouse.

There are two beneficiary change forms that you need to complete:

1. **Mutual of America's Beneficiary Designation** form for the Defined Benefit Pension Plan and/or Group Life Insurance Plan,
2. **Guardian's Beneficiary Change** form for the Term Life Insurance Plan.

Both forms are available at www.reviewmybenefits.com (user name: sstaff1, password: 12345) or you may request a copy from the HR Department at (213) 553-1892.

Employee Safety

Courteous Driving

Most of us rarely stop to analyze words and phrases which we hear and use daily. How do we define courteous driving? There is not an official definition, but we can describe it.

Driving habits that embrace courtesy should be practiced daily - not just on our good days. Some of us reserve courtesy for vacation or off-the-job trips, and some to impress the boss.

Courtesy should be part of your normal driving habits. For example:

1. Use correct procedures when making turns. This includes being in the correct lane well in advance, signaling your intentions, and checking approaching traffic.
2. Park as quickly and safely as possible so as not to block traffic.
3. Stay in the right hand lane on two-way streets except when getting in position for a left turn or passing slower traffic.
4. Drive defensively. Be alert and ready to act to prevent an accident. Even though you may be driving correctly, don't challenge the other driver—be ready to yield as necessary.

If you operate in a manner that minimizes obstruction of traffic, irritation to other drivers, and reduces the possibility of an accident, you will find driving easier, safer and more enjoyable. Don't fight it. Work at it. It pays dividends.

Courtesy may not be contagious, but it is good-habit forming.

NO Text Messaging (SB 28/Simitian)



This new law makes it an infraction to write, send, or read text-based communication on an electronic wireless communication device, such as a cell phone, while driving.

In addition, please be reminded of **SSG's Cell Phones or PDAs and**

Hands-Free Device Policy that went into effect 7/1/08 and revised 2/09, refer to form #380 for further details.

"Employees are prohibited from using cell phones or PDAs while driving in connection with company business without hands-free devices. Use of cell phones or PDAs without hands-free devices on company business is illegal and violates company policy. Employees are prohibited from writing, sending, or reading text-based communication while driving in connection with company business. Failure to abide by this policy will result in disciplinary action.

Citations for failing to use hands-free devices or from writing, sending, or reading text-based communication while driving will not be reimbursed by the company.

Cellular phones or PDAs should be turned off (or the ringer silenced or set to vibrate, if possible) in meetings or other situations where noise would be disruptive. If possible, avoid replying to messages during meetings..."

W-2 forms were mailed to your mailing address the 3rd week of January. If you have not received your W-2, please contact the Fiscal Manager at 213-553-1825 (bdelossantos@ssgmain.org)

SSG Health Plan Survey

Every year we ask all eligible employees to provide feedback on the SSG Group Medical Plan (Kaiser and Blue Shield are our current carriers). Your feedback is very valuable. Copies are being distributed through all SSG sites beginning 2/23/09 together with payroll. Completed confidential responses should be submitted by 2/28/09 via fax, email or drop-off. Please ask your supervisor for a copy. This year, confidential responses may also be submitted on-line.

Log on to http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=SphQ_2b1wghQv_2fIBEOkcpKwA_3d_3d.
Or just email to parkerlyons@solutions-bsc.com
(write 'SSG Survey' in the subject line).