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Director's Corner

BY DEBRA J. BAETZ

Last year about this time, I talked about fall's arrival and the change of seasons being a reflection of our changing world and the uncharted journey we had been on for seven months. That journey has continued now that we're more than a year and a half into it, and while times are different than they were last year, many of us may still remain stressed, tired and frustrated during what can feel like increased polarization and disagreement. I think most of us have had instances of feeling this way at one time or another in the past 18+ months.

The good news is that kindness can help make it better. Combined, our SSA core values of courtesy, compassion and respect are guiding principles in our daily work and underscore the importance of fostering relationships by treating everyone with whom we



come into contact – our family, friends, colleagues, clients and partners – with great care and empathy. It is my sincere hope that we as an SSA family, more now than ever, will work to consciously model these values in our interactions with others. Let's strive to be kind, compassionate, courteous and show our respect. Together, we can lighten the load.

I wish you and your families a kind, warm and cozy fall.

Debra J. Baetz
SSA Director

SSA Spotlight:

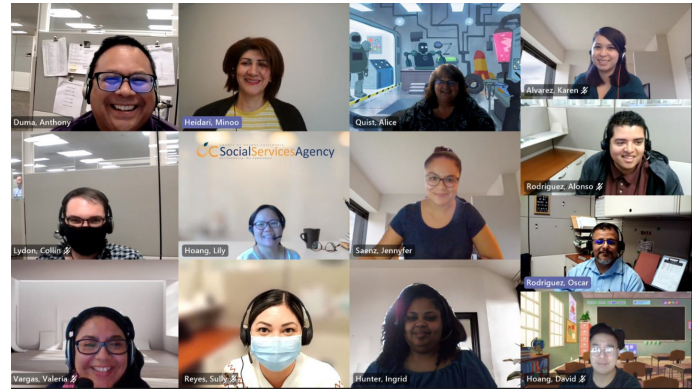
SARC Mentor and New Hire Onboarding Unit

BY ALICIA OJEDA
ADMINISTRATIVE MANAGER I
MARISELA PALACIO
SOCIAL SERVICES SUPERVISOR I

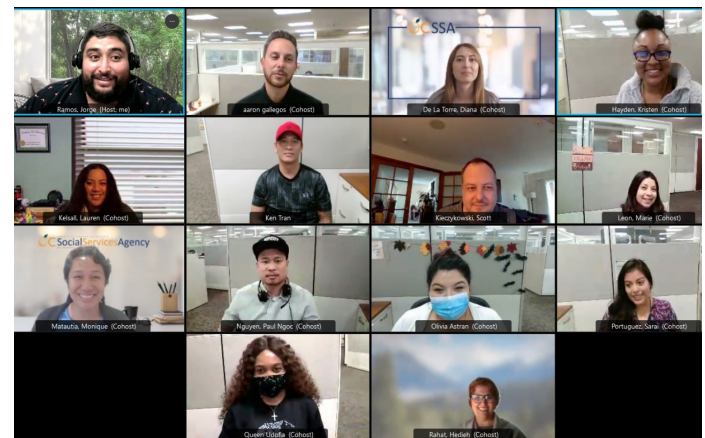
The Santa Ana Regional Center (SARC) Mentor and New Hire Onboarding Units at the County of Orange Social Services Agency (SSA) are two dynamic groups whose focus is to support, coach and prepare Assistance Programs (AP) Eligibility Technicians (ETs) to successfully administer the Medi-Cal, CalFresh and General Relief programs and complete related tasks. Together, the groups represent SSA's values of collaboration, creativity and teamwork, among others. The Mentor Unit focuses on supporting ET trainees who attend the Non-Assistance CalFresh (NACF) and Health Care Programs (HCP) Intensive Induction Trainings (IITs), as well as dual classes. Earlier this year, the New Hire Onboarding Unit began supporting the onboarding of new hire AP ET staff.

Since the SARC Mentor Unit was reinstated in 2016, it has doubled in size to meet AP business demands. Today, the unit consists of 20 Mentor Eligibility Technicians (METs) and two Mentor Eligibility Supervisors (MESSs). Staff selected for these units are all volunteers from multiple AP regional offices who demonstrate exemplary leadership and organizational skills and have a genuine desire to assist others. Through collaboration with Training and Career Development (TCD), the Staffing, Statistics and Planning (SSP) Team in AP Operations and SARC's Administrative Team, the primary goal of the MET is to support ET trainees learning the CalFresh and/or Medi-Cal programs during the Task Carry portion — simulated exercises using real case scenarios — of their training curriculum. Providing coaching, job shadowing and support, METs make sure that ET trainees have a successful and seamless transition when they return to a live work environment at their assigned AP regional offices.

Due to social distancing guidelines, mentors had to adapt Task Carry training. METs and MESSs, however, worked tirelessly to consistently provide trainees with the Task Carry training. With adjustments, the Task Carry experience shifted from an in-person setting to a virtual setting.



SSA SARC Mentor Unit



SSA New Hire Onboarding Unit

Launched in early 2021, the SARC New Hire Onboarding Unit offers AP newly hired ET staff with preliminary support as they begin their SSA careers. Working collaboratively with the SARC Mentor Unit, the New Hire Onboarding Unit is made up of 13 METs and seven ESSs, all volunteers from various AP regional offices. The unit prepares new hire ET staff on the fundamentals of the Affordable Care Act and ensures the completion of all SSA mandatory trainings so that staff qualify to attend formal IIT. Much of each training day is spent in virtual breakout rooms, where new hire ETs observe case demonstrations, process cases from start to finish, job shadow and disposition cases.

"Mentoring is fast-paced and very rewarding," ET mentor Joe Sabet said.

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SSA Spotlight: SARC Mentor Unit and New Hire Onboarding Teams

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“ I enjoy working with new professionals who value and appreciate the experience they get as Onboarding ETs. Mentors work closely with each other and their supervisors to ensure the best experience for new hires and I believe our work is invaluable to their future career with the County.” - Joe Sabet

Since the project began, the New Hire Onboarding Unit has successfully onboarded over 285 new hires.

We would like to extend our gratitude and kudos to both the SARC Mentor Unit and New Hire Onboarding Unit. By sharing their knowledge and expertise, and assisting in the professional development of new and current staff, they have allowed SSA eligibility professionals to better serve and provide quality services to our Orange County community. The success of these teams was made possible through collaborative efforts between SARC, the SSP Operations Team, TCD and the partnering AP regional offices that provided volunteer mentors and supervisors.

Beyond the Call: Exceptional Service in Action

Adam Correa

Senior Social Worker, Children & Family Services

Adam was named CFS Employee of the Month in October:

“ As an Emergency Response Senior Social Worker, Adam carries a tremendous workload working with difficult situations day in and day out. He consistently deals with these pressures calmly and professionally. He is always willing to go above and beyond by referring his clients to services that address the issues affecting their families. ”



Beyond the Call: Exceptional Service in Action

Sandra Villa

Eligibility Technician, Assistance Programs

After requesting to speak to a supervisor, a customer had these words of praise for Sandra:

“Sandra explained my case in detail and provided additional resources available to me and my family. Her knowledge and willingness to help exceeded my expectations. Thank you for providing excellent customer service.”



Paul Jimenez

Eligibility Technician, Assistance Programs

Paul received the following words of praise from a customer:

“I want to commend Mr. Jimenez for his wonderful customer service this morning. I was having such a hard time turning in my SAR7. However, he patiently assisted me, step by step, scanning and loading my SAR7 into the system all the way. I could not have done it without his guidance. I’m really appreciative.”

PJ

Jeremie Matsuda

Eligibility Technician, In-Home Supportive Services

Jeremie received the following words of recognition from his supervisor:

“Jeremie was selected as the You Rock winner for October 2021 due to his commitment to providing excellent customer service to our community. A client stated her day was better because of her experience with him when applying for IHSS and Medi-Cal services. The client thanked Jeremie for his patience and praised him not only for his encouragement but for his professionalism and compassion. We are so proud of you Jeremie. Keep up the great customer service.”



Beyond the Call: Exceptional Service in Action

Anna Diaz

Social Services Supervisor I / Family Self-Sufficiency & Adult Services

Anna Diaz received the following words of appreciation from an In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) client's daughter after taking the time to explain the client's case status:

“I would like to share our great experience with Mrs. Anna Diaz. She is very professional, compassionate, empathetic and thoughtful. She always answers our phone calls and explains everything to be sure we understand. We are very blessed and lucky to have her as our Social Worker's Supervisor. Anna is an asset to IHSS!”

AD

SSA Returns to Homeless Outstation Assignments

BY KENYA AVILA
OUTREACH COORDINATION SPECIALIST

Last month, a small group of County of Orange Social Services Agency (SSA) Eligibility Supervisors and Technicians returned to monthly outstation assignments at six homeless shelters throughout Orange County. This was the first month SSA resumed services at the shelters since the onset of COVID-19. Staff assisted at the following homeless shelters: The Link (temporarily located at the Fullerton Navigation Center), Alternative Sleep Location, Tustin Temporary Emergency Shelter, Bridges at Kraemer Place, Yale Navigation Center and Costa Mesa Bridge Shelter. Once on site, SSA staff assisted shelter residents by providing application assistance for the Medi-Cal, CalFresh, General Relief and CalWORKs programs and answering existing inquiries. Having an onsite presence and meeting our clients where they are help mitigate barriers some clients face associated with making an in-person visit to an SSA office.

This month, SSA expanded outstation assignments to two new shelters, La Mesa Emergency Shelter and Huntington Beach Navigation Center. The SSA Community and Government Relations (CGR)

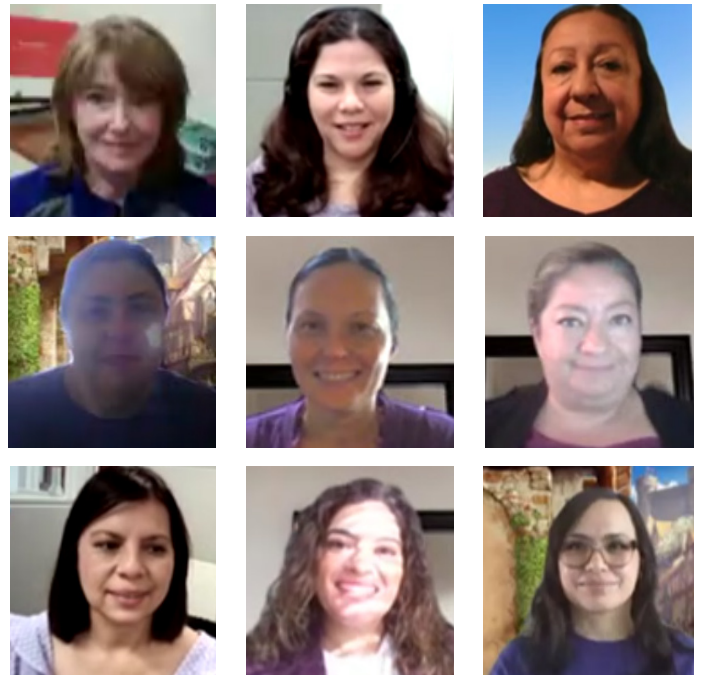


SSA employees on site providing application assistance to clients.

Outreach Team would like to extend a special thank you to Assistance Programs, Family Self-Sufficiency, Centralized Operations, OC Information Technology, SAIC and Accounting departments for making these outstation assignments possible. These teams all play an essential role in helping to coordinate outreach efforts that serve the County's most vulnerable population.

Check out the new [outreach calendar](#) on SSA's CGR page to learn about upcoming direct service events, public presentations, community resource table events and more.

Domestic Violence Awareness Month



Members of Children & Family Services and Family Self-Sufficiency celebrating Wear Purple Day.

BY PAMELA PANTIRU AND JENNIFER MCDONALD
SENIOR SOCIAL SERVICES SUPERVISORS

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month, a nationwide campaign dedicated to raising awareness of the signs of abuse and to remind victims of the help and resources available in their communities. To show support for this annual campaign, the County of Orange Social Services Agency (SSA) encouraged employees to wear purple on Wear Purple Day, October 21.

SSA has assisted victims of domestic violence for 20 years through its Domestic Abuse Services Unit (DASU). DASU helps families receiving CalWORKs benefits to overcome the barriers of domestic violence as they work toward self-sufficiency. DASU is an innovative, preventative and collaborative program that empowers clients through education, trusting relationships and supportive community services. DASU consists of nine Senior Social Workers (SSWs), one Data Entry Technician and two Senior Social Services Supervisors based out of SSA's Family Self-Sufficiency & Adult Services four regional offices.

The DASU team works collaboratively with CalWORKs case managers, Employment and Eligibility Specialists, Behavioral Health Therapists and a multitude of community partners such as the Families and Communities Together (FaCT) Family Resource Centers (FRCs), local justice centers and domestic violence shelters.

The last 18 months brought unique challenges for DASU, as many clients and victims of domestic violence found themselves more isolated than ever. Despite these challenges, DASU SSWs continued to reach out, linking victims to virtual, life-changing services and supporting them with case plans tailored to their individual needs. The team hopes to continue these efforts — which have helped lead successful outcomes for DASU clients — for years to come.

Help for those impacted by domestic violence is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week through the National Domestic Abuse Hotline at (800) 799-7233.

Cultural Recognition

BY DINA BAGUES
ADMINISTRATIVE MANAGER I

October marks several national observances as proclaimed by Congress and the President recognizing the contributions and importance of diversity and culture. Read below to learn about some of the significant cultural initiatives and campaigns recognized throughout October.

Italian American Heritage Month

Italian American Heritage Month recognizes the contributions and achievements of early Italian Americans. Italian immigrants began arriving in the United States, primarily through Ellis Island in New York City, in the 1820s. Over 26 million Americans of Italian descent currently reside in the U.S.

Did you know?

- America's name is Italian inspired. Amerigo Vespucci, who explored the east coast of South America, is the source of the name "America."
- In 1984, Geraldine Ferraro, an Italian American woman, broke the gender barrier in U.S. politics by being the first woman to run for Vice President on a major party ticket.



National Coming Out Day

National Coming Out Day (NCOD) on October 11 celebrates members of the LGBTQ+ community living as their authentic selves. Now in its 33rd year, the day is celebrated by sharing stories, raising awareness and supporting one another.



Did you know?

- NCOD was inspired by a single march in 1987 in which over 500,000 people participated in the March on Washington for lesbian and gay rights.
- The **LGBTQ Center of Orange County** offers resources for children and young adults in Orange County.
- SSA's Employee Resource Group, the **Multi-Cultural Advisory Committee** (MCAC), has an LGBTQ subcommittee known as The League which provides employee resources on how to serve our diverse community and one another on how to serve our diverse community and one another.

Filipino American History Month

Each year, the United States recognizes Filipino American History during the month of October. Filipino Americans have played a critical part in the history and culture of both the United States and California — and Filipino American History Month is a designated time for recognizing and celebrating those contributions.

October is a significant month in Filipino American history because it commemorates when the first Filipinos arrived in the United States on October 18, 1597.

Want to learn more?

- Learn more from the **Filipino American National Historical Society (FANHS)**, and for additional photos, articles, videos and historical insights, visit the **FANHS Instagram page**.



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Cultural Recognition

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- The **This Filipino American Life Podcast – Exploring the nuanced experiences of Filipinos in the United States**, covers an extensive list of topics from history to culture to entertainment and relevance to the Filipino community and/or culture.

Global Diversity Awareness Month

Although its origins are difficult to trace, Global Diversity Awareness Month is the perfect opportunity to pay tribute to the diverse minds and beliefs held by cultures around the world. Embracing the values of various cultures represented in our community only strengthens our understanding of each other's backgrounds.



German American Heritage Month

German American Heritage Month recognizes the contributions of German immigrants and their ancestors within the United States. As early as 1683, families from Germany began settling in Pennsylvania. A proclamation by President Ronald Reagan marked the beginning of German Heritage Month in 1987. From the auto industry to the arts, literature and music, Americans of German descent continue their impact.

Did you know?

Love a good hamburger? That came from Hamburg in Germany.

Historical entrepreneurs such as Heinz, Chrysler, Boeing and Rockefeller all have German American heritage.

Polish American Heritage Month

Congress passed Polish American Heritage month in 1984 to commemorate the first Polish settlers in the United States.

The first wave of Polish immigrants arrived in the colony of Jamestown in 1608. Polish Americans are credited for their vital role in the arts, the sciences, religion, scholarship and more.

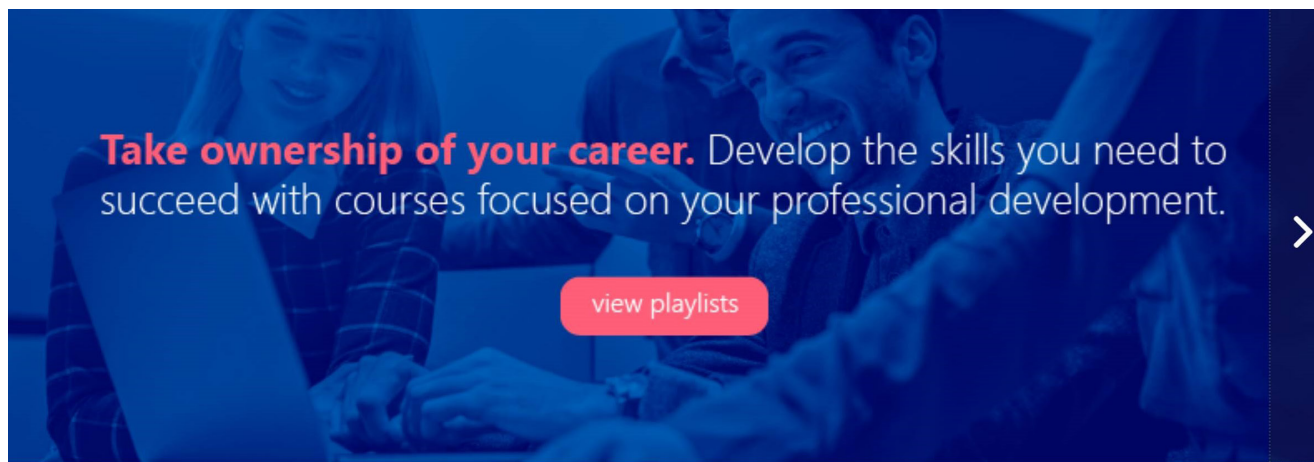
Whether you have Polish roots or not, here are some ways to celebrate this culture and heritage:

- Be brave in the kitchen and try some Polish cuisine. For a hearty stew of meat, sauerkraut and cabbage, consider making Bigos. Looking for a classic? Opt for pierogi — the Polish version of a dumpling.
- Take Polish dance lessons.
- Watch a Polish film.



Training and Career Development Offers Skills Enhancement and Learning

BY RICHARD PULS
SENIOR SOCIAL SERVICES SUPERVISOR



Many of us strive to improve and advance in our careers. We work hard, go the extra mile, maybe even pursue higher education and, of course, try to steadily improve the quality of our performance. It takes diligence and practice to acquire new skills to keep up with the constantly changing environment around us. Balancing the demands of work, education and personal life while working to improve our professional skillset can present challenges.

To make professional development easily available to County of Orange Social Services Agency (SSA) employees, **Professional Development Playlists** are available on the County's Eureka Learning Management System (Eureka). Within **Eureka**, employees can find 34 playlists featuring a variety of topics designed to broaden and advance professional development in the workplace. Topics include:

- Managing Change in the Workplace
- Innovation and Creativity
- Thriving Emotionally at Work
- Networking in an Online Environment
- Achieving Results — Accountability
- Engaging Others — Collaboration
- Leading Change — Vision Setting
- Becoming Aware: Emotional Intelligence.

Staff can access and select courses best suited to their needs and complete at their own pace. To access the playlist, go to the **Eureka Learner Home** and click on "View Playlists" when you see the **Professional Development Playlists** banner on the screen. To search for a particular topic, type in relevant course names in the search feature.

Take some time to boost your professional development and explore one of the many employee resources SSA has to offer.

Got Photos?

Do you put together presentations on behalf of your team or department and sometimes find yourself needing good photos? The Community & Government Relations (CGR) team created a collection of stock photos for SSA staff to use.

The 11 categories of photos range from human resources and administrative images to images specific to the County of Orange Social Services Agency such as CalFresh, CalWORKs and exterior photos of our facilities. To view the images, visit the **CGR SharePoint page**, go to documents, then click **Images Library**.

Employee Promotions

NAME	CLASSIFICATION	DIVISION
Alvarez, Isabel C	Social Services Supervisor I	Assistance Programs
Ambriz-Lopez, Claudia	Social Services Supervisor I	Assistance Programs
Bax, Mary A	Eligibility Supervisor	Family Self-Sufficiency & Adult Services
Berlen, Leonardo Vito	Social Services Supervisor I	Administrative Services
Bigney, Scott Thomas	Social Services Supervisor I	Assistance Programs
Carrington, Angela Michelle	Social Services Supervisor I	Assistance Programs
Ceja, Angie	Social Services Supervisor I	Assistance Programs
Cervantes Ramos, Alma Vanessa	Social Services Supervisor I	Family Self-Sufficiency & Adult Services
Choi, Goldie S	Social Services Supervisor I	Family Self-Sufficiency & Adult Services
Donohue, Ana R	Social Services Supervisor I	Assistance Programs
Frias, Melanie	Eligibility Supervisor	Assistance Programs
Garcia, Adriana A	Social Services Supervisor I	Administrative Services
Guerra, Georgina Esmeralda	Sr. Social Services Supervisor	Children & Family Services
Hodges, Demetri Terrell	Social Services Supervisor I	Assistance Programs
Huijsmans, Diana S	Social Services Supervisor I	Administrative Services
Langley, Lakiia Denae	Social Services Supervisor I	Assistance Programs
Lopez, Melissa Muniz	Social Services Supervisor I	Assistance Programs
Pascual, Lawrence Asuncion	Employment & Eligibility Specialist	Family Self-Sufficiency & Adult Services
Pattnaik, Arundhati	Social Services Supervisor I	Family Self-Sufficiency & Adult Services
Pavone, Jeffrey C	Social Services Supervisor I	Assistance Programs
Pugh, Wendi J	Social Services Supervisor I	Administrative Services
Ruiz, Ricardo R	Social Services Supervisor I	Assistance Programs
Stone, Cindy K	Social Services Supervisor I	Assistance Programs
Sullivan-Cudal, Susan Kaye	Office Supervisor C	Children & Family Services
Torres, Crystal Marie	Social Services Supervisor I	Family Self-Sufficiency & Adult Services
Veenhuizen, Melissa Renee	Social Services Supervisor I	Assistance Programs

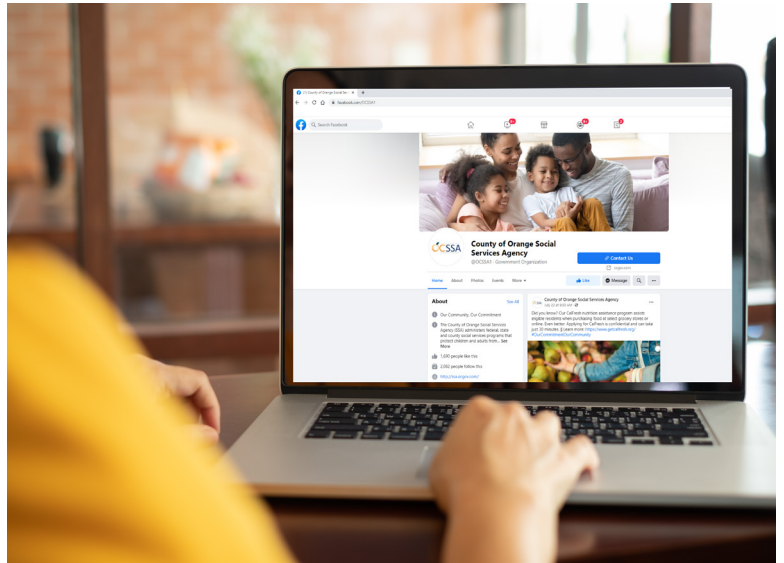
Employee Promotions

NAME	CLASSIFICATION	DIVISION
Villalobos, Gladys Concepcion	Social Services Supervisor I	Family Self-Sufficiency & Adult Services
Yslas, Jasmine Marie	Eligibility Supervisor	Assistance Programs

Looking to promote? Be sure to stay up to date on current job opportunities here at SSA and throughout the County! To view current recruitments, sign up for job alerts and/or apply, click [here](#). For frequently asked questions about the County job application process including links to practice online assessments, click [here](#).

Connect With Us!

SSA Today is published monthly by SSA's Community and Government Relations team in collaboration with the SSA Today Newsletter Committee. For **information on how to submit content** for the SSA Today newsletter, please contact one of the committee representatives below or send an email to SSAToday@ssa.ocgov.com. To contact the SSA Executive Team with your questions, comments or suggestions, please email directorscorner@ssa.ocgov.com.



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