



Director's Message

Dear OC Health Care Agency
(HCA) Team,

Where does the time go? It is hard to believe that summer is quickly ending, the school season has begun and before we know it the holiday season will be upon us. It is difficult for many of us to juggle the multitude of demands placed on our time. It is not always easy and at it can be overwhelming. This is when it's most important to find the time to recognize how important it is to take care of you too. I would like to encourage you to take time for a little self-care. September is self-care awareness month and a great reminder that taking care of oneself is essential. We've

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Peer-to-Peer

Sylvia Gutierrez

“What I enjoy the most about my job is having the opportunity to spend each day with my co-workers, with whom I feel close and consider my work family. I also have very much enjoyed getting familiar over the phone with some of the conservatees, as well as being able to speak with ‘Spanish only’ callers. Although I have not been working for the Public Guardian office for very long, I can say by far, this is a place I am happy to come to work every day!” Happiness and community are two important factors for Peer-to-Peer recipient **Sylvia Gutierrez**, Office Assistant for Strategy and Special Projects.

Before she started working at the OC Health Care Agency (HCA), her previous jobs consisted of some type of office support and customer service, giving her plenty of experience to interact in a friendly manner with others. “Previously, I was working at Memorial Care Breast Center. I was an Imaging Scheduler and would receive and answer about eighty calls per day,” she said. Sylvia applied for a job at the HCA on multiple occasions during the past few years. Thanks to her perseverance and determination, she was able to join the family here to make a positive difference at the HCA.

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Outreach and Engagement Staff on the Streets During

TROPICAL STORM HILARY

Contributor: **Christine Nguyen**, HCA Communications

Hurricane Hilary touched down in Orange County (OC) and brought with it a difficult tropical storm to weather through. With one of the major concerns of the OC Health Care Agency (HCA) being the safety and well-being of OC residents, the OC Outreach & Engagement (O&E) teams quickly mobilized during the storm. Preparations for Hurricane Hilary were out of the ordinary said **Christina Weckerly Ramirez**, Senior Manager, OC O&E, "Our team had to be flexible and ready to respond with conditions rapidly changing throughout the storm. O&E supervisors were briefed each morning on OC O&E's role for this effort including available resources, county partners, and reporting updates. We also talked throughout each day to address any challenges," said Christina.

The storm deployment included informing unsheltered residents in areas at high risk for flooding and safety concerns about the incoming weather said **Jennifer**

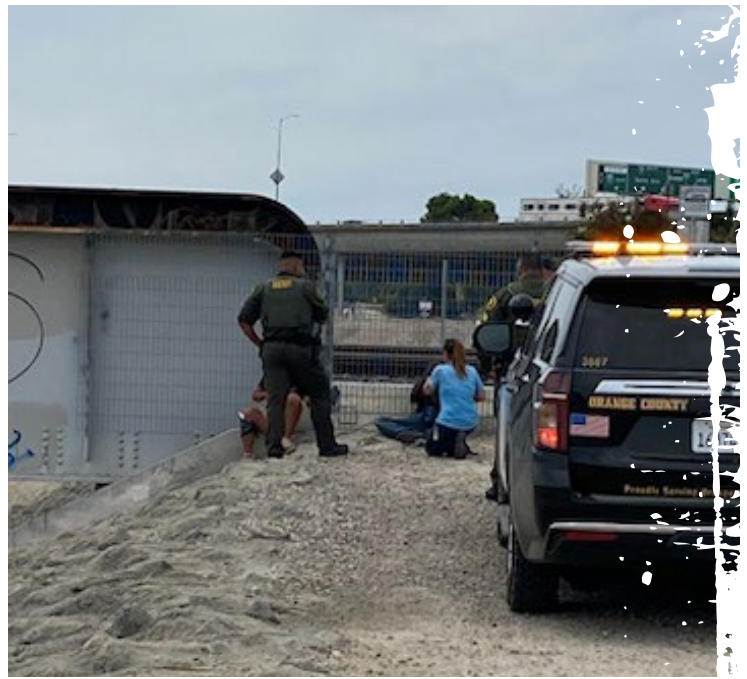
Dinicola, Manager, "We were concerned about how to motivate individuals who wanted shelter before the storm really hit on Sunday. It is hard convincing folks to want to take shelter or move locations from a storm they do not see coming or were not aware of."

Gaining that trust was key said **Agatha Wise**, Program Supervisor II who led the team on Saturday, August 19. "Many of the individuals we serve do not have access to current news on their own (they do not have smart phones or other resources), so this means that OC O&E needed to inform them about Hilary and foreseen impacts." The OC O&E team was up to the challenge, in part because of the pandemic said **Luz Garcia**, Program Supervisor I, who led the team on Sunday, August 20. "We used our experience and lessons learned from being the primary informants to the population of COVID infection, prevention, and resources, so we felt confident we could work through the challenge of being the first to inform them about Hilary," she said.

With plans and motivations at the ready, the entire Saturday and Sunday O&E teams participated in the storm outreach. When asked why the entire team volunteered to mobilize for this unusual weather event, **Cesar Torres**, Mental Health Worker, summed it up this way, “Everyone was in it for the same reason – the welfare and safety of our unsheltered residents.” While **Tamara Hassan**, Behavioral Health Clinician said, “We all care deeply about the population, and we were enthusiastic to get them to safety and help support them to quickly adapt to the change.” As for the conditions, **Hugo Flores**, Mental Health Specialist said, “There was heavy rain, but O&E team members, escorted by the OC Sheriff’s Department (OCSD), worked diligently to reach out to the population and ensure everyone who needed shelter had access and were informed of the resources available to them.”

Fortunately, no catastrophic injuries were reported from the storm. The OC O&E team was also quick to point out they were fortunate to partner with multiple County of Orange Agencies, including the Office of Care Coordination (OCC), the OCSD, the County Executive Office, and with colleagues in other Mental Health and Recovery Services (MHRS) programs. Status reports during the outreach were sent every 2 hours so the O&E team could be supported and identify any needs or challenges said Christina. “We value the coordination with our County Agencies,” she said. “We have extensive experience working with OCSD so there was trust, collaboration, and understanding of our roles and strengths from the beginning of the outreach. The OCC helped with any barriers to shelter. We couldn’t have done it without the collaboration and the support of County and MHRS leadership who were responsive and encouraging throughout.”

The nonstop efforts of the OC O&E team and County partners contributed to saving lives and keeping OC residents safe during Hurricane Hilary. Thank you to the OC O&E team for your dedication to get out there and make a difference!



Front row (L-to-R): **J’nai Higgins**, Mental Health Specialist (MHS); **Tamara Nakauchi**, MHS; **Precious Martines**, Behavioral Health Clinician I (BHCI); **Amanda Henry**, MHS; and **Agatha Wise**, Program Supervisor II (PSII).

Back row (L-to-R): **Cesar Torres**, MHS; **Sade Owey**, BHCI; **Tamara Hassan**, BHC; **Thanh Nghi Nguyen**, MHS; **Luz Garcia**, PSI; **Steven Cortez**, MHS; **Danny Manzo**, PSI and **Hugo Flores**, MHS.

Not pictured: **Michelle Ruiz**, MHS and **Julie Garcia**, MHS.

Sylvia said what she is most grateful for when it comes to work is, "I am humbly proud that although it was a rough start, I was so happy the moment I felt I could carry out my assigned tasks with ease. Going forward, I am also very appreciative for my job and my co-workers/friends." Once again, her perseverance is showcased in her beginning stages and is one of the strengths she carries to work.

Aside from work, Sylvia is most proud of her two amazing and loving daughters. "We have a wonderful relationship. I am also very proud to be the grandmother of my precious four grandchildren; two boys and two girls, ages 19, 7, and twin girls who are 8 months old. I love them all dearly!" Family, inside and out of the HCA, is Sylvia's main priority and what she strives to create in her work here.

Director's Message

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signed up for careers where we usually put the needs of others first. There's no doubt of your and our Agency's commitment to serving the Orange County community. However, service can be hard if we don't fill ourselves first or recognize our own needs. Self-care can be many things to many people, but a regular sleep routine, healthy eating, expressing gratitude, spending time at a favorite activity or hobby, and of course spending time with those we love are some common self-care examples. Take the time for self-care because you're worth it!

We also focus on suicide prevention awareness this month. For those of you who work or pass by the County Administration North (CAN) and South (CAS) Buildings, you'll see the colors of suicide awareness, purple and teal, lighting the buildings this month. It's the "Light Up Hope OC" campaign which you can read about in this newsletter. I encourage you to know the signs of suicide and learn how to talk about suicide with those you care about.

We all care about our students who are back in school. COVID-19 variants remain a focus of our attention. County Health Officer, **Dr. Regina Chinsio-Kwong (Dr. CK)** issued an updated Health Order in late August. You can read it [here](#). You can find more resources on our website at <https://occovid19.ocalthinfo.com/>.

I'd also like to give a shout out to the HCA's Outreach and Engagement team for your dedication during Tropical Storm Hilary. The O&E team is amazing in so many ways and the team, in partnership with our County of Orange Agencies, hit the streets during the storm to serve those experiencing homelessness. We are so proud of you! You can read more about the O&E team's storm efforts in this newsletter.

As always, I am grateful to each of you who serve our Agency and wonderful community.



A stylized, handwritten signature in white ink that reads "Debra Baetz".

Debra Baetz
Interim Agency Director

EMS to the Rescue!



On Sunday, July 30, 2023, Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Health Emergency Management (HEM) employee **Jesse Jimenez**, Storekeeper II became a hero. While visiting family in the city of Stanton, Jesse relied on his previous training in Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) to save a young life!

Jesse was standing outside of some apartments when he caught movement out of the corner of his eye. He said that for some reason, he just knew that someone was in trouble. He told family members standing outside to call 9-1-1 and report a child drowning. He hopped a fenced area around a pool, jumped in the water, and pulled out a 4-year-old girl and then immediately administered CPR.

He was able to communicate to the toddler's mother to give rescue breaths, even though she did not speak English. Within a few minutes of starting CPR, he could feel the girl start to respond. First responders from

the Orange County Sheriff's Department and Orange County Fire Authority Station 46 arrived on scene and took over and transported the toddler to Childrens Hospital of Orange County (CHOC).

Jesse really wants to push out the message of learning CPR. In all of his training, he said he never thought he would have to use it. Although he saved a life, Jesse said he does not consider himself hero. He considers himself as being a trained person, who by the Grace of God, was in the right place, at the right time, to utilize that training.

Jesse and the rest of the EMS staff encourage everyone to learn CPR. You never know when you are going to be the one person there who can make a difference and save a life. The American Red Cross and the American Heart Association both offer courses. For the Red Cross, please visit: [CPR Training with Red Cross | Red Cross](#) and for the American Heart Association please visit: [American Heart Association CPR & First Aid](#).



(L-to-R): Ledia Boules, Sabina Metry, **Jesse Jimenez**, Michael Metry and Scarlett Metry.



RON DARIA



MY WORK MATTERS

Ron Daria is a Community and Provider Liaison with Public Health Services, Communicable Disease Control Division - Pulmonary Disease Services (PDS). He's been with the County of Orange (County) OC Health Care Agency (HCA) for 18 years.

What brought you to this work and/or why did you decide to pursue this profession?

"I wanted to work for the government as a nurse and serve the vulnerable population in the community, something that I was not able to do back in my country, the Philippines."

What impact do you want to have in your role/dept./area or the community?

"To have an educated and empowered community. Not just patients but also the health care team outside the agency in eliminating Tuberculosis (TB) in our lifetime by testing and treatment of latent TB infection (LTBI) preventing active TB disease."

What advice do you have for anyone who is interested in doing what you do?

"Be well rounded and always be patient. Put yourself in your client's shoes."

What encourages you at work and what do you do to encourage others?

"The smiles of my patients and colleagues around me, encourage others by being grateful for the help they shared."

Why does your work matter?

"Because 'WE' matter!"

Anything else you'd like to say or any other point you'd like to make when it comes to why your work matters?

"Without your work contribution and mine, our goals will never be met."

WAY TO GO SILVIA BONILLA

Congratulations and “way to go” to **Silvia Bonilla**, MPA, CPPB, NIGP-CPP, Supervising Procurement Contract Specialist, Procurement and Contract Services (PCS)! Silvia was selected as a Top 3 finalist by the National Institute of Governmental Purchasing (NIGP) for an exclusive procurement award. The Procurement Specialist of the Year Award recognizes the dedication and professionalism of public servants and highlights the impact of Procurement Professionals in the community.

“I had the opportunity to attend the 2023 NIGP Forum in Louisville, Kentucky as a Top 3 Finalist for the Procurement Specialist of the Year Award. Being nominated for this award is an honor beyond measure and something I will forever be proud of in my career,” Silvia said. “I want to extend my sincere gratitude to those who have mentored me along the way. I wholeheartedly thank you for your support, authentic leadership and profound care. Forever grateful to be part of our amazing team!”

Silvia has been part of the PCS team since 2019 and has been involved in a variety of projects ranging in complexity including COVID-19 efforts, Human Services Contracts

and Information Technology commodity and professional services procurements. **Juan Corral**, Division Manager of PCS celebrated the recognition, “Congratulations and job well done Silvia! It's always exciting news when a member of the PCS team is recognized for their contributions and achievements. She is a great representative of what our department strives for in terms of professionalism, collaboration, and customer service.”

In October 2022, Silvia became a Certified Professional Public Buyer (CPPB) followed by NIGP Procurement Professional in February 2023. Silvia's service-minded attitude and commitment to continued learning and professional development have contributed to her success and endeavors.

Silvia Bonilla shared the recognition on her LinkedIn post [here](#). Follow the HCA on LinkedIn at <https://www.linkedin.com/company/ochealth>.



Deadline Nears to Submit a Nomination for the Turning Red Tape into Red Carpet Awards

OC Health Care Agency (HCA) programs have until **Wednesday, September 13** to submit a nomination for the Orange County Business Council's (OCBC) Turning Red Tape into Red Carpet Award (RTRC). The OCBC honors outstanding local agencies, leaders, programs and public-private partnerships that cut through red tape and encourage jobs and economic growth in Orange County. You can learn more about the award and award categories [here](#).

The HCA Communications team can assist with writing an entry and will submit and process payment for all Agency entries. You can get started by downloading a fillable entry form by clicking [here](#). Submit entries to hcacomm@ochca.com and thank you!



A Recovery Story:

HCA Partner Sohail Eftekharzadeh

For many people, recovery can seem distant, a problem that doesn't affect them or their lives. While for those recuperating from addiction, recovery can feel difficult, and maybe even impossible. But addiction is an issue that can hurt those we know and love, and more importantly, the truth is that though recovery is a challenging process, it is achievable. Healing from addiction is possible with support. That is why **Sohail Eftekharzadeh**, the Program Director at the Wellness Center Central (WCC), has dedicated his time to helping others on the journey to recovery; it's a process he is familiar with and has experienced himself.

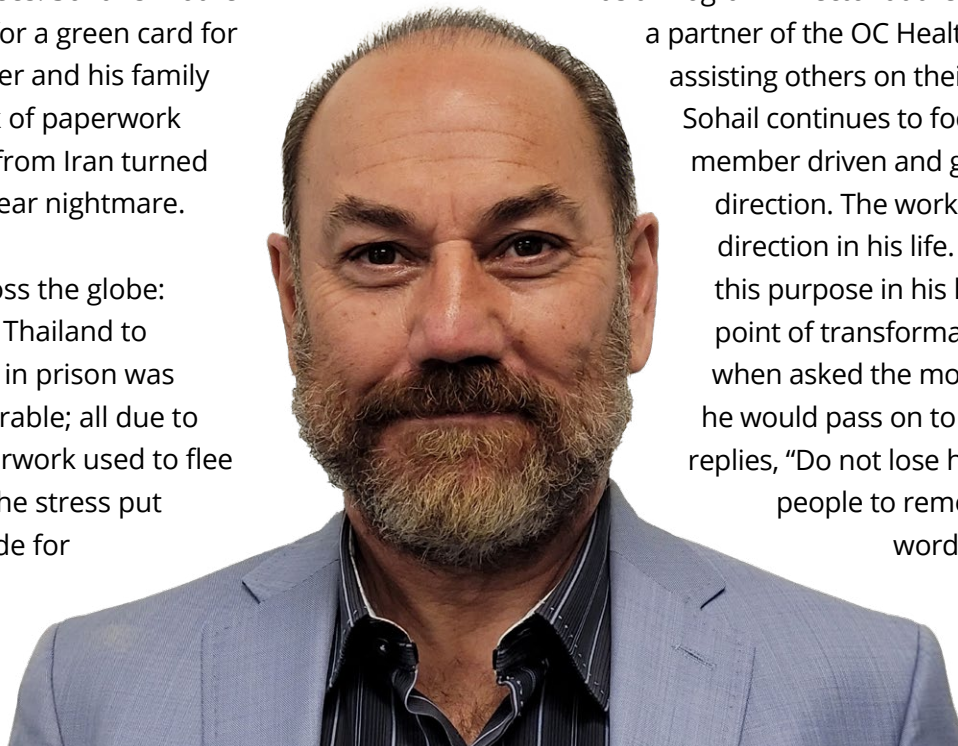
Tough circumstances in everyday life can lead to a decline in mental health and wellness, which can become contributing factors that lead to addiction, as was the case for Sohail. As an immigrant from Iran, he began his American dream with a strong work ethic and the hopes of building a better life for himself. In 1984, he fled war-torn Iran to join his family in the US. There was no asking for permission or passports to leave, as is typical for refugees. Sohail's mother had already applied for a green card for him to reunite with her and his family in America, but a lack of paperwork during his hasty exit from Iran turned his journey into a 2-year nightmare.

Sohail zigzagged across the globe: Pakistan to Thailand, Thailand to Turkey, where a stint in prison was traumatic and unbearable; all due to his inconsistent paperwork used to flee Iran. The travel and the stress put Sohail in survival mode for 2 years. Eventually making it to the

US, he spent 15 years working in a job as a car salesman and achieved his American dream, building his own business. However, the severe trauma and hurt Sohail experienced throughout his journey followed him and weighed on his mental health, leading to an addiction to drugs to numb the pain. No longer able to thrive or function, Sohail ended up houseless and living out of his car.

Sohail's story made a turn for the better when his brother heard about Phoenix House in 2006 and upon his urging, Sohail entered residential treatment. Describing his recovery he says, "like many others, my journey was not a linear path, but rather a journey of hard work and never losing hope." Recovery helped Sohail start healing from his pain and it's where he found his purpose. He accepted a job to help others recover and hasn't turned back since. Sohail recognized the opportunity to aid others with the same struggles he experienced.

Today, Sohail is 16 years sober and continues his work as a Program Director at the Wellness Center, a partner of the OC Health Care Agency, assisting others on their paths to recovery. Sohail continues to focus on WCC being member driven and grows his team in this direction. The work is giving Sohail daily direction in his life. He said that finding this purpose in his life was the turning point of transformation for him, and when asked the most important message he would pass on to others Sohail simply replies, "Do not lose hope." He urges people to remember these closing words: "Hope never dies. It's everything. Do not ever give up."





for National Suicide Prevention Awareness Month

Message from **Dr. Veronica Kelley**, Chief, Mental Health and Recovery Services, OC Health Care Agency

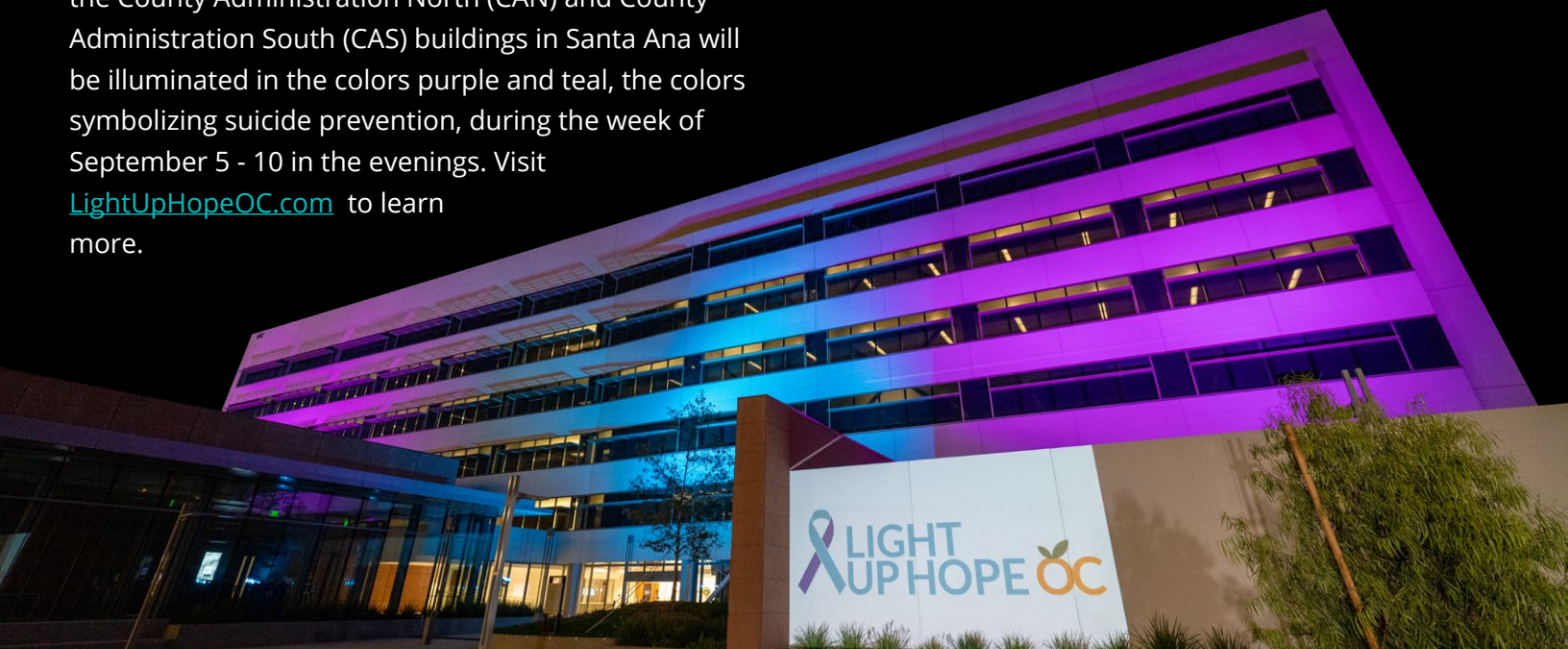
The month of September is National Suicide Prevention Awareness Month. During September, we also recognize Suicide Prevention Week from September 10-16, 2023 and World Suicide Prevention Day on September 10. This is a time when individuals and organizations locally, nationally, and globally come together to remember loved ones lost to suicide. They join their voices to amplify the message that everyone can play a role in suicide prevention by becoming aware of the warning signs of suicide, by finding the words to support a friend or family member, and by reaching out and connecting them to resources. The colors teal and purple symbolize suicide awareness and prevention and serve as a reminder that suicide is an issue we need to talk about openly.

The OC Health Care Agency will be launching the “Light Up Hope OC,” campaign to raise awareness, to highlight the message that suicide is preventable, and to bring hope to the community. As part of the Campaign, the County Administration North (CAN) and County Administration South (CAS) buildings in Santa Ana will be illuminated in the colors purple and teal, the colors symbolizing suicide prevention, during the week of September 5 - 10 in the evenings. Visit LightUpHopeOC.com to learn more.

We can all play a part in suicide prevention. Learn more about the warning signs of suicide, how to have a conversation with someone who might be experiencing suicidal thoughts, and all the wonderful available resources. We encourage you to check out a community calendar of events occurring throughout Orange County and engage with activities as you are able. You can see the calendar [here](#).

To get started with your Suicide Prevention Day, week and month planning, check out the Suicide Prevention Activation Kit [here](#).

Let's continue to support one another in doing what we can to prevent suicide. Learn more at suicideispreventable.org and remember that calls to the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline at 9-8-8 are answered 24/7 for anyone who might be thinking about suicide or who is concerned about a loved one who might be at risk.



BUENA PARK YOUTH RECEIVE FREE HELMETS

and Learn about Safety

Contributor: **Rebecca Miller**, Health Educator

With summer slowly winding down and children starting to return to school, it's important to continue to encourage kids to head outdoors for physical activity. Throughout neighborhoods in Orange County, you can see children rolling down the streets on bikes, skateboards, scooters, and more. "These activities provide great opportunity for physical activity for children and adults alike," shares **Rebecca Miller**, Health Educator with the Health Promotion and Community Planning Division's Injury Prevention Program (IPP). Rebecca reminds us, "Did you know, by law in California, everyone under 18 years of age must wear a helmet while bicycling, or riding a scooter, skateboard, roller skates and in-line skates?" According to Safe Kids Worldwide, properly fitted helmets can reduce the risk of head injuries by at least 45%, yet less than half of children 14 and under usually wear a bike helmet.

In July, IPP set out to engage parents and children in Buena Park to share the importance of helmet safety. During a Read With Me park day (a free weekly book reading hosted by a local elementary teacher), families came out to Bellis Park to hear a new story, tour police cars, and learn about bike and helmet safety. Rebecca and Intern Lauren Gatica provided helmet safety tips and facts to children and their families. Rebecca and Lauren fit and distributed 70 helmets to children that day at no cost. "Fitting a helmet is easy," said Rebecca, "when you follow the 2-V-1 technique."



2

There should be no more than 2 horizontal fingers' space between the helmet and the eyebrow. The helmet sits low on the forehead and the wearer should be able to see the bottom rim of the helmet. A helmet that is pushed back will not protect the face or the head well in a fall or crash.

V

The front and back straps should form the letter "V" just below the ears.

1

Only 1 finger should fit between the chinstrap and the chin. The helmet should not move more than ½ inch in any direction. Use thicker or thinner pads and adjust as needed.



Under the Microscope:

A Look at **KAREN GALLIHER**

"I have fond memories of the Public Health Laboratory (PHL) changing over the years from a very small staff to triple the number of microbiologists. I am proud of how each lab department has expanded to bring on the latest technology and equipment and has been a part of the public health response to the pandemic," **Karen Galliher**, Supervising Public Health Microbiologist as she reflected on 38 years with the OC Health Care Agency (HCA).

Karen graduated from California State University Long Beach with a bachelor's degree in Medical Microbiology. After college, she worked in the private sector for a year. She then reached out to her college professor to ask about careers in microbiology outside of hospital work and was directed to apply to public health for HCA. Karen started out in the HCA as a Public Health Microbiologist Trainee. She then worked her way up from Microbiologist I to Microbiologist II to her final position as Supervising Public Health Microbiologist and is now off to enjoy her retirement.

Karen is most proud of becoming the Bacteriology Supervisor, which includes the role of Bioterrorism

Coordinator. In her role, she managed laboratory work as it relates to Enteric diseases, foodborne outbreaks, and emerging pathogens, and she also trained staff for the Agency. What Karen will be looking forward to most in retirement is spending more time with her family and is going traveling to Hawaii and Arizona, where her mother currently resides. She will miss all her friends at the PHL, many of whom she has worked with for more than 30 years. **Megan Crumpler**, Laboratory Director said, "The Orange County Public Health Laboratory and the clients it serves are very fortunate to have had Karen's commitment and expertise for the last 38 years. Her contribution to training, quality assurance, and test implementation will have a lasting impact for many years to come."

Fun fact about Karen: "My mother is Ukrainian, and I have learned the Ukrainian tradition of decorating pysanky Easter eggs. This is a process using beeswax to create hand-drawn art by layering different colored dyes to the surface of the egg," she said.



For Health



Family Meals

Does your family eat dinner together every night? You are on the right track! Family meals benefit children both nutritionally and emotionally. It is a good time to check in with your child and decompress after a long day. It helps children feel heard and nurtured by being able to spend time with their family. Allowing the child to participate in dinner preparation also help with autonomy and learning skills. Children who eat in a family also eat more fruits and vegetables and less sweets, soda, and junk food. They are also at much lower risk of substance abuse.

Family meals may feel burdensome, but allowing everyone to contribute and have creative input can make these something to look forward to. Go to [MyPlate Kitchen](#) to find recipes that work for your family.

Apple and Chicken Salad

Serves: 4

Ingredients

- 2 red apples (such as Cameo Apples)
- 2 celery stalks (diced)
- 2 chicken breasts (skinless, cooked, diced, about 2 cups)
- 1/4 cup plain non-fat Greek yogurt
- 1/2 cup raisins
- 1/4 cup mayonnaise
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/8 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 16 lettuce leaves (Bibb, Romaine, green or red leaf)

Directions

1. Cut apples in quarters; remove core and chop.
2. In a medium size bowl, mix all ingredients, except lettuce.
3. To serve, arrange lettuce on serving plates, top with apple and chicken salad.

VISION

Quality health for all.



MISSION

In partnership with the community, deliver sustainable and responsive services that promote population health and equity.

GOALS

Promote quality, equity, and value.
Ensure the HCA's sustainability.
Offer relevant services to the community.



CONNECT WITH US

The **What's Up newsletter** is created and distributed monthly by HCA Communications. We welcome your ideas, input and/or insight into HCA people and programs. To contribute, comment or connect please email us at hcacomm@ochca.com or call (714) 834-2178. You can follow us on social media by clicking below.



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