County DIGEST

MAY 15, 1995 COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

Appreciating Diversity

Taking the lead in the fight against intolerance of cultural differences in Los Angeles is a broad challenge for a new, interdepartmental human relations outreach effort created last month in a historic action by the Board of Supervisors. This new alliance brings together the human relations expertise of the County, which includes the Affirmative Action Compliance Office, the Human Relations Commission, the new Department of Human Resources, and representatives from the Commission on Disabilities and the Commission for Women.

"Los Angeles is one of the most diverse communities in the world. The greatest challenge before us is 'How do we lead Los Angeles County from a metropolis made up of different communities divided by race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, culture, language, sexual orientation, gender, age and geography, into one Global Community?' As local policy makers representing distinctive constituencies, we have a responsibility to embrace the County's diversity and make it its greatest asset," says Supervisors Molina and Antonovich.

The mission of this new challenge is twofold. First, the Human Relations Commission will take the lead throughout the many diverse communities within the County by providing intergroup conflict resolution services by working closely with each local municipality to proactively address conflict before it escalates to crisis proportions. This will involve the development of mutual assistance arrangements for conflict resolution with the 88 cities situated within the County, just as government agencies assist each other in public safety arenas, such as fire and police services. The Board members will also reach out to cities within their districts that do have an intergroup conflict resolution unit and urge their participation in a mutual assistance arrangement with the County. A pilot program with two of these cities will help create mutual aid agreement models during the next year.

With the goal of community harmony in Los Angeles, the County's second mission is to teach its own workforce how to appreciate and understand diversity.

"I don't want the United States to be a melting pot. We are all who we are," Affirmative Action Compliance Officer John Hill told members of the County's Cultural Diversity Committee at its inaugural meeting.

"Los Angeles County has made significant strides to ensure that its workforce reflects the rich diversity of the community. In creating a diverse workforce, new issues arise. Our current challenge is to truly create a working environment where each individual is valued for her or his contribution to the County. As a Board, it is important that we address issues of diversity in an effort to improve morale, increase productivity, and provide better service to the public we serve," states Supervisors Molina and Burke.

Part of the County's plan includes the creation of a County-wide diversity plan.

"While we have an equal employment and non-discrimination Board policy, we do not have a policy on diversity in this County and it's probably the most diverse county in the nation. Diversity covers many areas, not just

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Diversity

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ethnicity," says Mike Henry, director of personnel.

The first step to help increase employee understanding of diversity was the formation of the Diversity Advisory Committee, created by John Hill, the County's Affirmative Action Compliance Officer.

Last December, Hill sent out a call in the **County DIGEST** for interested County employees to form a diversity group. More than 100 responded with an abundance of essays on the topic of diversity and what they wanted to do about it if they were chosen for the Committee. From this group, Hill selected 50 employees and gathered them for the first time in February.

Introductions were followed by personal accounts of how prejudice had impacted their lives. One employee working at a new AIDS clinic admitted that she was working with a stigmatized workforce. Another talked about the difficulty of working in a neighborhood so culturally mixed that problems arose from the differences among employee groups. Hill emphasized that people really have more in common than they think.

"We are all a mixture, if you look back through the generations," he says, pointing out that diversity is not limited to colors and nationalities. "It can even mean being short."

Hill hopes to set an example for other government bureaucracies about how to work better together for the good of the public served by the many County departments.

"Future generations will look back on the work that we are starting today in this room. We are all who we are, but we can't provide quality service to people we hate. You can't be a social worker if you hate poor people. You can't be a nurse if you hate sick people. We must all learn to respect each person and find our similarities, not our differences," urges Hill.

May is Mental Health Month

The "Good News" About DEPRESSION

Did you know that one third of all Americans experience some kind of mental illness is their lifetime? Eighty to 90 percent can be treated, but not all seek help. A recent study reported in the Wall Street Journal concluded that the effects of "untreated depression" costs the U.S. economy $43.7 billion each year, $11.7 billion of which is due to lost time on the job.

"Snap out of it!" or "Cheer up!" are common quips aimed at the depressed, but such advice can actually make someone depressed feel even worse. Those depressed are already having difficulty dealing with their emotions, and implying that they should be able to have quick control over their distress can intensify their feelings of low self-worth and helplessness.

Our society frowns on the expression of negative feelings and values positive feelings. "Don't Worry, Be Happy" was a popular song, but people cannot always be happy. It is common to experience a variety of positive and negative feelings in our daily lives.

So, what is depression? Usually, depression has both psychological and biological aspects. It's mental exhaustion, and each person has his or her own limits for tolerating circumstances that can produce depression. Women are more prone to depression, but men may also experience the full range and severity of symptoms. Depression is very individual in nature.

What are the differences between sadness, grief and depression? **Sadness** is generally a state of unhappiness ranging from mild and momentary to intense and lasting. **Grief** is the deep sadness and emotional suffering experienced as a normal adjustment reaction to a significant loss or setback. **Clinical depression** is a mood disorder ranging in degree of severity that can last for weeks or even years.

The good news is there's help available. Most people can find relief from their depression. To discuss depression that you or a family member may be experiencing, contact the **Los Angeles County Employee Assistance Program** at (213) 887-5300 for confidential assistance.

Symptoms of Depression

- Feeling Sad or Blue
- Not enjoying doing familiar things
- Having thoughts about death and suicide
- Feeling not useful or needed
- Losing weight
- Having trouble sleeping
- Feeling restless and irritable
- Having difficulty concentrating
- Feeling tired for no reason
- Feeling hopeless

Possible Sources of Depression

- Broken relationships
- Financial concerns
- Problems at work
- Lack of emotional support from others
- Illness
- Seasonal changes
- Negative life events
- Personality factors
- Positive life events (buying a house, having a baby)
- Inappropriate parenting
- Death of someone close
- Emotional, physical, sexual or substance abuse

Employee of the Month

Ken Hopper: *Helping City Youth Find Roots*

Ken Hopper spends his day proving that the grass **is** greener on the other side. At least it's greener for the countless youth who spend their free time at one of the 17 park facilities he manages as recreation services manager for the Department of Parks and Recreation. He wants them to feel right at home.

It's a passion for Hopper, one of nine children born to migrant farm workers in 1940s Alabama, to have roots. His family was constantly on the move. Hopper attended 20 elementary schools, five junior high schools and four high schools, finally settling in and graduating from Duarte High School.

It's that same passion for his job that brought him before the Board of Supervisors on April 18, 1995, when he was honored as April County Employee of the Month.

Despite his transitory childhood, Hopper excelled in school and became quite active in student government and athletics. His interest in recreation began in high school.

"During local government day, my assignment was to be Parks and Recreation Director for the City of Duarte," he explains. "After spending the day assisting the director, I was hired two weeks later to work at one of Duarte's after school and summer programs as a recreation leader. I'm still basically doing that, just on a much larger scale."

Married at 19 and the father of two, Hopper studied police science, but later decided that inspiring community youth through recreation programs was really what he wanted to do.

A 25-year County employee, Hopper oversees the parks for the department's Southeast Recreation District Office. He develops recreational programs for all ages, including cultural activities, sports programs and special events. Closest to his heart is the "Kids to Camp" program in which more than 300 inner-city and low-income youth have experienced the joys of camping up in the San Bernardino mountains. With dwindling funding, Hopper has initiated fundraisers totalling $90,000 in contributions to keep his programs running.

He's also credited with recruiting nearly 500,000 hours of volunteer service, calling volunteers "the backbone of all recreation programs."

Together with his five brothers, Hopper recalls working in the fields as early as age six.

"Our fun was what we made of it. It was a different type of exposure," he says. "I want the kids coming to our our parks to know that you can accomplish anything that you really want to. You have to have things to care about."

MOMENT OF PRIDE: Ken Hopper receives his scroll of commendation from Supervisor Mike Antonovich.

May Retirees

Congratulations to the following employees who have joined the ranks of the retired, after 30 years of service to the people of Los Angeles County:

Assessor: Marvin Lane
Animal Control: John S. Rozier
District Attorney: Wilbert Owens, Jr.
Fire: George Y. Yamane
Health Services: Thelma L. Baker, Alan Harwood, Herman J. Johnson, Robert L. Karp, Helen L. Lee, Clyde Montgomery, Alice Reinhardt, Carlos T. Rodriguez, Lawrence C. Todd
Internal Services: Ronald C. Layman
Mental Health: Betty M. Fairbanks
Public Social Services: Jean G. Bouldin, Carlene Moore, Alan C. Pierce
Public Works: William Dailey, Allen Sue, Gerry L. Tolen, Frank M. Velasquez
Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk: Helen P. Owens
Sheriff: Manfred E. Bartsch, Florence E. Berger, Arthur Guerra, Roger A. Jewell, Grant R. Johnson, Perry A. Ponds, Edwin M. Powell, Wesley C. Pratt, Richard S. Wallace
Superior Court: Marilyn Serafin
Treasurer and Tax Collector: Doris J. Smoot

Congratulations to the following employees who are retiring after serving the County for 25 years:

Assessor: R.D. Nauman
Chief Administrative Office: Clarence C. Leland
Children's and Family Services: Alfonso Garcia, Annie L. McCullough, Eva D. Navarette, Patricia Saylor
District Attorney: Robert K. Gosney
Fire: James D. Smally
Health Services: Myrtle B. Abron, Erma Barbarin, Phyllis Fields, Kyoko Hondo, Carole A. Johnson, John A. Richmond, Janice T. Snip, Martha Streeter, Birdie Watson
Internal Services: Nora L. Gecks, Brenda A. White
Mental Health: Esther Costello Sanchez
Parks and Recreation: Manuel J. Cisneros, Donald C. Robinson
Public Defender: Patricia M. Scully
Public Social Services: Bertha M. Dantzler, Miles E. Hufford, Lupe M. Leyvas, Armando Ra Leyvas, Armando Ramirez
Public Works: Frank A. Marquez
Sheriff: Chester L. Ballew, Leroy E. Bray, Donald J. Bumgarner, Ronald J. Card, Paul J. Cattin, Hugh D. Crissman, Edgar L. Matthews, Jack A. Meek

The County's Marrow/ Blood Donor Program

"There is a great need to increase the number of individualsregistered with the National Marrow Donor Bank, especially within the minority community," says Board Chair Gloria Molina, who also took time to donate blood at a recent drive. The County provides paid time off for employees who participate in the Red Cross Blood Drive.

Each year, more than 16,000 children and adults in the U.S. are diagnosed with a fatal blood disease, such as leukemia or aplastic anemia. Life-saving marrow transplants are perhaps the only hope for many of these patients. Marrow donors are needed to help combat these life-threatening diseases. To help meet this international demand, the County is participating in its first-ever marrow donor testing at the Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration on Thursday, June 8, 1995, in conjunction with the American Red Cross Blood Drive, in Room B85. County employees are encouraged to be tested for a potential match.

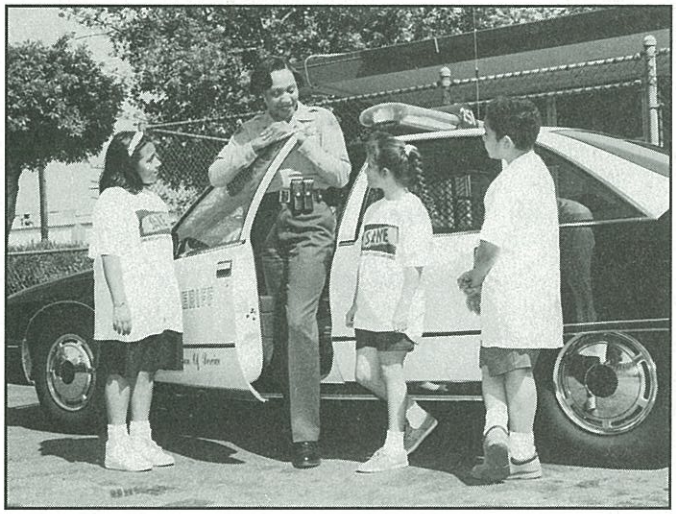
Simply explained, marrow is a tissue found in the large bones of the human body that produces vital blood components, such as white blood cells which fight infection, red cells which carry oxygen, and platelets which prevent bruising and bleeding. Providing compatible marrow for someone with a life-threatening disease can mean a second chance at a healthy life.

A large number of marrow donor volunteers between the ages of 18 and 55 are needed because the odds of matching an unrelated donor are between one in 100 and one in 1,000,000. Even though there currently are almost 1.5 million registered volunteers in the national program, there have only been 3,275 transplants since 1987.

If interested in the marrow donor program, contact your departmental Blood Donor Coordinator or walk in anytime between 7 a.m. and 5 p.m.

Looking for a Career Change?

The Recruitment Unit of the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department will host a "Women In Law Enforcement Career Day and Health Fair" on Saturday, June 17, 1995, from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., at the Sheriff's Training Academy in Whittier. Over 30 informational career booths from the Sheriff's Department's specialized units will provide interested job seekers with information about career opportunities and career planning. The Department's Wellness Program Coordinator will provide nutrition information and health assessments. The Career Resource Center will be available to help participants make the right career choice. The day will be highlighted by workshops and panels of distinguished speakers discussing career opportunities for women within the Sheriff's Department.



The Department is especially seeking women for the position of Deputy Sheriff, with an annual starting salary from $40,349 to $44,909, plus an excellent benefit package. The Medical Services Unit is also recruiting for positions in the nursing field, physician, and allied health. Staff will also assist applicants and explain career options available as deputies, civilians, interns, explorers, reservists and volunteers.

For more information, contact Deputy Blanche Wilson at (310) 946-7012.

County DIGEST

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