




Director's Message

It's hard to believe that it's been more than a year since Orange County's (OC) first COVID-19 case started to tilt our world upside down. The pandemic has truly impacted every aspect of our way of life, but I do believe that hope is on the horizon and the vaccine is a vital key in helping us return to some semblance of normalcy. I appreciate each and every one of you for the hard work you continue to do as we move that needle closer to the finish line for our community.

You may have already heard that our supply of vaccine from the State is very limited, challenging our Agency to make sure we're offering

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In Memoriam



The OC Health Care Agency (HCA) mourns the recent loss of two members of the HCA family: **Phil Stamm**, Store Clerk with Environmental Health, passed away due to complications with COVID-19 on January 17, 2021, and **Gregory Fuller**, Health Program Specialist with the AB 109 Program, passed away in his home on February 12, 2021.

Phil started working for the HCA in 2018. As Store Clerk, he managed Environmental Health's inventory of office supplies and equipment, maintaining record and asset control of items received and distributed to all programs within the division. According to his colleagues, Phil

was always generous with his time and willing to lend a hand. He often went above and beyond to support his colleagues with whatever they needed. They remember him for his cheerfulness, can-do attitude and welcoming spirit. His bright personality and generosity will be missed.

Phil enjoyed camping with his family and visiting national Parks. He is survived by his wife, two children and three grandchildren.

Greg worked for the County of Orange since 2006 and had been part of multiple programs within the HCA's Adult and Older Adult Behavioral Health division under Behavioral Health Services. He

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RELIEF ARRIVES FOR RENTAL HOUSING



EMERGENCY RENTAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM for Orange County Renters

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a trying time for Orange County (OC) residents, with many suffering from financial hardship and struggling to pay for essential living expenses such as rent and utilities. To bring much-needed financial assistance to these households and to support our most vulnerable community members, the U.S. Department of the Treasury (Treasury) allocated approximately \$65.5 million to the County of Orange (County) to set up the Emergency Rental Assistance (ERA) Program.

The OC Health Care Agency's (HCA) Office of Care Coordination (OCC) administers the ERA Program on behalf of the County. Prior to the announcement of the

program, the OCC had anticipated the need to develop a homeless prevention services strategy, which prompted a Request for Proposals to seek qualified providers. As a result, the team was able to contract three regional providers with experience and expertise in providing homeless prevention services in each of the regional service planning areas of the county: Pathways of Hope, Volunteers of America and Family Assistance Ministries. The OCC also contracted with 211OC to operate as a virtual front door for information about the program and preliminary application process. This includes a web portal and call center to support rental households with questions and to apply directly for the program. The regional providers review the applications in

detail with the applicant households and collect needed documents to confirm eligibility for the program. Additionally, the regional providers have contracted with OC United Way to function as the conduit to provide the financial assistance directly to landlords and utility companies.

"The ERA Program is an incredible and much needed resource for Orange County rental households who have been impacted by COVID-19," shared **Jason Austin**, OCC Director. "The Office of Care Coordination is hopeful that the program will assist them in remaining housed."

The scope and magnitude of the assistance to be provided through the ERA Program, as well as the

HOUSEHOLDS

need to implement the program quickly, presented as daunting challenges for the OCC. The regional providers had to adjust budgets and staffing plans to accommodate contracts ranging from \$12 to \$28 million and move rapidly in hiring and training staff. This included negotiation as well as writing and finalizing contracts over the weekend and after business hours as the program was being developed.

By implementing the virtual front door with 211OC, the OCC has been able to leverage the existing infrastructure and functionality of the call center to assist with accepting applications for the ERA Program.

With the help of the ERA Program, eligible rental households in OC (with the exception of those residing in Anaheim, Santa Ana and Irvine, which received direct allocations from the Treasury) would be able to find some relief by receiving up to \$10,000 in financial assistance for unpaid rent and/or utility bills due to the impact of COVID-19. Through its first 10 days since the County began accepting applications from the public on February 1, over 6,500 applications have been received.

Director's Message

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the vaccine to the people who currently need it the most. As we work to continually review our local data and expand availability to more groups, it's important for you to understand that decisions of eligibility have to be weighed against our current allotment of doses and incorporate strategies that best protect residents and workers who are most likely to contract and have serious health complications from COVID-19.

The HCA has been actively exploring ways to reach our most vulnerable seniors, especially those who live in our lowest socioeconomic areas with the highest infection rates. Based on a poll that our Emergency Medical Services staff conducted with several hospitals in early January, 54% of individuals hospitalized for COVID-19 are over age 60 and 72% of patients in the Intensive Care Unit as well as 72% of patients on ventilators are over age 60. With that said, our seniors are in critical need of the vaccine.

The OC COVID-19 Vaccine Taskforce has analyzed data that identifies the lowest equity areas where seniors can benefit the most from our current supply of vaccine. The recent rollout of the Point of Dispensing (POD) site at Santa Ana College is the latest example of our efforts to reach our hardest hit and underserved communities.

Our mobile pods have been especially critical in ensuring equitable access to vaccines for our seniors, who are most susceptible to barriers such as technology, language and transportation. We have been ramping up our efforts in rolling out these pods as frequently as possible with the assistance of our community partners. By bringing the mobile pods directly into impacted neighborhoods, we are creating a safe and convenient environment for this population to receive their vaccine.

There is still much work to be done in the months ahead as we continue our vaccine distribution efforts, but there is also very much to be proud of. The innovation, flexibility and commitment you have shown is second to none. I thank you for your patience and understanding as we prioritize our limited vaccine supply for our staff, residents and workers most in need.



Dr. Clayton Chau
HCA Director and County Health Officer



Public Gu

This past year has been challenging for everyone for a myriad of reasons and it is easy to allow extraordinary efforts to go unacknowledged when Office of the Public Guardian (PG) staff and County Counsel have been stretched thin putting out fire after fire for longer than we can remember. The PG operates under the authority of the California Probate Code and the Superior Court to provide conservatorship services, when no other alternative exists, for the person and the estate. We wanted to share just one example of the way staff have been working together to protect the interests of those we serve in Orange County (OC).



CAMPAIGN WINS AWARD

The OC Health Care Agency (HCA), in collaboration with Pulsar Advertising, has taken home the 2020 MarCom Platinum Award for the “Could it be COVID?” marketing campaign!

Since its inception in 2004, MarCom has evolved into one of the largest, most-respected creative competitions in the world. The MarCom Awards honor excellence in marketing and communication while recognizing the creativity, hard work and generosity of industry professionals. Each year about 6,000 print and digital entries are submitted from dozens of countries.

In an effort to increase awareness

about the symptoms of COVID-19, the need to get COVID-19 testing, and importance of COVID-19 prevention, the HCA launched the “Could it be COVID?” initiative under the oversight of the Health Promotion & Community Planning Division and HCA Communications. The campaign was aimed at Orange County’s (OC) most vulnerable populations, people who are unable to get COVID-19 testing from their health care providers or who might not have insurance.

The campaign team leveraged a variety of media platforms to get the word out, including print, radio, cable TV, digital outdoor boards, check cashing sleeves, mobile web banners, and digital and social media in three languages (English, Spanish and Vietnamese). They also conducted community outreach efforts to promote testing site awareness at countywide nonprofit, faith-based and social service organizations, distributed hardcopy flyers and used an online platform to reach parents of school children in OC school districts.

With over 2.8 million cumulative tests to date, the message continues to be getting out that testing is free and widely available. To see the HCA’s “Could it be COVID?” award entry, click [here](#).



Guardian: Estate Intervention

By **Shelia Roberge**, Supervising Deputy Public Guardian

Last September **Monique Craven**, Deputy Public Guardian, received a phone call from a board and care facility where a conserved client was living. Monique was advised that her client's board and care had been contacted by the brother of her conservatee who requested to come to the facility with a notary in order to have the conservatee, his sister, sign off on her interest in their mother's home. While conserved, an individual cannot enter into contract and the PG must act on the individual's behalf. One of the responsibilities of the PG, if information is learned during the course of conservatorship, is to act on behalf of the conservatee to ensure they receive any inheritance they would be entitled to receive.

With the newly received information, Monique was quick to respond on behalf of her client. Through receipt of the new information, PG learned the conservatee's mother had passed earlier in the year. Monique called the board and care to advise that the conservatee could not sign any documents while conserved,

and Monique reported the event to her PG supervisor.

At that point, a CLEAR search (an online investigation tool utilized by government agencies) was conducted to obtain information on the deceased mother and any property she may have owned. With the information obtained in the CLEAR search, **Lisa Tang**, Asset Manager, was able to pull a property profile and was able to provide Monique with information that showed the conservatee's brother had a sale pending on their mother's property. Through these quick efforts, Monique was able to determine that the mother's property was in fact in escrow and distribution of the full sale price would have gone entirely to the conservatee's brother.

Monique reached out to Brad Posin, Deputy County Counsel, for assistance. Without hesitation, Brad made contact with both the brother and the escrow company. That halted the real estate activity and protected the interest of our client

without having to pursue litigation.

Escrow is again ready to close and our client will now receive her 50% interest in the sale of her mother's property. While the PG is responsible for the handling and management of estate assets, this situation was unique as an inheritance would not typically be on the radar of the PG, unless someone informs our office of the event. Had this information been received a week or more later, the PG still could have intervened, but with costly litigation that would have reduced funds that would otherwise go directly into the conservatee's estate.

Thanks to all involved for their expeditious efforts which rectified this situation in just four months. Any hesitation or delay in acting on this information could have resulted in a very different outcome. PG was clearly able to make a difference in the life of this conservatee. Thank you all for your efforts!

1. Lisa Tang, Asset Manager 2. Monique Craven, Deputy Public Guardian 3. Sheila Roberge, Supervising Deputy Public Guardian



5 Things You Need to Know About



1 With COVID-19 vaccinations now underway, there are some [concerns](#) about side effects and overall safety of the vaccines currently under Emergency Use Authorization (EUA) in the United States.

2 The most common side effects include fever, chills, headache, nausea, body aches, fatigue and pain at the site of the injection. Side effects are [normal signs](#) that your body is building protection. They may affect your ability to do daily activities but should go away in a few days.

DR. CLAYTON CHAU AT HUNTINGTON

Town Hall

OC Health Care Agency (HCA) Director and County Health Officer **Dr. Clayton Chau** joined Huntington Beach Mayor Kim Hall and MemorialCare Medical Group's Chief Transformation Officer Helen Macfie in a virtual town hall discussion on the COVID-19 vaccine. The one-hour event, titled "From COVID-19 to Independence," was broadcast live on YouTube and Facebook on February 4 and intended to help the community learn more about COVID-19 and the COVID-19 vaccine so they could make more informed health decisions for themselves and their families. It is part of an ongoing series of town hall presentations that has also featured Deputy County Health Officer **Dr. Regina Chinsio-Kwong**.

Dr. Chau opened his presentation by sharing some general facts about the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines currently authorized for emergency use by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) as well as dispelling common myths such as whether the vaccine can cause COVID-19 or infertility (the short answer is NO to both). He then spent some time discussing who is currently eligible to receive the vaccine, how to register on the



FROM COVID-19 TO INDEPENDENCE
VIRTUAL TOWN HALL

Othena platform and the HCA's various vaccine distribution efforts through Operation Independence. Finally, he helped to address some questions from residents including the challenges of drive-thru vaccinations, the importance of adhering to safety precautions even after vaccination and whether one needs to get vaccinated if they already contracted COVID-19.

Acknowledging the challenge of managing a limited supply of vaccines in high demand by the community, Dr. Chau shared, "I'm hoping that 3-4 weeks from now when we have new vaccines and we have plenty of vaccines, none of this would matter. What would matter would be how do we get them into everybody's arms ASAP. I know

COVID-19 Vaccine Side Effects

3 After vaccination, your cells begin making pieces of protein that mimic the coronavirus but are harmless. Side effects may occur during this process because your immune system [recognizes](#) that the protein is foreign and is building an immune response to it.

4 Side effects may be more common [after the second vaccine dose](#) compared to the first dose because the body has had time to respond and adjust to the new protein. When you receive your second dose, your body's cells are more ready to react. If you have concerning symptoms, do not hesitate to contact your physician for guidance, and remember to dial 9-1-1 in an emergency.

5 [Instructions](#) are available on how to track and monitor COVID-19 vaccine side effects using Othena. Community members not using Othena are encouraged to report side effects to their doctor, to the [Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System](#) or to the [V-safe After Vaccination Health Checker](#).

N BEACH



right now we have limited vaccines and people are frustrated.” He then added, “I know it’s easy for me to say, for individuals who have loved ones, seniors who are in those conditions, it must be frustrating, but I’m asking for folks to be patient.”

You can view this special town hall event with Dr. Chau at [here](#).



Take a look at the colorful and creative animals on this page. They are part of the “Wild in Orange County (OC) Safari Data Party” which is being rolled out by the OC Health Care Agency’s (HCA) Tobacco Use Prevention Program (TUPP). “The animals are certainly eye-catching and that’s by design,” said **Anabel Bolaños**, Program Supervisor, TUPP. “We’re using them to bring stakeholders together to identify the tobacco-related needs in the community. The Wild in OC process will set priorities, goals and develop a work plan to reduce smoking, vaping and exposure to secondhand smoke in OC.”

“The theme of going on a safari was chosen because it’s fun! We will be looking at a lot of data, so framing it as a ‘party’ will make it more interesting and enjoyable,” said **Rhonda Folsom**, Program Supervisor TUPP. The entire Safari Data Party is virtual via Zoom, so TUPP staff have provided participants with themed virtual backgrounds. The theme seems to have helped attract almost four times the number of participants (60+) than those who participated in 2017, when the last needs assessment was completed.

The program is now in the planning stages which includes gathering input from community stakeholders and analyzing the ratings of tobacco-related indicators and assets in order to develop a three-year work plan that will be implemented during 2022-2024.

WELCOME Executive Secretary **JOSEPH MINDERHOUD**

*The OC Health Care Agency (HCA) welcomes **Joseph Minderhoud** as the new Executive Secretary in the Office of the Director!*

Joseph previously worked as an Office Specialist at the HCA's Westminster Behavioral Health Clinic for the past two years. Ten years prior to joining the HCA, he held various positions in the private sector where he managed logistics for international and domestic companies in which service and coordination were a vital part of his roles.

Joseph holds a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration with a concentration in Accountancy from California State University, Long Beach.



In his free time, Joseph enjoys mountain biking, camping, hiking and spending time with his family. He has been married for nine years and has two sons, ages five and seven. "I've lived in Orange County since I was about eight years old, so this really is my home and I'm honored to serve the community here," shared Joseph. He loves food, which includes trying new restaurants, cooking (barbecue is his specialty) and watching cooking shows and YouTube channels.

Congratulations on your new role at the HCA! What inspired you to join the Agency?

Thank you! After years in the private sector, I decided that I wanted to make a career change and I always felt that public service was calling to me.

Any interesting things you've learned in your previous job experiences?

Previously my work in the private sector was in operations and logistics. Working in this field requires problem solving and critical thinking as well as the ability to manage many projects at the same time. I also come from mostly smaller companies where I've had to wear

many hats and being a team player is necessary for success.

Any recommendations on fun places to mountain bike, hike or camp?

Yes! Aliso and Wood Canyons Wilderness Park (part of OC Parks) is probably my favorite place to mountain bike. My family loves "glamping" at the San Diego Metro KOA with our travel trailer. It's such a great family-oriented campground with terrific amenities. We love Big Sur, Sequoia & Kings National Parks and dispersed tent camping. I also love backpacking and going on an annual trip with friends (without the family); this year we are going to Yosemite.

What are you most excited for in your new role as Executive Secretary at the Director's Office?

I'm most excited to work directly with **Dr. Clayton Chau**. In the short amount of time I've worked with him, I've already found that he is a kind, wonderful, caring and thoughtful person. I look forward to getting to know him more as I grow in my role.

OC Environmental Health

Helps Make the Grades on Exams

By Eileen Kirtley, Program Manager, OCEH Division Support

Thanks to the OC Health Care Agency's (HCA) Environmental Health (OCEH) division, several health inspectors in Orange County (OC) and around the state have been provided the opportunity to earn a State required credential during the COVID-19 pandemic. The OCEH division stepped in and hosted a State exam, which is required for health inspectors in California, when one of the periodic exams was canceled because of the pandemic and there was uncertainty over scheduling future exams.

"This Environmental Health training program provides individuals with instruction in all matters of environmental health science, which includes academic and on-the-job training," said **Christine Lane**, OCEH Director. "The culmination of the program offers enrollees the opportunity to take a comprehensive State exam to earn a [Registered Environmental Health Specialist \(REHS\) credential](#). This credential is required in order to continue a career and employment as an Environmental Health Specialist, more commonly known as a Health Inspector."

The REHS examination is administered by the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) three times per year. Each year OCEH has a number of candidates who have completed the rigorous [training and work experience](#) (typically lasting 18 months), which is required in order to qualify to take the exam. Before OCEH hosted the State exam, the division's candidates would have to travel out of OC to take it.

In March 2020, 12 OCEH Specialist trainees were hyper-focused and ready to take the exam. Then for the first time since the registration of Environmental Health Specialists began in California in 1945, the examination was officially postponed due to COVID-19, one week before it was to take place.

Across the state, 44 candidates in the southern region

and 28 in the northern region were left in limbo due to the postponement of the exam. The postponement put careers at risk in a climate where environmental health and safety is paramount. For the sake of the EH professional community, and particularly those candidates who had studied so hard to succeed, OCEH decided to reach out to CDPH and offer OCEH's large conference room to host the southern region part of the State exam, hoping CDPH would consider the accommodation and allow the test to be given in the near future.

The initiative was well received by the CDPH, and with the northern region environmental health colleagues on board a collaboration began between agencies. After navigating fluid COVID-19 directives and a web of logistical hurdles, the decision was made to move the exam forward with full COVID-19 adaptation measures in place.

The exam, normally held at both regional locations simultaneously over the course of one day, was divided into four smaller groups of candidates to allow for social distancing in both locations. "All candidates were required to undergo a health screening prior to entering the exam," said **Eileen Kirtley**, Program Manager, OCEH Division Support. "Test-takers were required to bring their own sanitizer and pencils, and a face covering was mandatory at all times for all involved parties. Paperwork that would normally be filled and submitted onsite before the exam would this time be completed off-site ahead of time through email communications, and the actual exam booklets and answer sheets would be distributed, collected and quarantined by the State REHS Program Administrator who would proctor the exam at the OCEH site."

Additionally, direct access to the conference room was provided via an exterior back entry door location, so

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For Health

Personalize Your Plate!

March is National Nutrition Month®, an annual campaign created by the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. This year's theme is Personalize Your Plate.

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to nutrition and health. We are all unique with different bodies, goals, backgrounds and tastes! The key is tailoring your favorite foods to meet your individual nutrient needs. To learn more about National Nutrition Month® visit <https://www.eatright.org/food/resources/national-nutrition-month>

Salads are an easy way for your family to personalize your plate. Ideas of what you can put into a salad are endless. To help you and your family eat a variety of nutritious foods try making this Pear Salad recipe. There are many ways you could customize this salad such as adding chicken, using a different kind of cheese or nuts or even using balsamic vinegar in place of the apple cider vinegar. Get creative and use whatever ingredients you love best!



Pear Salad with Gorgonzola and Candied Walnuts

Makes 4-6 servings

Ingredients:

- 5 ounces** salad greens, chopped
- 2 large** ripe pears, diced
- 1 large** avocado, peeled, pitted and diced
- 1** small red onion, peeled and thinly sliced
- 6 ounces** candied walnuts
- 4 ounces** crumbled gorgonzola cheese

Dijon Vinaigrette Ingredients:

- ¼ cup** olive oil
- 1 tbsp** apple cider vinegar
- 2 tsp** Dijon mustard
- ½ tsp** fine sea salt
- ½ tsp** freshly-cracked black pepper

Directions:

- 1.** In a large pot, heat oil over medium heat.
- 2.** Sauté onion, bell pepper and garlic until tender, about 5 minutes.
- 3.** Add tomatoes, corn, vegetable broth, chili powder, oregano and beans. Stir well.
- 4.** Cover and simmer until thoroughly heated, about 15 minutes.
- 5.** Spoon into 8 bowls. If desired, top each bowl with one tablespoon of fat free sour cream and serve with whole grain rolls.

OC Environmental Health Helps Make the Grades on Exams
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candidates had no contact with OCEH staff, and vice versa, other than those staff members of staff directly involved with the exam administration. A dedicated check-in table was set up outside the conference room, with a marked, socially distanced line forming outside. One-way traffic flow was set up for the exam room with at least six feet of separation between all pre-assigned and labeled desk stations. Desks, chairs, and common surfaces were also cleaned and sanitized before the exams, during the candidates' lunch breaks, and again after the exams.

"Although the March exam was originally indefinitely postponed, over the course of two days in mid-July of 2020, OCEH became an integral part of a team effort that helped provide 39 southern region state exam candidates the opportunity to take their much-anticipated exam, with 11 of them from OCEH," said Christine. "Overall the feedback received for our test location and

experience was positive from all involved parties and due to the success of the Inter-Agency effort OCEH hosted the exam for the next group of southern region candidates in early September and then again in mid-November. Not only that, but the CDPH realized the viability of the OCEH location and we are hosting the March 2021 exam too."

(The exam itself lasts a full day, and includes technical and mathematical questions in multiple subjects including water, food, soil and airborne microbiology and disease prevention, drinking water supply and treatment, waste water management, hazardous materials, solid and medical waste management, public swimming pools and recreational health, vector control and legal enforcement, jurisdiction and authority of environmental health laws and regulations. Study preparation for this comprehensive exam begin months in advance; the statewide pass rate averages just above 65%.)

in Memoriam

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spent the past seven years of his career in the AB 109 program working with justice-involved individuals with behavioral health needs. He dedicated his County career to helping the most vulnerable people in our system of care. In addition, Greg was also an Orange County Employees Association (OCEA) Steward wherein he advocated for and protected the rights of County workers. He received multiple OCEA awards due to his dedication and passion for service and advocacy.

Greg's colleagues remember him to be a ray of sunshine and having a gregarious personality. "Greg was a great human and it is such a tragedy losing him," shared Greg's supervisor, **Gi Villavicencio**, on behalf of the AB 109 team. **Dr. Jeffrey Nagel**, Deputy Agency Director of Behavioral Health Services, added, "He was an extraordinary person and his passing is a tremendous loss to our Agency. His absence will surely be felt." Greg is survived by his wife and three children.



MISSION

In partnership with the community, protect and promote the health and safety of individuals and families in Orange County through:

- Assessment and planning
- Prevention and education
- Treatment and care



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