



## Employee Monthly Newsletter

### HONORING OUR VETERANS



View the complete event at: <https://bit.ly/3GPEbzo>



**Veteran of the Year**  
**George Smith**



**Patriots of the Year**  
**Wendy Weller & Andrew Trapani**



**Enterprise of the Year**  
**Veteran Surf Alliance**

The San Mateo County Veterans Commission hosted the 7th Annual Veterans Recognition Event at the Westin SFO Hotel on November 10th in front of nearly 300 attendees. This years honorees included the 2022 Veteran of the Year (George Smith), Patriots of the Year (Wendy Weller and Andrew Trapani), Enterprise of the Year (Veteran Surf Alliance) and Lifetime Achievement (Congresswoman Jackie Speier).

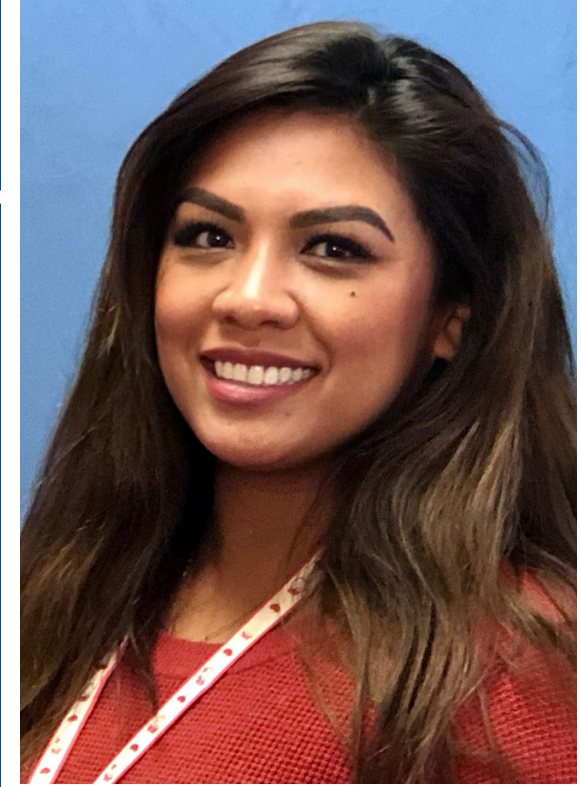
**George Smith** is the embodiment of duty and service – first as veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps where he served honorably in Vietnam in 1966. After his Marine Corps service, Smith became a San Mateo firefighter and also was the consummate volunteer working on behalf of veterans and veteran causes ever since his honorable discharge. He has been active in the American Legion Post 105 in Redwood City, where he currently serves as post commander, the American Legion Riders and the Marine Corps League. Of particular note, during the COVID-19 pandemic, Smith worked to ensure that Final Honors for veterans were given at the funerals of all Marines and FMF Corpsmen in San Mateo, San Francisco, Marin and Sacramento counties when requested.

**Wendy Weller and Andrew Trapani** embody the patriotic spirit as volunteers for veterans and their families. They have participated in over 148 Final Honors for veterans and their families, helping them during their time of grief. As members of the Patriot Guard Riders, Warrior Watch Riders and the American Legion Riders, they have proudly escorted veterans (along with their family members) to their final resting place, honoring them with a flag line at the end. Weller and Trapani volunteer about 1,200 hours a year for this service to veterans.

The **Veteran Surf Alliance** has a chapter that meets at Linda Mar Beach in Pacifica. This volunteer run Santa Cruz-based nonprofit creates fellowship and community among veterans through surfing, easing the transition between military service and civilian living. They accomplish this by teaching, coaching and mentoring veterans to surf and be respected members of their communities, providing access to surfboards, vital equipment, routine surf meetups and annual events. In short, they help veterans to find the same type of camaraderie they had while serving in the military with members of their community.

GET TO  
KNOW

## EMPLOYEE HIGHLIGHT SAMAY CHHUN



Samay Chhun is a Public Services Specialist with the County Veteran Services Office (CVSO). When veterans connect with the CVSO, Samay is the first contact they make prior to meeting with a Veterans Services Representative (VSR). Samay is dedicated to public service and is passionate about spreading the word to all veterans about their benefits. She understands it's important to clearly explain to veterans and to their families how the CVSO can help them.

"Veterans who come to our office typically have their claims triaged by me", says Samay. "It could be a simple service, like assisting with a California driver's license, or it might involve scheduling an appointment if a veteran wants to discuss their claim in further detail.

I will ask the veteran as many questions as I can, so the VSR will be aware of the kind of claim the veteran intends to submit."

Samay believes that communication is the key to success at the CVSO. The entire team is in constant communication with one other and guides their clients every step of the way in order to ensure all veterans in San Mateo County have access to their benefits. Because Samay often handles calls and appointments, she takes detailed notes, so all members of the CVSO team are aware of the needs of each veteran and their families. Samay also stays up-to-date with new claim filings and changes at the Veterans Administration.

Samay is honored to be assisting veterans who have given so much to us so we can enjoy our freedom and liberty. "I'm deeply proud that I can assist all veterans in San Mateo County. Numerous clients express their gratitude and let me know how much we have helped them. I am grateful to my coworkers and supervisor for assisting in my growth as a public service specialist", says Samay.

Veteran Services Manager, Ed Kiryczun says, "From day one, Samay buried herself in all the handbooks and VA literature we gave her and, most importantly, she immediately learned to understand and empathize with our veterans and their families. She provides a solid first impression to our veterans, and establishes a strong and trusted relationship with them. This in turn makes a huge difference in our client success when she passes them onto our Veterans Services Representatives. Samay is a great resource to our office and our County's veterans."

### FUN FACT



- Uses 4 different planners to manage work-life balance.
- Avid kickboxer - keeps her strong and healthy.
- Enjoys picking out new hiking spots to walk her dog.
- Loves to crochet and gives blankets out as gifts.





## DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

I hope the Thanksgiving Holiday and long weekend brought each of you a restful, enjoyable break and helped kick-start the holiday season. Each of us deserve time off and an extended chance to spend time with our family and friends. I am thankful always for the good work you do to assist our clients and help our agency fulfill its mission.

On any given holiday or weekend, I am especially thankful for the smaller number of HSA staff who are working the actual day. Particularly in our Children and Family Services we have our

Hotline, Emergency Response and Residential service teams. Our thanks to everyone at HSA who works on a major holiday like Thanksgiving Day.

This November Newsletter also highlights the celebration of Veterans Day 2022. The unique role and sacrifice of veterans in the history of our country, always deserves more attention and our deep appreciation and thanks.

## FINANCIAL SERVICES- STAFF RECOGNITION EVENT

The Financial Services Branch had an All Staff Employee Event on November 2, 2022. The day included a costume contest, bingo games, employee recognition announcements and team updates. The Financial Services Branch came out with full spirit and participation. The prize of "Best Group Costume" went to the Contracts and Procurement Team for their Jurassic Park theme. The day would not be complete without the wonderful catering services from the Catering Connection. A special thank you to the Financial Services Branch for their continued hard work and support to the Agency.



## EMPLOYMENT SERVICES - TEAM BUILDING

Employment Service's leadership came together for a team building exercise. This was not just a Holiday activity - they also learned several lessons on teamwork, change, environment and how to adapt with changes in the workforce. ES Director, Jennifer Valencia, said, "It was great to work together in person away from a computer...it's been awhile!"





## RACIAL EQUITY & INCLUSION SPOTLIGHT



On November 18th, HSA Outreach and Equity Team representatives participated in the San Mateo County TransACTION Day of Change in honor of Transgender Day of Remembrance (TDOR) at Courthouse Square, Redwood City. The event included booths with \*trans and gender-diverse resources and services, and programming that included a candlelight vigil honoring the 32 trans people murdered in 2022 simply for being themselves. The number of reported trans people who have been killed is likely an underrepresentation with disproportionate rates of violence experienced by black and brown trans women.

TransACTION focuses on ending the stigma that trans and gender-diverse people face and coincides with United Against Hate Week. Rejecting hatred, prejudice, racism, sexism, bigotry, bullying, or violence in any manner toward any individual regardless of race, ethnicity, disability, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, socioeconomic status, immigration status or country of origin. San Mateo County Stands United Against Hate in all forms and believes in building inclusive and equitable communities for all.

\*trans is an umbrella term often used as shorthand for transgender.

**SAN MATEO  
COUNTY  
STANDS  
UNITED  
AGAINST  
HATE**

- For more information on TDOR and trans-inclusive resources, please visit <https://www.smcgov.org/lgbtq/transgender-day-remembrance>
- You can download the [SMC United Against Hate poster](#) here to display in your office year around.
- Visit the [Glossary of Equity Terms](#) in the [Equity Resource Hub](#) for shared definitions and to learn more about them.



**YouMatter!**  
*Be healthy*  
SAN MATEO COUNTY WELLNESS

**Don't Forget!** The We Can! Weight Challenge and the Holiday Hold'em Challenge run from 11/1/22 – 1/11/23. To register and to get more information, please go to PreventionCloud at <https://preventioncloud.com/oauth/okta>.

New for 2023:

- A new Signature Initiative "Know Your Numbers" focusing on lowering blood pressure. Dates for Wellness Screenings and Blood Pressure Clinics coming soon!
- Wellness Grant Program – No application required. All departments and health divisions will receive a grant in January 2023.
- Updates to the Wellness Policy will be sent by the County Wellness Team.