

AGING & independence

COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY
AGING & INDEPENDENCE SERVICES

Energy, Balance, Introspection: Older Adults Embrace Tai Chi

By Kim Gallo
Director, Aging & Independence Services

Studying martial arts has been a way of life for Jasz Bulan since middle school. Over the past decade and a half, Jasz has practiced a variety of forms, but tai chi has become her favorite. Tai chi is a thousand-year-old Chinese martial art form that focuses on slow, controlled movements, intentional breathing, and meditation. Jasz values “the stillness, introspection, and internal work of tai chi.” She explains that during a sequence of movements, called forms, one “puts intent into small moments... where each of my hands is, my weight, my balance...all of these things are choices.” While tai chi’s movements may be small or subtle, people who practice tai chi can see big benefits—especially older adults who are looking to prevent falls or ease discomfort from arthritis.

Aging & Independence Services (AIS) has been offering tai chi courses for the past several years. These class series are “evidence based” with research suggesting that participation in the courses improves movement, balance, strength, flexibility, and reduced risk of falls, among other benefits. Currently, AIS offers both in-person and virtual tai chi classes.

Helen, 71, had taken in-person tai chi classes for many years, but she was glad to discover the virtual option

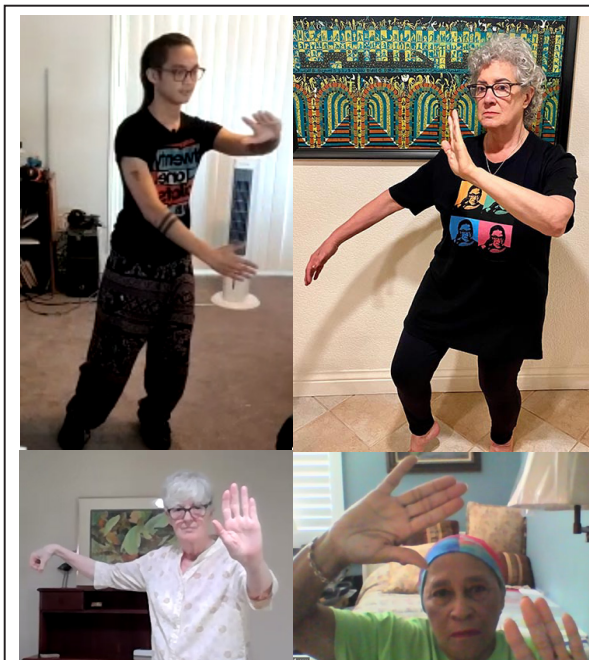
through AIS in the fall of 2020. With so much uncertainty and most things at a standstill during the height of the pandemic, Helen appreciated “an activity to look forward to and schedule. We could rely on this.” While in-person tai chi classes are now an option, as a resident of North County Helen continues to appreciate the accessibility of virtual classes.

Mika, 69, also takes the virtual tai chi class. She says, “I started about a year ago because I know how dangerous falls are to seniors, especially women. I don’t want to fall. I’ve taken every class I could since.”

Both Mika and Helen have found that Jasz is the perfect guide on their tai chi journey. “Jasz has an ability to communicate, explaining the moves in a way that makes sense,” Mika says. “It is an experience. You know

Jasz’s mind is right there with yours.” Helen agrees and adds, “Jasz brings a fresh perspective...I don’t feel like it is an ‘exercise routine’ but an ‘evolving skill.’”

Tai chi is well suited to people with various health or balance concerns. For instance, Helen faces some health challenges, including a condition that causes vertigo and osteoporosis. As she recovered from an abdominal



Instructor Jasz Bulan demonstrates tai chi during a virtual class (upper left). Mika practices tai chi at home (upper right). Susan (lower left) and Lorise (lower right) attend a virtual tai chi class offered by Aging & Independence Services.

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surgery, Helen was able to continue taking classes because Jasz always includes options, such as participating from a seated position. Jasz's accessible approach allows people with diverse health or mobility needs to feel comfortable joining her class. Jasz urges students to "trust your own senses, trust your own pain receptors, and if something aches or hurts, ask me how to adjust."

While Jasz teaches both in-person and virtual classes, she is glad that the virtual classes are available as they allow those with transportation or mobility barriers to benefit from tai chi. "It is a service for people who can't get out on their own or who have difficulty standing up or getting into a car," Jasz explains. While the internet has no shortage of pre-recorded instructional videos, the live virtual option brings a dimension that is missing. Helen notes, "Recordings lack the human interaction" which allows for customized instruction and modifications. Mika agrees: "I've sampled at least a dozen online tai chi classes. There isn't anything that's been comparable in quality."

Mika has noticed a variety of discernible benefits since she began consistently practicing tai chi: "I'm more limber and more energetic." She also has more confidence. "If I stub my toe... I don't worry as much about falling because I know what to do with my feet and move them differently than I used to." Mika was able to put her new skills to the test on a trip to Iceland. "There was lots of snow and steep places to climb, but I noticed that I was using the balance stances that Jasz taught me. Even though I was on some very slippery terrain, I didn't fall once."

Helen has learned "not to be on autopilot." She is "learning how to move the whole body" and being mindful of the way she turns and moves. Helen especially appreciates

the cognitive aspects of tai chi practice: "I learn something new every day. Some people do crosswords...tai chi has aspects of mental exercise, visualization, and thinking ahead."

While tai chi is the perfect activity for many older adults who are looking to remain strong, limber, and cognitively sharp, it can still be intimidating to try something for the first time. Mika encourages newcomers to try a class and then stick with it. She notes, "We all look like older people doing something for the first time." Mika adds, "but I can do it, though it isn't easy. You aren't going to learn it instantly. You have to want to do it." Jasz agrees that tai chi can be available to anyone "so long as they are willing to learn a little bit of patience."

And while the benefits are great, there are always the usual barriers to overcome—whether it is making the time in a busy schedule or fighting inertia to get moving in the morning. Mika jokes, "It is a real tribute to Jasz that I set my alarm and get up earlier than usual for class!"

Join Jasz or one of AIS's other excellent instructors at an in-person or virtual class. For details, visit www.healthierlivingsd.org, email HealthierLiving.HHSA@sdcounty.ca.gov, or call (858) 495-5500.

NEW TAI CHI CLASS IN NORTH COUNTY

People of all abilities are invited to join AIS for the *Tai Chi for Arthritis and Fall Prevention* class series. There is no cost to participate. Classes are held twice weekly (Tues. and Thurs. from 9:20-10:20 a.m.) at the Park Avenue Community Center, 210 East Park Avenue, Escondido 92025. Email HealthierLiving.HHSA@sdcounty.ca.gov, or call (858) 495-5500.

HELP ADDRESS SOCIAL ISOLATION

Join the Age Well San Diego Social Participation Team to help address social isolation in our region! Age Well San Diego is the community-driven component of the County of San Diego's age-friendly action plan. The Team will be focusing on the following three goals:

- ***Increase older adults' access to technology and promote digital literacy training resources***
- ***Implement and expand enriching social engagement and learning opportunities that are cross-cultural, intergenerational, and appropriate for individuals of all abilities.***
- ***Increase awareness of the negative impacts of social isolation for older adults and people of all ages and highlight the benefits of meaningful, culturally diverse, and accessible opportunities for social connection.***

Older adults and professionals are welcome. To learn more, contact Armida at Armida.Martinez@sdcounty.ca.gov.

In the COMMUNITY

CARE MANAGEMENT: MULTI-PURPOSE SENIOR SERVICE PROGRAM

Sometimes staying independent in one's home means getting help. That extra help with bill paying, shopping, laundry, and other tasks can keep someone from needing to live in a nursing home. If you or a loved one are age 65+, eligible for Medi-Cal, and need assistance to continue living safely at home, consider applying for the Multipurpose Senior Services Program (MSSP). MSSP care managers work with the client, family members, and medical team to find and coordinate services in the home. Through the timely use of services, MSSP protects frail older adults and helps them live at home for longer.



Care management services include: a comprehensive health and psychosocial assessment; care planning with the client and family; arrangement of services; coordination of care with other community agencies; some limited payment of in-home services; monthly phone contact; quarterly home visits; and ongoing monitoring/phone contacts as needed.

For more information on MSSP or to apply, contact the AIS Call Center at **(800) 339-4661** M-F from 8 a.m.-5 p.m.

HICAP AVAILABLE FOR CONSULTATION DURING MEDICARE ANNUAL ENROLLMENT PERIOD

The Medicare Annual Enrollment Period is from October 15th through December 7th. During this time, you can join, change, or drop a Part C Medicare Advantage plan, or Part D prescription drug plan. Any coverage change you make will take effect January 1st.

The Health Insurance Counseling & Advocacy Program (HICAP) provides free and unbiased help to Medicare beneficiaries. HICAP Counselors are available by phone at **(800) 434-0222** (toll free) or **(858) 565-8772**, Monday - Friday, 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.

TOOL TO LOCATE QUALITY ASSISTED LIVING

Accepting that a loved one can no longer be safely cared for at home can be difficult. For those who are looking to identify quality assisted living facilities, Choose Well may be able to help. Choose Well is a free, innovative, web-based program



sponsored by the County of San Diego that helps older adults and their families make informed decisions when selecting assisted living facilities. Visit <https://choosewellsandiego.org> to discover specially evaluated Choose Well facilities that have voluntarily agreed to be scored on 11 measures of quality.

AFFORDABLE INTERNET FOR QUALIFYING HOUSEHOLDS

The Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) is a U.S. government program that helps many low income households pay for broadband service and Internet connected devices. Those who participate in certain government assistance programs (e.g., Medi-Cal, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), etc.) or the Lifeline phone benefit are eligible for ACP. You are also eligible if your income is 200% or less than the Federal Poverty Guidelines (\$27,180 for a 1-person household or \$36,620 for a 2-person household). If eligible, you could receive a discount of up to \$30/month on your Internet service through a participating provider in your area and a one-time discount of up to \$100 for a laptop, tablet, or desktop computer (with a co-payment of more than \$10 but less than \$50). To learn more about ACP or to apply, visit www.affordableconnectivity.gov. For more information and additional resources for getting connected to the Internet in San Diego County, visit <https://getconnected.sandag.org>.

VOLUNTEER OF THE MONTH

Klint Gill of the Coronado Police Department's Senior Volunteer Patrol (SVP) unit is the Retired & Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) Volunteer of the Month for November 2022. Klint joined the SVP six years ago and quickly assumed many duties.

Klint is an active member of the Emergency Call Out team and can always be counted on to be ready day or night to respond to an emergency. He also serves in a leadership capacity for the majority of the Coronado Police Department's special events. In addition, Klint provides key support to the District Attorney (DA) weekly signing activities which frees up officers to focus on other key responsibilities. Klint is recognized as an experienced volunteer who is skilled at understanding requirements and sharing his knowledge and thus has become a crucial member of the Field Training Team to train new recruits. He is a real asset in helping other SVP members get reacquainted with operations and providing on-the-job training and guidance.



Klint Gill

In his six years of service, Klint has put in more than 475 days and 2,000 hours, despite the prolonged SVP shutdown during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. Since operations restarted from the shutdown, Klint has consistently worked three shifts a week. This level of commitment regularly puts him as one of the top three members in total hours worked and patrols completed.

Klint's commitment to the Coronado SVP has earned him the respect of his colleagues. One shared: "Klint is so deserving of his Presidential Gold and Silver Volunteer Awards and the accolades he has received at SVP recognition events which highlight all that he does for the SVP program." Others remarked: "I've learned a lot from Klint. I always enjoy our conversations. He has some good ideas and thoughts which help keep me on my toes to learn more!" and "He is a total joy to work with."

Klint can always be counted on to get the job done while providing keen input on how to improve operations within the SVP. He is treasured by the SVP, Police Department, and the City of Coronado. Congratulations, Klint!

CONGRATULATIONS TO SENIOR GLEANERS

Senior Gleaners of San Diego County was recently chosen by the Johnson & Johnson Western Regional Retiree Association as the recipient of a \$3,000 grant for their work to support the health of older adults.

Senior Gleaners is a non-profit organization that collects surplus fruit and vegetables from residents' gardens and fruit trees, as well as grocery stores, and distributes them to organizations that provide food to residents in need. Not only does the organization address food insecurity for seniors (and people of all ages), but their volunteers are seniors too. By offering volunteer opportunities, Senior Gleaners contributes to older adults' health and wellbeing by helping volunteers to remain active and engaged in the community with a sense of purpose.

Grant funds will be used to buy additional ladders and gasoline to support gleaning activities. For details on how to volunteer with Senior Gleaners, or to explore additional volunteer opportunities, email **Armida.Martinez@sdcounty.ca.gov** or call **(858) 505-6399**.



MORE THAN A MEAL: SENIOR NUTRITION CENTERS



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VISIT A NUTRITION SITE

Using funding from the Older Americans Act, AIS contracts with several nutrition centers to provide hot, nutritious lunches during the week, for adults age 60 and older. The program integrates nutritional standards into their meals, available Monday through Friday for lunch, and breakfast at select locations. In addition to promoting better nutrition, these dining centers reduce isolation for many older adults who may live alone. Some programs offer transportation to and from their dining site. To find a nutrition site near you, visit www.aging.sandiegocounty.gov, click on “Services,” and then select “Meals & Senior Dining.” You may also call 2-1-1 to learn about additional food resources.

MEXICAN INDEPENDENCE DAY AT THE FALLBROOK SENIOR CENTER

This year there was quite a fiesta at the Fallbrook Senior Center to celebrate Mexican Independence Day! Older adults and other attendees enjoyed a special lunch of tamales, rice, beans, and flan for dessert. Mariachi musicians and folklórico dancers entertained Senior Center guests, and after lunch, many older adults made their way to the dance floor to join in the festive spirit!



BECOME A “DEMENTIA FRIEND”

In honor of National Alzheimer’s Awareness Month, in November AIS is partnering with community and senior centers to offer free, in-person Dementia Friends Sessions. In these interactive one-hour sessions you will learn: common signs and symptoms of Alzheimer’s disease/dementia; what it is like to live with dementia; communication tips; and how you can join efforts to make our region more dementia-friendly. Attend one of the following sessions:

Wednesday, November 16, 9-10 a.m. at the Norman Park Senior Center, 270 F Street Chula Vista 91910

Wednesday, November 16, 10-11 a.m. at the La Mesa Adult Enrichment Center, 8450 La Mesa Blvd., La Mesa 91942

Thursday, November 18, 1-2 p.m. at Park De La Cruz Community Center, 3901 Landis Street, San Diego 92105

Wednesday, November 30, 1-2 p.m. virtually on Zoom

To RSVP, visit www.surveymonkey.com/r/DementiaFriendsSD. Contact: Toni-Ann.Simpelo2@sdcounty.ca.gov.

PREPARE FOR WINTER: GET A COVID BOOSTER AND A FLU SHOT

County public health officials are renewing their call for San Diegans to get vaccinated and boosted against COVID-19 as the colder months are upon us. The Moderna and Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 bivalent BA.4/BA.5 variant vaccines (“bivalent boosters”) were designed to protect individuals from the worst outcomes of COVID-19, including hospitalization and death, as well as the BA.4 and BA.5 Omicron subvariants. For more information on eligibility or to find a vaccine site near you, visit www.coronavirus-sd.com.

The flu season has arrived early this year with more than 2,500 San Diegans already diagnosed with lab-confirmed tests as of October 25. County health officials are encouraging San Diegans to get a flu shot to protect themselves and their loved ones. The flu vaccine is available at doctors’ offices and retail pharmacies and is covered by medical insurance. People with no health care coverage can get vaccinated at one of the County’s six public health centers or a local community clinic. To find the nearest public health center location, call **2-1-1**.

VIRTUAL HEALTHIER LIVING CLASSES

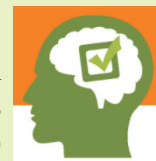
Offered by Aging & Independence Services, these free, interactive, and goal-oriented workshops focus on support, skill development, and building confidence to manage conditions, such as arthritis, depression, heart disease, or diabetes.

Virtual Class Dates: 11/8, 11/15, 11/22, 12/6, 12/13 (Tuesdays), 9 - 11:30 am via ZOOM.

To register, visit <https://bit.ly/virtualhealthierliving>. For more details, email HealthierLiving.HHSA@sdcounty.ca.gov or call (858) 495-5500.

MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

Good mental health starts with you! How are you feeling? Taking care of your mental health is an important part of managing your overall health and wellbeing. Experiencing mental health challenges can feel lonely, isolating, or hopeless at times. However, many people (1 in 5 adults in the San Diego) are living with mental health challenges and most of those people recover.



There are a variety of tools that can help you get well, including medication, talk therapy, group support, self-directed wellness plans, and many other options. The sooner you reach out for support and start using the tools that work for you, the better your outcome is likely to be. Free mental health resources and information are available through San Diego’s It’s Up to Us campaign at www.up2sd.org/resources/resource-guide/. Help is also available 24/7 through the Access and Crisis Line at (888) 724-7240.

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Please note: To ensure a timely and relevant calendar, the online and printed versions of this calendar may vary.

NOVEMBER 17, THURSDAY 5:30-6:45 P.M.

A free virtual class, *Managing Money: A Caregiver's Guide to Finances*, will be hosted by the Alzheimer's Association. If you or someone you know is facing dementia or another chronic illness, it's never too early to make financial plans. Learn tips for managing someone else's finances, how to prepare for future care costs, and the benefits of early planning. To RSVP, visit www.alz.org/events and click on "Educational Programs" or call (800) 272-3900.

DECEMBER 2, FRIDAY 11 A.M.

A *Social Media Workshop* will be hosted by San Diego Oasis and Cox Communications at the Oasis Tech Tank, 5500 Grossmont Center Dr., #269, La Mesa 91942. Hear an overview of popular social media platforms: Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and TikTok. Stay connected with your family, friends, and current events. You must have a free MyOasis account to take this class (sign up on the website). Bring your fully charged device or use a loaner tablet). Cost: \$5. Visit www.sandiegooasis.org or call (619) 881-6262 to RSVP.

DECEMBER 5, MONDAY 11 A.M.-12 P.M.

A free *Legacy Letter Writing Workshop* will be offered by Sharp Grossmont Hospital at the Herrick Library 9001 Wakarusa St., La Mesa 91942. Find out how to write

a legacy letter to leave for your loved ones at this free seminar. To RSVP, visit www.sharp.com/classes or call (800) 827-4277.

DECEMBER 7, WEDNESDAY 1-3 P.M.

Make last minute holiday gifts during the *Craft Smörgåsbord!* event at the San Marcos Library, 2 Civic Center Dr., San Marcos CA 92069. Help clear the library's closets as you make gifts and decor. All supplies provided. Space is limited. To RSVP, call the Library at (760) 891-3000 and select option 3.

DECEMBER 8, THURSDAY 9:30-11 A.M.

A free *Bilingual Brain Health Community Forum* will be hosted by the Alzheimer's Association in conjunction with AARP at the Norman Park Center, 270 F St., Chula Vista 91910. Share your experience with Alzheimer's disease and discuss how the Association can best serve your community. There will be interactive activities with content in both English and Spanish. Refreshments will be provided. RSVP online or at 1.800.272.3900 or visit www.alz.org/sandiego/events and click on "Educational Programs."

DECEMBER 9, FRIDAY 10-11:30 A.M.

A free workshop, *Safety at Home*, will be hosted by Alzheimer's San Diego at the Scripps Miramar Branch Library, 10301 Scripps Lake Drive, San Diego 92131. Learn important home safety tips to keep people living with memory loss safe and well at home. Reduce the risk of wandering, falls, household injuries, medication

errors, and more. To RSVP, visit www.alzsd.org/services/education or call (858) 492-4400.

DECEMBER 13, TUESDAY 10-11 A.M.

A free *Transportation Options for Seniors* class will be offered by Sharp Grossmont Hospital at the La Mesa Adult Enrichment Center, 8450 La Mesa Blvd., La Mesa 91942. Learn about the transportation options available to seniors in our community. To RSVP, visit www.sharp.com/classes or call (800) 827-4277.

DECEMBER 14, WEDNESDAY 1:30-3:30 P.M.

A *Non-Fiction Book Club* meeting will be held at the Borrego Springs Library, 2580 Country Club Rd., Borrego Springs 92004. Join other non-fiction book lovers for a discussion of Arlie Hochschild's *Strangers In Their Own Land*. For details or to register, call (760) 767-5761.

DECEMBER 16, FRIDAY 1 P.M.

A class, *Blue Christmas: When Your Holiday is Neither Merry nor Bright* (course #469), will be held both online and at San Diego Oasis, 5500 Grossmont Center Dr., #269, La Mesa 91942. Explore a way to make the Christmas holiday meaningful and constructive even when we are down. Cost: \$15. Visit www.sandiegooasis.org or call (619) 881-6262 to RSVP.

SEND IN YOUR ITEMS

We welcome your contributions to this monthly calendar. Email sarah.jackson@sdcounty.ca.gov.

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