

THE RUTHERFORD Report

THE NEWSLETTER OF SECOND DISTRICT SUPERVISOR JANICE RUTHERFORD

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Giving back involves a certain amount of giving up.

—Colin Powell

The San Bernardino County Sheriff's HOPE Team helps connect homeless people with local resource agencies to help them get off the streets.

Sheriff Offers HOPE to Homeless

A four-man team of San Bernardino County Sheriff's deputies is taking on the County's homeless problem by helping people make positive changes in their lives.

Launched in 2013 as a pilot program in the High Desert and East Valley, the Homeless Outreach and Proactive Enforcement (HOPE) program has grown into a countywide effort to connect homeless families and

individuals with resources that can help them get off the streets.

Sheriff John McMahon started the program after seeing the impact emergency service calls related to homelessness were having on his deputies and other first responders.

"We get a lot of calls to 911 related to homelessness," Deputy Mike Jones said. "Someone calls and reports a

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Mountain Foster Agency Seeks Families

Russell and Jill Neumen—the founders of the only foster care agency in the San Bernardino mountain communities—started as teachers in the Los Angeles neighborhood of Westchester.

"We've always enjoyed working with children," Russell said.

After the couple had two daughters, Jill became a stay-at-home-mom while Russell ventured into student counseling and administrative positions.

That's when Russell began to understand the need for group homes to serve young boys who'd run away from home—often to escape abuse.

He and his wife started three group homes for boys ages 14 to 18, and they worked closely with the young people, taking them on trips to the beach, mountains and other locations many of them had never seen.

"We wanted to help them create memories and have a sense of normalcy," Russell said.

As their daughters grew up, the couple realized they wanted to raise them somewhere besides the bustling streets of Los Angeles so they moved to the tranquil community of Lake Arrowhead.

Russell taught math at Rim of the World High School for a short time before becoming a social worker with the San

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Gym Revived by Owner Who Battled Cancer

Gary Peterson was told he had just a few months to live after being diagnosed with leukemia in 2010.

The life-long health and fitness enthusiast had owned and operated Spa Fitness for Women in Upland for about 30 years before selling the business in 2005 and moving to Henderson, Nevada to start a new life.

“That decision was very tough for him,” said Dr. Konnie Vong, who became romantically involved with Gary after a long friendship. “Nobody knew the business better than him.”

About five years after the sale, Gary got calls from members who said the gym had suddenly closed and no

one could reach the new owners for answers. Eventually, the property went into default, and Gary decided to reopen it despite his prognosis and the battle ahead of him.

Encouraged by his loyal members and Konnie, Gary chose to remodel and reopen the facility as Shirlee’s —The Ultimate Women’s Gym.

The gym had been named Shirlee’s Fitness Center prior to Gary purchasing it in 1982. The name is an acronym: Strengthen Hearten Inspire Restore Love Encourage Empower Support.

After a stint in the United States Air Force, Gary got his start in the fitness industry in the 1970s working as a

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homeless person passed out on the grass, but when firefighters and deputies arrive, they discover the guy’s just sleeping.”

Rather than just rousing the homeless and telling them to move on, HOPE team members talk to them and try to find out how they can help them get their lives back on track.

Deputies come dressed in cargo pants and polo shirts rather than the standard uniforms to put people more at ease, and they often have to reassure the homeless individuals they contact more than once that they aren’t there “just to take them to jail.”

“It’s really about building trust with them,” Jones said. “We have a lot of people who say they are not interested right now, but we keep coming back.”

The team’s persistence has paid off on many occasions.

One man camped along the Mojave River in Victorville told deputies he’d been homeless for 13 years and shunned their help every time they stopped by to talk.

“We asked him, ‘How many times to you get a second chance in life?’” Jones said.

The message eventually sank in, the man quit using drugs, and deputies connected him with a transitional housing program through the San Bernardino County Department of Behavioral Health.

Collaborations are a big component of the HOPE program. The team works with the County’s Transitional

Assistance Department, Veterans Affairs and various other agencies and nonprofits to get people they help they need.

They even created a 55-page resource guide that provides information on everything from obtaining a Social Security card to enrolling in substance abuse treatment to getting job training and more.

The guide is handed out to every homeless person they encounter. So far, they have contacted more than 1,200.

The team also provides “Positive Change Not Spare Change” posters to businesses to combat panhandling. The posters urge people to give to local charities that support the homeless rather giving cash to those holding up signs for handouts.

“Through our contacts, we’ve found that about 60 percent of panhandlers aren’t even homeless; they’re unemployed or need some extra money,” Jones said. “And a lot of those claiming to be veterans aren’t really veterans.”

The homeless panhandlers they do speak with often say they use the money they collect to fuel their drug and alcohol addictions rather than for food, which they can readily get from various nonprofits and other groups.

Visit <http://cms.sbcounty.gov/sheriff/GeneralInfo/HOPE.aspx> or call (909) 387-0623 for more information about the HOPE program.

You can also email the HOPE team at hope@sbcasd.org.

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Bernardino County Department of Children and Family Services. He worked with children who had been removed from their parents' homes for various reasons, and he also worked with parents to help them work on their issues and get their children back.

"The ultimate goal is always family reunification," he said.

Some of the children Russell worked with suffered from physical or sexual abuse, but there was a common thread in nearly all of their lives—parents who abused drugs and alcohol.

Russell and Jill began working on forming a local foster agency after Russell realized there wasn't a local foster agency serving the mountain communities. That meant many mountain children swept into the foster care system ended up in placements off the mountain.

"That can be a bit of a culture shock for a child who's grown up here," he said.

The nonprofit Arrowhead Foster Family Agency placed its first foster child in 2001. Today, it serves all of the mountain communities from Cedarpines Park to Big Bear as well as parts of the High Desert.

The agency trains foster parents and evaluates their homes and finances to ensure they are capable of supporting a foster child. Some foster parents are couples who can't have children of their own; others are empty nesters who yearn to have children in their lives again.

"Ever community has children that need foster homes, and somebody has to give back and help," Russell said.

While family reunification is the primary goal for foster children, there are many instances where that's not possible and the foster parents adopt the child or children placed in their care.

While adoption is good news for the foster children and their adoptive parents, it also reduces the number of foster families the Arrowhead Foster Family Agency can turn to for placement.

"When they adopt, they often stop being foster parents because they want normalcy for the children," Russell said.

At one time the agency had 15 foster families to turn to in the mountain communities. Today, they have just five.

They recently began a campaign to find more mountain residents willing to become foster parents so mountain foster kids aren't placed outside of the community they grew up in.

With the help of Brooke Braden—the daughter of a foster family that eventually adopted the children placed in their care—they created a website and Facebook page, and they also hosted a carnival-style event at Lakeside Church to educate residents about the foster care system. Brooke's father, Mack, is the pastor at the church.

"I've already had several families who have respond to the campaign," Russell said.

Visit www.arrowheadfosterfamilyagency.org or call (909) 336-1416 for more information about the Arrowhead Foster Family Agency.

2nd District Trivia

Last Issue's Answer: Mariposa County is one of California's original 27 counties. It covered about a sixth of the state before parts of it were absorbed by 12 other counties, including San Bernardino County.

Question: Who was the first woman to become Chair of the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors? She was also the second woman in California to serve in that capacity.

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district manager at the Jack LaLanne Health Club in Torrance.

Occasionally, the gym would offer women-only or men-only days, and Gary noticed the women-only days attracted a lot of clients.

As an added bonus, the gym was also cleaner and smelled nicer on days men were excluded.

So, when Gary eventually opened his own gym, he chose to make it a women's only facility

"(Women) feel more comfortable coming into a gym and getting their exercise when they aren't being ogled by men," Konnie said.

Shirlee's also differentiates itself from larger, corporate gyms by limiting the number of people who can join. This helps keeps the crowds in check so members can make the most of every visit, Konnie said.

The gym features 10,000 square feet of indoor workout space, complete with an array of fitness equipment from free weights to tread mills to stationary bikes and more.

In addition, the facility offers a range of fitness classes including Aqua, Zumba, Pilates, Yoga, Spin and more.

For those who prefer to exercise outdoors, Shirlee's features an outdoor track, boot camps, pool, and cabanas where members can stretch or work out with weights and fitness machines in the fresh air.

While he was given just months to live, Gary battled cancer for four years before he eventually succumbed to the disease in October 2014. His fitness legacy lives on thanks to Konnie and her team at Shirlee's.

Visit www.shirlees.com to learn more about this Second District business.

Upcoming Events

Dec. 11-13	The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints presents its 6th annual Living Nativity event, "A Celebration of the Birth of Christ." Live shows will run each evening at 6:30, 7:15 and 8. Located at 6829 Etiwanda Avenue in Rancho Cucamonga, this free outdoor activity includes choir music, caroling, live actors, real animals (petting zoo), refreshments and a replica of the town of Bethlehem. Visit www.livingnativityrc.com for more information.
Jan. 9-10	The 41st annual Cable Airshow will take place at Cable Airport in Upland. Enjoy airplane acrobatics, food, music and more at this family friendly event. Gates open at 8 a.m. Visit http://cableairport.com/airfair/ to learn more. Entry costs \$10 for adults, \$5 for children ages 5-12 and free for children under five.
Jan. 9	The U.S. Forest Service is seeking volunteers to count bald eagles at Lake Gregory and Lake Arrowhead. Volunteers are asked to meet at 8 a.m. at the Skyforest Ranger Station for orientation. Contact Robin Eliason at reliason@fs.fed.us or 909-382-2832 for more information. Call (909) 382-2832 after 6:30 a.m. on the day of the event to check for cancellation because of weather. Volunteers are advised to dress in warm clothes and to bring binoculars. Bald eagle counts will also be held on February 14 and March 12.
Jan. 15-16	The Rotary World Peace Conference will take place at the Ontario Convention Center. Visit www.peaceconference2016.org to learn more.
Jan. 28	The San Bernardino County Homeless Partnership will conduct its annual homeless point-in-time count from 6 to 10 a.m. Volunteers are needed. Visit www.sanbernardinocountyhomelesscounts.com for more information or to sign up.
Jan. 28	The Fontana Chamber of Commerce will host the annual State of the City address at the Jesse Turner Center. The event will take place at 7:30 a.m. and again at 11:30 a.m. at the same venue. Contact the Fontana Chamber of Commerce at (909) 822-4433 for information.
Feb. 6	The 8th annual Lake Arrowhead Rotary Polar Bear Plunge will take place at 10 a.m. at the Lake Arrowhead Resort and Spa. Visit http://polarotarybearplunge.com to learn more about this fundraiser or to sign up for the chilly plunge.
Feb. 20	The Lake Arrowhead Communities Chamber of Commerce will honor local residents, businesses and announce the Volunteer of the Year during its annual Awards Gala. Call the chamber at (909) 336-1547 or send an email to askus@lakearrowheadchamber.com for details about this event.

Dates and times are subject to change without notice. Please contact Supervisor Rutherford's office at (909) 387-4833 if you have any questions or suggestions for the Events Calendar. You can view information about more local events on Supervisor Rutherford's home page at www.sbcounty.gov/rutherford.