

# SERVING SENIORS

*Passionately helping seniors survive*

Winter 2008

## “Gray” Role Affords High Success Rate

### Potiker Mental Health Worker’s Duties Centered Around Being an Advocate, Confidant and Friend

Officially speaking, Dennis Dearie is the mental health worker at Potiker Family Senior Residence—his title is Older Adult Rehabilitative Specialist and he is a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist. Don’t tell the residents at Potiker that though. To them, he is a problem solver, advocate, confidant, and friend.

Although he is a therapist by trade, he stresses that he doesn’t focus on mental illness, but instead on mental health. He sees himself not only as a rehabilitator, but also preventor of mental health issues—providing opportunities to some residents and “kick-starting” others.

He promotes pursuit of personal goals, leading a purposeful life, and quality of life by focusing on each resident’s strengths.

“I consider myself to be ‘planted’ in the building,” says Dearie. “I become involved in the residents’ personal lives, build credibility and rapport, and try to maintain a connection to each of them so that I am able to have access later if problems arise.”

Those “problems” could include a number of things—depression, failing health, anxiety, paranoia, substance abuse, and conflicts with other residents.

He visits residents daily and tries to head off problems before they get bad so they don’t disrupt the comfortable, home-like environment the facility provides to over 200 residents.

A typical day for Dennis begins with a review of any “crisis report” from the night security guard. From there, he makes contact with the resident(s) in concern and assesses the situation, providing services or

referrals as needed.

After handling any situation that may have occurred overnight, he checks on his regulars—those with health problems or other ongoing issues—to make sure they are okay and haven’t fallen or injured themselves.

Next, it’s phone time and calls to community partners to connect the seniors with services and advocate on their behalf. There are also the ongoing visits with residents who stop in to chat—there’s

provided through it are some of the most important things he organizes for the residents. The philosophy of The Clubhouse—one that is promoted at every meeting—is “get up, step out, reach out”.

“I use it as an opportunity for the residents to try something new, say “hi” to neighbors, smile at someone, and invite others to join them,” explains Dearie. “I try to teach them to put others before themselves as much as possible.”

Besides The Clubhouse, he helps

organize the Residents Committee and Potiker University, an on-site educational opportunity, as well as aid people in finding jobs, volunteer experiences and outside educational opportunities.

For many of the residents who would otherwise lead solitary lives, the group activities allow them to socialize with their neighbors in a familiar environment while reducing the isolation, loneliness and depression they experience.

The variety of activities not only gives Dearie a chance to teach the residents strategies to work with those individuals who may irritate them, but to look out for each other and let him know if someone is struggling.

“My job duties do not encompass the work of your typical mental health professional,” says Dearie. “It is definitely a gray role (keeping the relationship both professional and friendly).”



**DENNIS DEARIE VISITS WITH 91-YEAR-OLD POTIKER RESIDENT, ETHEL, AT THE COFFEE CLUB WHICH MEETS ONCE A WEEK ON THE ROOFTOP PATIO. COFFEE CLUB IS ONE OF THE ACTIVITIES CREATED BY DEARIE TO INCREASE SOCIALIZATION AND A SENSE OF COMMUNITY AMONG THE RESIDENTS IN THE BUILDING.**

always something or someone to mend. He usually joins everyone in the dining room to visit (and assess) some more. In the afternoon, he spends most of his time organizing and promoting activities for the residents—one of his ways of “kick-starting” and creating opportunities.

The Clubhouse and the activities



## Plan to Increase Awareness, Critical Funding

Thanks to a generous grant from The California Endowment, Senior Community Centers is embarking on a two-year Advocacy Project to increase public awareness of critical issues facing low-income seniors and catalyze change by aggressively advocating for legislative reform for three issues—nutrition, mental health services and affordable, supportive housing.

Based on our experiences, we know that low-income seniors with limited resources often have no voice when it comes to getting laws changed to improve their standard of living.

The Federal Budget that has been released by the President freezes spending for the Older Americans Act (OAA) which partially funds our Nutrition Program. The Governor is proposing a 10 percent across the board cut in funding. These two factors could result in a significant impact on our programs.

We have learned that promotion of healthy lifestyles is more cost effective than intervening once problems occur and

seniors face institutionalization. Being proactive on the front end could save hundreds of thousands of dollars on the back end in healthcare costs alone.

That is why we worked with national organizations as well as through the local media to support the Senate version of the Economic Stimulus Plan which includes a

**“Being proactive on the front end could save hundreds of thousands on the back end...”**

\$500 rebate for seniors on Social Security. The bill passed in early February and President Bush signed it mid-month.

Paul Downey, President and CEO of Senior Community Centers for the past twelve years, has played an important role in advocacy efforts pertaining to senior issues in Sacramento and Washington D.C. On the national level, Downey is a Board Member of the National Association of

Nutrition Services and Aging Programs (NANASP) and statewide serves as President of both the California Association of Nutrition Directors for the Elderly (CANDE) and the California Elderly Nutrition Partnership (CNEP).

He will lead the efforts on this project which is designed to not only increase public awareness of the issues, but train other senior care providers and decision makers to become a voice for seniors and senior issues, teach them how to effectively communicate with policymakers at all levels, and build coalitions of colleagues to leverage strength for maximum impact.

We are confident that raising awareness of critical issues among legislators, service providers and the general public, will lead to increased funding for programs and ensure that a greater number of seniors receive quality, uniformly-defined supportive services.

To follow updates about this project, visit our website at [www.servingseiors.org](http://www.servingseiors.org).

## SOS Hosts Star-Studded Super Bowl Bash Miss San Diego and Miss Outstanding Teen Headline Event



THE SERVING OUR SENIORS COMMITTEE (SOS) REGULARLY HOSTS PARTIES AT THE BROADWAY DAY CENTER. THE COMMITTEE IS MADE UP OF BOTH SENIOR COMMUNITY CENTERS BOARD MEMBERS AS WELL AS OTHER COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERS. THE GROUP RAISES OR DONATES THEIR OWN MONEY FOR THE EVENTS THEY HOST WHICH RANGE FROM PARTIES TO FIELD TRIPS TO TALENT SHOWS. ON FEBRUARY 1ST THEY HOSTED A PRE-SUPER BOWL TAILGATE BASH THAT INCLUDED GAMES SUCH AS A FOOTBALL TOSS, END ZONE DANCE COMPETITION AND SUPER BOWL TRIVIA. MISS SAN DIEGO AND MISS OUTSTANDING TEEN SAN DIEGO PERFORMED THE “PRE-GAME SHOW” AND THE “HALFTIME SHOW” AS WELL AS JUDGED THE END ZONE DANCE COMPETITION. PICTURED ABOVE: A PARTYGOER TESTS HER SKILLS AT THE FOOTBALL TOSS GAME (PHOTO COLLAGE, LEFT) THAT WAS HANDMADE BY TANA CLEAVES OF THE SOS COMMITTEE (PICTURED) AND HER HUSBAND, DAN. MISS OUTSTANDING TEEN, MARINA INSERRA (CENTER), TAKES A MOMENT TO VISIT WITH A REGULAR AT BROADWAY. MISS SAN DIEGO, LAUREN THOMSON (RIGHT), MAKES THE ROUNDS TO ONE OF THE TABLES AT THE PARTY.



## Heroes Circle

Welcome new members  
October 2007–December 2007

- Robert Anslow Jr. & Marina Marrelli
- Darcy & Robert Bingham\*
- Susan Channick
- Sid & Jenny Craig\*
- Julie DeMeules\*
- Michael & Renee Finch\*
- Bud & Esther Fisher\*
- Doug Forsyth
- Fred & Alicia Hallett\*
- George Hecht\*
- Scott & Annette Hirt
- Thomas Hunt & JoAnne Berg\*
- Kay Lemonovich\*
- Barbara & Frank Mullett\*
- John & Marilyn O'Neill\*
- Mary O'Tousa
- Dr. Michael Plopper
- Jeff & Yvonne Reid\*
- Melanie Royles
- Josiah & Abby Sand\*
- Ann Marie Smith & Mike Feuersinger\*
- Thomas & Julie Smith
- Paul & Janet Stannard\*
- Craig & Carol Whitwer\*
- Perry Wright
- Marvin & Bebe Zigman\*
- Debi Zumtobel\*

The [Heroes Circle](#) is a donor club for friends whose gifts to Senior Community Centers total \$1,000 or more annually.

*\*Renewed members*

## Meal Service Underway in City Heights



THE KITCHEN AND DINING ROOM AT CITY HEIGHTS SQUARE (CHS), SENIOR COMMUNITY CENTERS' NEWEST SUPPORTIVE HOUSING FACILITY, HAS BEEN PROVIDING LUNCH SERVICE MONDAY THROUGH FRIDAY SINCE OCTOBER. SAM (ABOVE LEFT), A RESIDENT AND VOLUNTEER AT CHS, LENDS A HELPING HAND DURING THE LUNCH SERVICE. DANNY JARVIS, PRODUCTION MANAGER (ABOVE RIGHT) DISHES UP LUNCH TO A WAITING RESIDENT. THREE RESIDENTS OF CHS (ABOVE BOTTOM) VISIT WITH EACH OTHER AND RELAX AFTER ENJOYING THEIR LUNCHEES.

### Did You Know ...

**72% of seniors polled will vote in this year's election**

**75% say this election is more important than past ones**

**54% think the most important issue is the economy**

**26% consider health care the most important issue**

*\*The results above are those of the seniors who participated in this survey at our Broadway Center and Potiker Family Senior Residence and do not necessarily present the views of Senior Community Centers in its entirety.*



# Perky Potiker Resident ‘Happy to Help’ Neighbors

## Planning and Participating in Activities Inside and Outside of Residence Brings Fulfillment

Ellie is used to looking after people—she’s been doing it for most of her life. The second oldest of four children, she raised her two younger brothers when her parents both died at an early age. In her professional life, she was in the customer service field. So, her new roles at Potiker are nothing new, in fact, she rather likes them.

“I’m just filling up my time,” she says. “I’m happy to do it!”

Ellie has lived in San Diego on and off for almost 63 years. Before moving back for good, she lived in New Orleans but was forced out

after Hurricane Katrina. Recently, she traveled back East for a family reunion and sadly, one of her brothers passed away during her trip.

“I was devastated,” she explained. “When I got back, I decided I wanted to keep busy and to help people.”

So, she signed up for the Computer Club, Garden Club, Yoga Club, Potiker University, Residents Committee (of which she is now the Secretary), and newly appointed assistant to Dennis Dearie (see Page 1). Outside of Potiker, she serves as a Visitor Ambassador which is a volunteer position for the Centre City Development Corporation.

Dennis looks to seniors like Ellie, who are very independent and knowledgeable, to take on leadership positions in the building and help their peers who need a little more attention and encouragement.

“I utilize people like Ellie to show the others that they ‘can do it’ too,” said Dennis. “It works really well when peer-to-peer learning opportunities are created.”

Often times, these opportunities are just encouraging others to participate in activities or even venture outside the building and onto public transportation. She will also help him organize activities, deliver fliers and reminders for events as well as assist during the events.

“I try to be there for people,” explained Ellie. “I know someday I might not be able to get around so well, or I might have other problems. Hopefully when that happens, someone will be there for me.”



ELLIE (RIGHT) VISITS WITH A FELLOW POTIKER RESIDENT IN THE RAINSFORD DINING ROOM PRIOR TO EATING LUNCH. BESIDES HER PARTICIPATION IN A NUMBER OF THE BUILDING’S ACTIVITIES, SHE IS ALSO A FRIEND TO MANY OF THE OTHER RESIDENTS, MAKING A POINT TO REACH OUT TO THOSE WHO ARE LONELY AND ISOLATED.

To learn more about our programs or services for low-income seniors, visit our website at [www.servingseiors.org](http://www.servingseiors.org)

### Log On Today!

Visit our newly revised website to receive this as an e-newsletter and more!

[www.servingseiors.org](http://www.servingseiors.org)

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- How to Help
- Events
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- More user-friendly
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### Simple Ways to Help Seniors Now and In the Future

#### Include Senior Community Centers in Your Will

Leave a legacy by making a lasting gift to ensure that seniors will continue to receive the vital services they desperately need.

#### Stock

Donating shares of publicly traded stock is an easy way to provide funds for operations or for our endowment. Contact your investment broker for specific instructions.

#### Support the Windmill Thrift Shops

Donating gently-used household items and clothing to the Windmill Thrift Shops directly benefits Senior Community Centers. Check out one of their two locations for great bargains! Visit their website at: [www.windmillthriftshops.org](http://www.windmillthriftshops.org)

Visit the [How to Help](#) page on our website for more information on ways you can make a difference.