

**Murrieta**

**SENIOR PUBLIC FORUM**

**Proceedings of the  
October 19, 2006  
Murrieta  
Senior Public Forum**



# **Problems and Challenges Impacting Quality of Life For Senior Residents**

**In Partnership with: City of Murrieta and Riverside  
County Advisory Council on Aging**

**Co-Sponsors:**

**\*Murrieta Senior Center \*Riverside County Office on Aging**

**\* Special thanks to Supervisor Jeff Stone for his generous contribution,  
which has made this event possible.**

## INTRODUCTION

On October 19, 2006, the Riverside County Advisory Council on Aging and The City of Murrieta partnered to hold a Senior Public Forum for residents of the City of Murrieta of Riverside County at the Murrieta Senior Center. The Forum was attended by residents of the community and representatives from several agencies and organizations serving older adults. This was the third in a series of community Forums being sponsored by the Advisory Council in partnership with local communities across the County.

Co-Sponsors of the Forum included the Murrieta Senior Center, Riverside County Office on Aging, and the Riverside County Foundation on Aging.

The purpose of the Forum was to identify critical needs facing seniors and other residents living in the City of Murrieta, pinpoint gaps in services and programs, and develop recommendations for addressing the needs and gaps. The Forum was designed to gather information that could be used by program planners, policy makers and community leaders.

The Advisory Council on Aging wishes to acknowledge the kind generosity of Supervisor Jeff Stone, who provided a grant to help underwrite the Forum and the Murrieta Senior Center for hosting the event.

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The Forum panel was composed of Jeri Copeland, Recreation Supervisor for the Murrieta Senior Center, Opal Hellweg, Legislative Team Member with Supervisor Jeff Stone, Doug McAllister, Mayor Pro-Temp, City of Murrieta, Councilman Rick Gibbs, City of Murrieta, and Lu Molberg, Executive Director, Riverside County Office on Aging.

Also present were Michelle Haddock, Deputy Director of the Riverside County Office on Aging; Jim Holston, Deputy City Manager and Debbie Thorpe, Community Services Manager, both of Murrieta.

Prior to opening the Forum, Opal Hellweg presented Doug McAllister with a proclamation complimenting the City of Murrieta for being at the forefront of aggressive planning to address the need for affordable and accessible housing for individuals and families of all ages. The Board of Supervisors of Riverside County commended the City Council of Murrieta for its progressive and visionary step in planning accommodation of the needs of all citizens by being the first city in the county to introduce and approve standards for (the) Universal Design of Homes, making affordable, safe, accessible housing available to all persons, including those with special needs.

## MAJOR ISSUES IDENTIFIED BY PARTICIPANTS AND SUGGESTIONS AND RESOURCES FOR ADDRESSING THE ISSUES

1. *The initial question had to do with utilizing the skills of retired professionals by finding outlets for their experience, expertise, and desire to continue to be useful to the community, while also providing them with a sense of meaning and purpose.*

That possibility is already being explored in Murrieta by the City Council, the Murrieta Senior Center, the Chamber of Commerce and the Superintendent of Schools; the latter with the idea that the schools would benefit greatly in a number of areas with the help of retired professional seniors who would like to share their experience and expertise by assisting with classroom instruction or describing their profession to students exploring their plans for the future. It was determined that the idea of mentoring or a retired teacher corps or professional corps merits investigation.

Additionally, there is the beneficial prospect of continuing mental stimulation of seniors being involved in such activities or through programs, such as Livelong Learning with the University of California, Riverside. Perhaps programs could be arranged with Mt. San Jacinto College, conveniently located in Menifee or perhaps with instruction even brought to Murrieta.

There is also the Senior Companion/Foster Grandparent Program, which pays a small stipend. The contact person is Mary Snow, the director of the program. Opal Hellweg indicated that she would provide Jeri Copeland at Murrieta Senior Center with some literature on what is known to be available in the county. For example, there is the Retired Senior Volunteer Program which, although located in Hemet, it serves the whole western area of the county. If you are a volunteer driver transporting passengers, the program will provide insurance coverage. Some senior volunteer activities include mentoring in schools, staffing for the city, being "Cops-on-Patrol," and helping social service agencies, among others.

2. *The next comment brought before the Forum had to do with inadequate publicity concerning the Senior Center and events such as the Forum. To keep seniors informed, the print, especially of the name Senior Center, needs to be larger in advertisements and other publicity and made more prominent and accessible. Additionally, it would be helpful if the Senior Center had a booth at some of the many street fairs, and in other ways made itself more visible to the senior public who could then avail themselves of its many services.*

Because the Senior Center is relatively new, its promotion is growing gradually, with more to be expected as time goes on. One way to assist in getting the word out about the activities and assistance available at the Senior Center is to volunteer in some of the many activities available and become an ambassador for it because of your own enthusiasm.

Possibly a letter could be written on city letterhead welcoming each new visitor to the Senior Center. It would show personal concern for each person and be gratifying to the recipient. Already, a welcome packet of information about the city, the Senior Center, emergency information, and so forth, is being prepared to give to first time visitors. There also needs to be a diligent effort to involve the city's Public Information Officer and Community Services in disseminating information about senior activities and other events in which seniors could participate. Currently, a semi-annual recreation brochure is sent to every resident and a soon to be started, more frequent newsletter is in the works. Again, an individual's enthusiasm and recommendation will be the most effective means of communicating information about the Senior Center and the various programs and activities provided by the city.

- 3. Concern was expressed with regard to providing respite for caregivers and also convenient day care centers, especially for persons with Alzheimer's, where neither one's financial ability to pay is the determining factor, nor the distance is too great from the point of need. Caregivers need not only a little freedom from their constant responsibilities, but they also need support groups to share problems, as well as ideas and solutions.*

Calling the Office on Aging at (800) 510-2020 is a starting place, because the Older Americans Act, the office administers, includes a Family Caregiver Program. It is one of the high priorities of Congress, and funds are available to offer caregivers some respite. This same program also helps supports adult daycare centers for families.

The number given above (800) 510-2020 is invaluable because it is the Help Link Number at the Office on Aging, covered by trained specialist's knowledge about benefits, resources and programs available across the county.

The Riverside Transit Authority (RTA) has developed connecting routes, as well as the special service known as Dial-A-Ride, a "door-to-door" service which picks someone up at his/her home and can deliver them within or beyond city borders. Senior and disabled persons can fill out an application to take advantage of the service. If someone pre-registers, a companion can travel along free. There are other special services offered by RTA to meet special needs at special fares.

Care Connexus in Sun City provides van service for the Temecula/Murrieta area. The telephone number is also available through the 800 number above.

The Office on Aging offers assistance to someone with needs who cannot afford to take advantage of some of these programs. Do not let cost prohibit you from possible participation in a program which can be helpful.

It appears, however, that Southwest County, particularly the Temecula/Murrieta area, needs more services for frail seniors and for caregivers.

Since there are persons willing to volunteer their time and service, perhaps some "co-op" arrangements could be organized to offer respite to caregivers and daycare for those with Alzheimer problems or other needs where daycare facilities would be helpful. This would not necessarily have to be one-on-one, but an arrangement where two or three persons could take care of 6 or 8 people. Training would, no doubt, have to be arranged or the volunteers could assist someone with professional skills in the area of need.

At present, there is a caregiver's booklet available at the Temecula Community Center, which may offer some helpful ideas. Also, the Alzheimer's Association has a lot of helpful information and programs, including an annual retreat to which some local families are sent, completely paid for by grants.

- 4. An interest was expressed in the future of senior housing and a desire to know what can be expected.*

The City of Murrieta is the first city in the state, and perhaps in the country, to have a Universal Design ordinance, which mandates how houses are to be built to accommodate persons with disabilities. The requirements include, among other things, wider doors and wider halls to facilitate the use of wheelchairs, a convenient placement of light switches, showers to step into (not just bathtubs), levers instead of doorknobs, and so on. They are attractive and there is nothing about the home that makes it appear as if it is a home for seniors or persons with disabilities. It is a home that can be bought and lived in for a person's entire life (known as Aging in Place) or have elderly people visit. 15% of houses to be built in Murrieta must be universally-designed homes, and all homes designated as senior communities must comply with the ordinance.

The house must also be able to accommodate the lifestyle changes of aging. There may not be a grab bar in the house at this time, but the wall behind the shower will be reinforced for a grab bar to be placed there in the future.

Accommodations and requirements such as these are anticipated for condos and apartments as well; most certainly if they are designated for seniors.

5. *Since Murrieta is not conveniently located close to commercial airports, transportation to and from them is difficult and expensive. There is no public transportation that covers those extended routes, and a private van/shuttle round trip can be costly. Is there any outlook for making these longer, connective public services available sometime in the near future?*

At this time there are no known plans for implementing public transportation directly from Murrieta to any of the airports in Southern California. With the rapid population growth in the southwest Riverside County area, it would seem reasonable to expect that situation to improve, but nothing immediate is anticipated.

The City of Murrieta has set aside corridors for Rapid Transit, but there are so many technicalities and tremendous costs involved every step of the way that it takes years to resolve and make headway on such a project, so the reality is not to expect major developments in Rapid Transit anytime soon.

6. *One person in attendance suggested that more questions and ideas might be forthcoming in a more intimate, less formal atmosphere than that of a forum with a panel, separating the speakers from the audience. It was suggested that the speakers and small numbers of the audience sit in small groups and exchange information in a more casual format, thereby permitting everyone to have an opportunity to speak. Communication is the key to learning and understanding and can be more effectively accomplished by reducing the distance – emotional, psychological, and physical – between participants.*

The suggestion is well taken. Perhaps other formats should be explored, because some people are reluctant to speak out in a large group, and it is difficult for other to go to a microphone.

7. *Some explanation was requested regarding the differences between independent living, assisted living, and a skilled nursing facility.*

Persons living independently can arrange to have some services brought to them. Assisted living is usually in a facility where certain, limited needs are taken care of, such as administration of medication. In a skilled nursing facility much more care is provided; nurses and aids have to help with many daily needs. More information can be obtained from these various facilities and inquiries can be made at the Riverside County Office on Aging at (800) 510-2020.

8. *A member of Kaiser Permanente inquired whether it was known if the company would be moving to the area, especially because of the tremendous population growth.*

Kaiser Permanente has bought property near the Inland Valley Hospital, south of Clinton Keith Road, near the 15 Freeway. Doctors' offices are planned for the site, but no hospital will be built at this time. There is adequate land, however, to build a hospital in the future.

9. *What kinds of jobs are available for seniors? The last figure learned through the Office on Aging was \$5.00 an hour for a part-time job.*

The Office on Aging has a job training program for seniors who qualify in terms of income. That program

does pay part-time minimum wage during the time you are being trained, with the anticipation that the training will lead to a job. The Office on Aging has no particular programs that can place people in jobs, but help can be found at the Work Force Development Center, whose purpose is to help people of all ages find employment. If there are any issues related to being an older worker, a call to the (800) 510-2020 will provide an advocate, because there should be no discrimination against a person of any age that wishes to work or needs work.

One of the main responsibilities of Opal Hellweg of Supervisor Stone's office is to advocate for seniors. If there are roadblocks or problems, call the Supervisor's office in Sun City at 301-5414 or the Riverside office at 955-1030, and she will make every attempt to help to rectify any improper situation.

Chad Ormsby from Home Instead Senior Care has part-time and full-time opportunities available for seniors who can provide companionship and support to other seniors who are in need and want to stay in their homes. Modest training is provided and the starting wages are about \$8.50 an hour.

Home Instead Senior Care also has a big Christmas program which involves a number of the major retailers in the vicinity. Gifts are purchased by the patrons, wrapped and delivered to seniors who might otherwise have nothing for Christmas. In addition, Home Instead has a foundation, supported by over 600 franchises worldwide, from which money can be granted for worthy causes.

*10. If there is a transportation need involving several people wanting to go to the same place and not incur a steep fee, what is available?*

It would be the perfect opportunity to use the Buddy System of the RTA, which offers a program through Dial-A-Ride of picking up each person at his or her door, in a group of persons going to the same place, and delivering them all at the specified location. The cost is only \$2.50 each way, which can be divided between those participating, making it very reasonable. It is necessary, however, to call ahead and make a reservation. A husband and wife can usually travel for just \$2.50, and a caregiver rides free.

Before the forum ended, several companies and entities which had been in attendance were given a brief opportunity to describe their services.

Tom Blume from Millard-Jones Mortuary said that a recent addition to their staff was George Caudum, who has worked for the Veterans Administration and the Order of the Purple Heart, where his entire job was to obtain benefits for veterans, including senior veterans and their spouse. He is now available to do seminars for any organization and would be happy to speak at the Senior Center. His expertise is offered as a community service and will not involve promoting Millard-Jones Mortuary. His purpose is to help veterans fill out necessary forms and teach them the way to get benefits from the Veterans Administration. Call the Mortuary to get information and/or help from George Caudum.

Hospice of the Valley, located in Sun City, serves a wide area which includes Temecula, and corridors from that area up the 15 and 215 Freeways. Services offered include a caregiver support group, a bereavement support group, a transition program providing volunteers who supply respite care for two hours a week for persons who are still seeking curative treatment, but have a life-limiting illness. Hospice of the Valley is also affiliated with a school where teens are being trained to sit with some of the patients in assisted living and skilled nursing facilities, as well as in hospice.

The Kay Cenicerros Senior Center has started a caregiver academy, where guest speakers will talk on various aspects of care giving, with helpful hints on how to be effective in working with seniors.

Every year on December 25<sup>th</sup> at the Temecula Community Center, the City Council offers a festive, free dinner for the whole community. Supported by the major food chains which provide turkeys and all the trimmings, volunteers prepare and serve the meal. Volunteers, including teenagers, use instant cameras to take photos of the children as they come in and give the pictures to the families. Everyone is welcome.

Finally, everyone was reminded to utilize the HelpLink number, (800) 510-2020, at the Office on Aging, because the highly trained personnel know the services provided in Riverside County and will be a help in locating the resources which will meet particular needs. They are experienced in assisting seniors, and will research requests for special information. Questions can be about hunger, bills, cost of medications, transportation, anything, including legal services, insurance and help with home repairs.

Everyone was encouraged to recommend these resources to someone who might be reluctant to ask for help. Bring them to the Murrieta Senior Center or call the 800-510-2020 HelpLink number for them. The goal is that no one should go without the help and services which are available.



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