



Ombudsman Services of San Mateo County awards its Volunteer of the Year who was instrumental in residents casting their votes this past election

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Redwood City, CA – 4/13/21 – The Ombudsman Services of San Mateo County, Inc. (OSSMC), continued to support its residents during the extreme challenges of the pandemic. This year's Volunteer of the Year, Diane Leeds, was selected for her tireless commitment in ensuring residents submitted their ballots before the November election and her work as a volunteer for the Ombudsman Program.

OSSMC normally hosts its annual volunteer recognition luncheon at the Foster City Crowne Plaza but last year due to COVID-19, the luncheon was postponed twice and it was uncertain when an in-person gathering would be permitted. This past year, the volunteers and award recipients went above and beyond their normal responsibilities and although an in-person gathering was not feasible this year, OSSMC will host a free virtual event this year to acknowledge the volunteers and award recipients.

"We wanted to still show our appreciation somehow and express our gratitude for the very important work that our volunteers do to protect our residents in our long-term care facilities. Although we are not able to be together physically to celebrate, we can still honor our volunteers in our hearts and as a community." –Denis Fama, OSSMC Board President

"Our volunteers are the heart and soul of this organization. They advance our Mission. Without them, we could not provide the services to our long-term care population which assures both their safety and quality of life in assisted living settings. The dedication, kindness and support which the volunteers demonstrate every day is remarkable."—Bernie Mellott, OSSMC, Executive Director

The event will be emceed by ABC7's veteran reporter, Vic Lee. Vic has been involved with OSSMC over the years with helping both plan and emcee past Volunteer Recognition Luncheons and is currently a board member. The virtual event is scheduled for Thursday, April 22nd at noon. The event will showcase a video and is free to attend. The registration link is www.ossmcvolunteers2021.com.

Featured guests on the video include Vic Lee and President, San Mateo County Board Supervisors, David J. Canepa, along with this year's award recipients.

Supervisor Canepa helped San Mateo County launch its Age-Friendly Cities project with three pilot cities that include Redwood City, Pacifica and Daly City and is helping other cities in San Mateo County become Age-Friendly.

In the past years, the Ombudsman Services of San Mateo County have received grants from San Mateo County to help with the operations of the program. As funds get tighter, it becomes harder and harder to operate.

"President Slocum and I in 2020-2021 made a historical investment of \$122,000 to keep this program going with unanimous support from the Board of Supervisors. The reason we did this is because we understand our older Americans need to be protected and have an advocate. We are pleased to renew the

grant from Measure K Funds for 2021-2022.”—President, San Mateo County Board of Supervisors, David J. Canepa

This year's award recipients are:

Distinguished Service Award, David J. Canepa, President, San Mateo County Board of Supervisors

Guiding Force Award, Ombudsman Staff

Victoria Cormack, Regional Supervisor

Betty Frayman-Kori, Regional Supervisor

Nicki Manske – Regional Supervisor

Kirsten Irgens-Moller, Program Manager

Alan Kornfield – Ombudsman

Mr. Bill – Ombudsman Specialist

Volunteer of the Year Award, Diane Leeds

“As a board member of OSSMC, it has been great to see the important work being done by the volunteers and staff to protect our residents during the pandemic. We are thankful to the County for their partnership in renewing their grant that helped prevent possible staff layoffs. We also appreciate the fund they established to help pay back rent of residents living in long term care facilities that could have been evicted by the end of this past year. One 95-year-old-resident had back rent of \$60,000 due and ran out of money. This grant helped him from becoming homeless. It was wonderful that OSSMC got a ‘Hero of the Week’ radio shout out from the Forever Young Foundation, co-founded by former NFL Player Steve Young and his wife Barb.”—Vic Lee, ABC7 Veteran Reporter

OSSMC advocates for every person who lives in a licensed long-term care facility in San Mateo County, making over 3,795 unannounced visits annually to 9,177 residents who live in 444 facilities.

The sponsors for this year's virtual volunteer recognition event are:

- Cotchett Pitre & McCarthy, LLP
- Peter & Paula Uccelli Foundation
- Heritage Bank of Commerce
- Three Productions, LLC
- Circle Communications, LLC

To register for the free virtual event and learn of ways to support OSSMC, visit

www.ossmcvolunteers2021.com

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About the Ombudsman Services of San Mateo County, Inc.

Mission: The residents of long-term care facilities are often the most vulnerable in society. OSSMC works to assure the protection of these residents through advocacy, direct intervention, and education in collaboration with service providers. All services are free and confidential. Funding is reliant on governmental agencies and donors. To donate, visit www.ossmc.org or send a check to OSSMC, 711 Nevada Street, Redwood City, CA 94061

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