

# Family Matters



The Newsletter for Sunnyvale Health Care Center

Spring 2011

## SHCC MARKS 9 YEARS OF TOP-NOTCH CARE



Nine years have passed since the Sunnyvale Health Care Center was born and longtime staff members say it has just as much promise and momentum as the day it opened its doors.

On March 25, the facility celebrated the milestone and Executive Director Hermie Chavez says the staff in place is strong enough to take it far into the future.

"This facility has con-

tinued to grow in terms of our programs and the quality of care we provide to our residents," she said.

That's nearly a decade of living the company motto "Family Caring for Families," and the commitment to that mission has not waned. Loni Reeder, daughter of former facility owner and recent resident Lorean Reeder, writes in a piece published in this newslet-

ter that the SHCC staff and Chavez family has raised the bar for skilled-nursing facilities.

"There's a lot of happy families," Hermie said. "We have very positive notes in our discharges."

And as the facility approaches double digits in age, the time and work that everyone has put into it is being recognized, both by the community and the state. Federal Medicare administrators awarded SHCC with a four-star rating and the positive attention that comes with it.

"I think we have a very good presence now in the community," said Vanessa Chavez, former clinical educator and newly licensed administrator. "We have a repu-



## Japan quake puts focus on disaster prep

The staff at SHCC was steadily working toward updating its disaster preparedness plan when a magnitude 8.9 earthquake struck off the northeastern coast of Japan, triggering a tsunami that killed tens of thousands of people.

Now the sense of urgency is stronger.

Assistant Administrator Vanessa Chavez and Operations Manager Loree Balis have taken the point position of the preparedness effort. Loree is the skilled-nursing facility cluster coordinator in Santa Clara County, which covers 13 locations in the West Valley chapter, which also encompasses Santa Clara, Saratoga, Cupertino and Mountain View.

"It is about knowing the right chain of communication and how to be self-sufficient in times of disaster," Loree said.

Loree said she has contacted the City of Sunnyvale to conduct training on earthquake

preparedness, since other than severe weather, earthquakes are the biggest disaster risk in California.

"We want to be ready as soon as we can," she said.

Vanessa said the concern for preparedness began in earnest when Hurricane Katrina struck the Gulf Coast in 2005, and the destruction of a skilled-nursing facility there hit home.

"We're trying to get the staff ready. In the event it happens in any shift," she said.

One of the goals is to have supplies for the facility to sustain itself far beyond the recommended 72 hours prescribed by experts. Vanessa said the goal for SHCC is the ability to function without outside help for a week.

There are planned disaster and fire drills, and training for the foreseeable future.

"It's all going on this year," Vanessa said.



Continued to NINE

# SHCC'S NINTH BIRTHDAY



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tation as a facility that takes good care of its residents. We need to grow that some more."

Vanessa added that the team in place, including additions in social services and nursing, has put them on the best footing they've had in the company's history.

"We found a lot of the players we've been looking for a long time," she said.

Said Hermie: "Really for the first time out of the years, we have a much more solid team. We're stronger with all the training we're doing. I feel pretty good about it."

Hermie said education has been a strong focus for SHCC, with ongoing training for staff. Now that a good foundation is in place, she said, it's time to start ironing out every wrinkle.

"We have to keep working to have no deficiencies and have a steady flow of patients, to get to our maximum potential," she said.

Still, as the facility closed the chapter on year nine, there is a lot to reflect on and appreciate.

"From an empty building, we have been doing very well and we want to celebrate that."

## *New faces, new leadership roles in place as company solidifies team for the future*

Some new faces and an already familiar face have stepped into new roles at Sunnyvale Health Care Center in what the management team hopes will push the facility toward an even brighter future.

Vanessa Chavez successfully completed a two-part state and national administrator licensing exam and will be transitioning into a larger leadership role under the tutelage of Executive Director Herminia Chavez.

"I'm excited. It's going to be a big challenge," Vanessa said.

She says preparing for the move has allowed her to see the facility with new eyes.

"I have a greater understanding of what

everyone does, how the building functions," Vanessa said. "It gives me a greater respect for what everyone contributes to the facility as a whole."

Her move leaves a vacancy in her previous position, a spot that staff say will be ably filled by RN Aileen Vargas as assistant director of clinical education.

"She's young and energetic and will bring a lot to clinical education," Vanessa said of her successor. "She's fitting in very well."

Aileen will oversee staff training, orientation and monitor areas like infection control, staff practices, all while working closely with nursing staff.

The other new face roaming the halls of SHCC is Andrea Ponce, who serves as social services assistant with department head Cloreece Freeman. Andrea brings with her a Master of Social Work degree.

"Her background is going to be a big asset," Vanessa said. "And she's very sweet and good with our residents."

## Upcoming Events Spring 2011

### APRIL

28:  
Candlelight dinner

### MAY

6 - 12:  
National Nurses  
Week

8:  
Mother's Day brunch

8 - 14:  
National Nursing  
Home Week

19:  
Santa Clara  
Senior Roundtable

26:  
Candlelight dinner

### JUNE

8:  
Mountain View  
Chamber of

Commerce  
Mixer

19:  
Father's Day  
Belly Dancers Show

30:  
Candlelight dinner

### JULY

28:  
Sunnyvale Member  
Mixer

# Wii program has residents swinging away



Residents at SHCC have taken up bowling, all without having to leave the confines of the rehabilitation center.

With the introduction

of the Wii activity program, introduced in December, video games have been incorporated into the facility's physical therapy regimen with

rave reviews.

"They like it and enjoy the program," said activities director Nelrose Ramirez.

Nelrose said the

weekly games provide a fun and engaging way of improving mobility in the upper extremities and increasing dexterity. The clear favorite is Wii bowling, where the wand-like remote control

tracks velocity and lateral movement so that the bowling ball on-screen mimics what would happen in real life.

That means to bowl a strike, it takes more than just a strong swing of the remote; backspin, side spin and the timing of your release are all key.

"They know how to aim and know how to move their fingers just right," Nelrose said. "It's about positioning yourself where you're going to throw."

While the sports suite is king, residents also play a variety of other party games. Male residents have fashioned their own men's club where they pit their virtual and real skills against each other.

And many who have gone home after their stay at SHCC continue to play at home, Nelrose said.

"They're using it for the long term," she said.

## REHAB CORNER: Fall prevention

By Susan Elias, Director of rehabilitation

Falls are accidents, they can't be prevented, right? Wrong!

Consider six simple fall prevention strategies.

### Ask your doctor:

- Prescription and over-the-counter medications you take which may increase your fall risk as a result of side effects or interactions

- Details surrounding falls or "near falls" including when, where and how

- Health conditions which may contribute to

a fall such as vision problems, dizziness/vertigo, joint pain, numbness in your feet, shortness of breath or urgency to get to the bathroom

### Keep moving.

If you are afraid to engage in low-impact activities such as walking, water exercise or tai chi, tell your doctor. He or she may refer you to a supervised exercise facility or to a physical therapist for a custom exercise program. Staying active improves strength, balance, coordination and flexibility, thereby de-

creasing your fall risk.

### Sensible shoes.

Avoid walking in socks, high heels, floppy slippers or shoes, slick or extra thick soles and slippers. Instead, buy properly fitting sturdy shoes with non skid soles and secure fasteners. Have your feet measured to ensure proper fit. Women with wide feet should try men's shoes.

### Remove hazards:

- Obstacles such as clutter, furniture, cords
- Use nonslip mats in bathtub and shower
- Loose rugs. If neces-

sary, secure with slip resistant backing or double-faced tape.

### Light living space:

- Use nightlights in bedroom, bathroom and hallways
- Use illuminated light switches and clear the path to any switches that aren't near room entrances
- Turn on easy-to-reach lamp before getting out of bed and turn light on before going up or down stairs
- Store flashlights in easy-to-reach locations for use in the event of a

power outage.

### Use assistive devices:

- These include handrails, grab bars, raised toilet seats, shower/tub chairs, handheld shower hoses, canes or walkers.
- If you need help with determining if any of these devices would make you safer, ask your doctor to order a home safety evaluation from a home health agency.

To read the complete article and links: [www.mayoclinic.com/health/fall-prevention/HQ00657](http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/fall-prevention/HQ00657)

## HEALTH CORNER: UTI in the elderly

By Linh Mata, RN Director of nursing

UTI is the most common leading infection in the elderly, particularly women. They are more likely to develop UTIs because of hormonal changes (less estrogen in women), immunocompromised condi-

tions, urinary catheter placement, incontinence and problems with emptying their bladder, causing urine to retain and creating a breeding place for bacteria.

With elderly patients, the infection does not manifest any obvious signs and symptoms.

The most common sign of UTI noted in the elderly is behavioral changes or acute confusion. Other common signs would be fatigue and loss of appetite.

It is always worth it to consider that behavioral changes are likely due to infection and

need to be evaluated. In order to evaluate and determine the effective antibiotic treatment, a urine sample is collected for testing and culture for presence of microorganisms.

One of the most challenging and inexpensive ways to prevent UTI is

to drink plenty of fluids, as most of the elderly will limit this to avoid frequent trips to the bathroom. Other measures are drinking cranberry juice, proper perineal hygiene and for those at risk to urinate when they feel the urge.

# You CAN go home again: SHCC pioneer returns as resident

By Loni Reeder

Since August of 2010, perhaps you may have noticed a spunky, elderly lady with a flower in her hair and a twinkle in her eye sitting in the lobby of Sunnyvale Health Care Center – she's probably waved at you, greeted you – probably told you she loved you and maybe even kissed your hand.

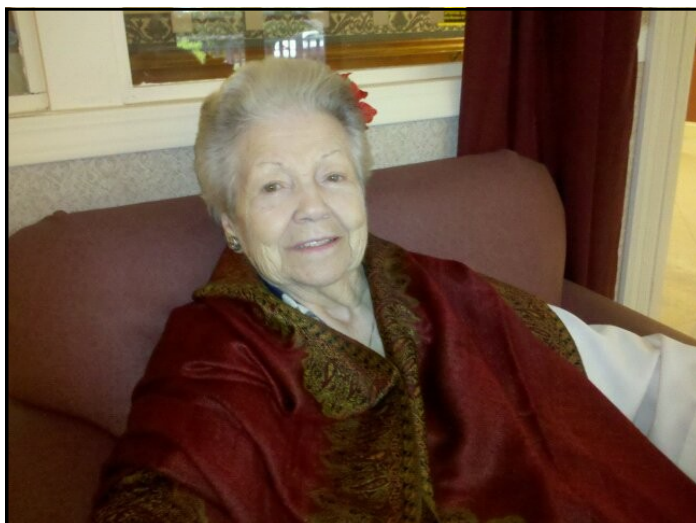
She may have even declared to you, "I own this place!" to which you may have given her a smile and a compassionate nod – but in reality, that was at one time the absolute truth!

In the 1960s, the word 'entrepreneur' had yet to become a term that is now pretty much mainstream when we speak of visionaries, but most definitely, my parents, Allan and Lorean Reeder, were just that in their desire to revolutionize the caliber of nursing home care in the state of California.

There was a very definite look and feel about nursing homes in the 1960s and in all the years prior which would send chills down the spines of anyone facing that possibility for themselves or their loved ones.

Clinical; sterile; unfeeling; uncaring. Staff in starch-white uniforms – walls without color or personality.

It was my parents' vision to change all of that – to bring love, beauty, bright colors and dignity to a time in life where people are dismissed and discarded simply for their age – to create an environment less frightening to loved ones and residents, and in 1968, the first of



three of their visions came to life when they opened Greenridge Heights Convalescent Hospital in El Sobrante (now known as Greenridge Senior Care).

Shortly after that in 1969, they opened Sunnyvale Convalescent Hospital (now known, of course, as Sunnyvale Health Care Center) – and then later, in the mid 1970s, they founded and opened the first retirement community in Santa Clara named for my mother and myself (Villa Lo Rae Retirement Center – now known as Villa Serena).

I remember the Sunnyvale facility being a great challenge to get off the ground: To assemble the right group of investors (which my father did with three doctors: Dr. Register, Dr. Jones and Dr. Roth); To deal with the Sunnyvale "founding fathers" and the keepers of the building permits – but even more so, to be able to build on such an odd-shaped parcel of land. As you all can see first-hand, the architect did an amazing job!

What you now know

as the dining room at the front of the building was originally called "The Traffic Watching Room": long couches faced the giant windows, and people would go there and sit and socialize and watch the world from a beautiful vantage point.

Originally, the floors throughout were carpeted. There was a green wing and a blue wing, with the blue wing being the first hallway as you enter from the lobby – blue indoor/outdoor carpeting and green/gold carpeting for the other long hallway.

Staff was encouraged to wear colorful smocks and beautiful pictures adorned the walls. My father became Sunnyvale's first administrator – and my mother, the Director of Housekeeping. They hired an amazing gourmet chef, Mr. Ray, to oversee the kitchen and dietary needs of the residents.

My first part-time job after school was folding

sheets and towels and gowns in the laundry area. I remember the occasional midnight run to the facility, as my parents were very hands-on to make sure that staff was on the job.

My parents' primary concern at all times was the health, dignity and well being

of each and every resident.

Holidays were very difficult for some of the residents, so we would always spend part of Christmas and Thanksgiving there and make special moments for Mother's Day and Father's Day.

My father received a



letter from then-Governor Ronald Reagan, thanking him for his efforts to help change the face of nursing homes and for raising awareness to the value of our senior community.

My parents eventually retired to Chico and my father passed away in 2000. Shortly after that, I moved my mom back

down here to be closer to me. Up until last year, she was doing pretty well health-wise – but congestive heart failure and mild dementia are a sad combination, along with advancing age (she is now 91).

When decisions needed to be made for her care, there was never any question in my mind that I would bring her back "home" to Sunnyvale Health Care Center.

My decision was further reinforced by the caliber of the amazing Chavez family, who have raised the bar in what stellar nursing home and rehabilitative care should be everywhere. They have beautifully, compassionately, lovingly and skillfully taken SHCC to a whole other level and have exceeded every hope my father had for this facility.

I am thankful, blessed and pleased that my mother's final days are being spent here and forever grateful for the amazing love and care she has been given since being here. She always says to me when she looks around the facility, "I live in a beautiful home."

This beauty has been proven to not just be in the facility, but in every person who works at SHCC. You too are leaving your own mark every day and leaving a legacy of love in every act of kindness you display in your jobs. Never think that people don't notice; they do! My deepest thanks to everyone at SHCC for keeping my parents' vision alive and well, 40 years later.