

Serving More Than 50,000 Members



Alive!

LAPD CUSTODY SERVICES

Coming Into Their Own

Custody Services, critical but little known, is stepping up as a force within the force. And it's growing.

-PAGE 12



Rita Wrap-Up

Rita Robinson-Kane Interview Part 2!

- PAGE 10



Alive! photo by Summy Lam

From left: Sr. Detention Officer Corey Gravel, 6 years of City service, with Detention Officers Eric Ramirez, 12 years, Club Member, and Francis Navarro, 7 years, Club Member.



Celebrating the work and lives of public employees.

Employees Club of California
311 South Spring Street, Suite 1300
Los Angeles, CA 90013

SERVING
PUBLIC
EMPLOYEES
SINCE 1928

Undersea Savings!

Aquarium of the Pacific adult admissions: only

\$35.95!



GO TO: employeesclub.com

★★ VOTE FOR ★★

MIKE WILKINSON

FOR LACERS BOARD

“ I will continue the fight to keep LACERS financially sound. ”

- Mike Wilkinson



Email: mikewilkinson4LACERS@gmail.com

VOTE BY APRIL 11, 2025

Notice: The Employees Club of California does not endorse or sponsor this advertisement. The views and content expressed herein are solely those of the advertiser.

Out From the Shadow

ROBERT'S BLOG

by Robert Larios, CEO, The Club



The story of public service employees such as yourselves is usually one of obscurity – you are little known for the incredibly important work you do. That, of course, is why we publish *Alive!* every month, and indeed why the Employees Club even exists; we celebrate, honor and thank you for your dedication.

This month's cover story is a perfect example. We are delighted to tell you about LAPD's Custody Services – the old

Jail Division – and its professional, trained and efficient staff. We have not told you their story before in depth, and very few others have, either. It is certainly about time for them to come into their own.

Custody Services manages the LAPD's 10 jails and the arrestees they house between their arrest and their first court date. Detention Officers are tasked with caring for and maintaining the welfare of LAPD arrestees. Custody Services is growing in prominence and size, and it is hiring.

Sr. Detention Officer Mirna Perez, Club Member, invited *Alive!* to tell their important story, and offered us a day to visit when the prison was cleared of arrestees due to building maintenance. **Sr. Detention Officer Corey Gravel** and **Detention Officer Eric Ramirez**, Club Member, then led a tour of the modern Metropolitan Detention Center. We learned all about their duties so we could share them with you.

We honor and respect Detention Officers even more, now that we bring light to their service. That is the magic of *Alive!*, and the very mission of the Employees Club. Thank you for all you do, Custody Services!

Tell Us Your Story

Our feature on Custody Services began when Sr. Detention Officer Mirna Perez, Club Member, wrote to ask us if we could cover them. You can do the same! Do you have a story to tell? Contact *Alive!* at alive@employeesclub.com to begin the process.

Fire Response Continues

Have you been affected by the historic fires of January that devastated communities throughout Los Angeles? Don't hesitate to contact the Club Care Team, managed by the Club's **Lupe Lira**. We are still very much on the job, taking care of Members and public servants in need. **See page 16.**

Worth Considering

The path to your best self is built by investing in the treasures no one can take from you. Nurture your mindset, honor your character, stand tall in your integrity, shine with authenticity, lead with self-discipline, and radiate kindness. These are the roots of a life that thrives no matter what.

¡Gracias por leer!

Robert Larios

CEO



Club CEO Robert Larios (center) with (from left) Detention Officer Eric Ramirez, Club Member, and Sr. Detention Officer Esteban Guevara, Club Member.

At a recent Mobile Team site visit.



Raise employee morale! Schedule a Club Mobile visit!

The Club Mobile Team will bring benefits experts and Club legendary apparel for purchase at low prices (hats custom-made on site). It's one of the best ways for staff to feel appreciated. Your employees will be grateful!

To schedule a Club Mobile visit:

Scan the Code to Schedule a Visit
Or contact Lupe Lira, Director of Retail and Ecommerce: (213) 819-0350, or mobile@employeesclub.com

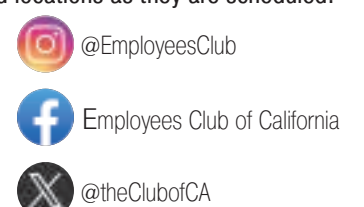


ATTENTION SUPERVISORS: Raise employee morale! Bring the Club to your worksite!

Club Mobile is cashless! For your convenience, now accepting major credit cards.



Follow Club social media for other days, times and locations as they are scheduled:



Monthly Anchors:

North Central Sanitation
452 N. San Fernando Rd.,
9 a.m. – 2 p.m.
The first Monday of every month:
Mon., April 7, May 5

Van Nuys City Hall
6262 Van Nuys Blvd.,
10 a.m. – 2 p.m.
Tues., April 1, May 6

Harbor
100 W. Fifth St.,
10 a.m. – 2 p.m.
The first Wednesday of every month:
Wed., April 2, May 7

North Hollywood StreetsLA
10811 Chandler Blvd.,
11 a.m. – 3 p.m.
The second Thursday of every month:
Thurs., April 10, May 8

City Hall Farmers Market
201 N. Main St.,
10 a.m. – 2 p.m.
The last Wednesday of every month:
Wed., April 30, May 28

Additional Visits:

Personnel
957 N. Gaffey St.,
noon – 4 p.m.
Wed., April 9

LADWP Chatsworth
9332 De Soto Ave.,
11 a.m. – 2 p.m.
Tues., April 15

LADWP Beaudry
233 S. Beaudry Ave.,
11 a.m. – 2 p.m.
Tues., April 22

Rec and Parks
4730 Crystal Springs Dr.,
11 a.m. – 2 p.m.
Thurs., April 24

StreetsLA Topanga
9324 Topanga Canyon Blvd.,
11 a.m. – 2 p.m.
Tues., April 29

LADWP 3rd Street
1230 W. 3rd St.,
11 a.m. – 2 p.m.
Wed., April 30



Alive! photo by Summy Lam

LAPD CUSTODY SERVICES

Coming Into Their Own

PAGE 12

COVER STORY:

Coming Into Their Own12-15

LAPD's Custody Services is a critical part of the City's police force.

STORIES

The Club

- Club video 'Along for the Ride' sets its YouTube world premiere for April 15 4
- Club honored 6 at recent annual luncheon. Meet them! 20
- The Association and Club Angels continues to serve those affected by the recent LA fires 16
- Applications for Club's Joannie Mukai Scholarship are now available. Deadline is 3 p.m. June 27, 2025 9

Airports

- LAX honors 14 for City service milestones. 23

Citywide

- Anna Sklar, veteran writer for several City departments, passed away in February 23
- In Part 2 of her interview, Retiree Rita Robinson-Kane talks about her time at LA County, and her legacy 10

Harbor

- Stephanie Magnien Rockwell named as Chief of Staff 6

Harbor, Airports

- Police departments welcome new Officers Ramos, Mansour .. 7

LACERS

- General Manager Neil Guglielmo, former Club Board Member, retires 4

LAFD

- Capt. II Andrew Ruiz is Firefighter of the Year 9

LAPD

- Dep. Chief Emada Tingirides moves her command to Central Bureau 7

LAPD, LAFD, Public Works

- Depts. shine behind the scenes during 2025 LA Marathon. . . . 9

Public Works

- Sanitation to host sixth annual Earth Day sustainability event. . 6
- Sanitation's popular open houses return for 2025 9

SECTIONS AND COLUMNS

- Alive!* Around the World 23
- Arlene on the Scene 17
- Club Mobile Schedule 2
- Club Sports 21
- Coloring Contest: For Kids 8
- Cooking 24
- Deaths: In Memoriam 22
- Insurance Corner 6
- LACERS 16
- Lifes Important Moments. 22
- Picture Perfect: Winners 17
- Retire Ready! 5
- Retirements Listing 22
- Retiree Plaque Presentations 11
- Robert's Blog: From the CEO 2
- Your Insurance Dollars at Work..... 7

FOR RETIREES:
RLACEI Pages 18-19

Get more *Alive!* content at alive.employeesclub.com

Library Top Ten Web

Advertiser's Index

- Mike Wilkinson for LACERS Board. 2
- Rosebud Marketing. 7
- Water and Power Community Credit Union 21

CLUB DEALS
FROM THE CLUB DEAL DESK

SAMSUNG

UP TO **30% OFF**

APPLE

UP TO **10% OFF**

Lenovo

UP TO **40% OFF**

EMPLOYEESCLUB.COM

FREE!* CLUB RETIREMENT PLAQUE

Retired or Retiring Soon?

Receive your own personalized Club Retirement Plaque, free! (You must be a Club Member for at least five consecutive years.)

***\$495 Value**

Get started here:



The Club
Is Here
to Help

Contact the Club

if you have an event you want covered in *Alive!*
or if you have questions about insurance.

help@employeesclub.com
(800) 464-0452

Alive!

Apr. 2025 • Volume 24 – No. 4

Alive! is the official publication of the
Employees Club of California

311 Spring St., Suite 1300
Los Angeles, CA 90013

TELEPHONE: (800) 464-0452

CONTACT US: admin@aliveemployeesclub.com

Alive! (USPS P7960) is published monthly,
12 times per year by the Employees Club of California,
311 Spring St., Suite 1300, Los Angeles, CA 90013.

ALIVE! EDITORIAL OFFICES:

311 Spring Street, Suite 1300,
Los Angeles CA, 90013 • (800) 464-0452

POSTAGE: Periodicals postage paid at Los Angeles, CA
and at additional mailing offices.

SUBSCRIPTIONS: Annual subscription price for *Alive!*
is included in the membership dues and is nondeductible.

POSTMASTER: Send address corrections to
Alive!, Employees Club of California, 311 Spring St.,
Suite 1300, Los Angeles, CA 90013.

Alive! Staff

Robert Larios, *Managing Editor*

John Burnes, *Editor*

Ronald Cortez and Natalia Guevara, *Editorial Assistants*

David Jamgotchian, JJLA Associates,
Design and Production

LACEA (Association) Board of Directors

Phillip Chou, *LADWP*

Jaqueline E. Koci Tamayo, *County of Santa Clara*

Carlos Rodriguez, *LADOT*

Andrew Virzi, III, *LADWP*

Capt. I Danny Wu, *LAFD*

**LACEA Insurance Services (The Club)
Board of Directors**

Terry Carter, *LAPD, Retired*

Marilyn Holley, *Public Works:
Bureau of Sanitation, Retired*

Rose Hyland, *Office of the Controller, Retired*

David Muraoka, *LAPD, Retired*

Rita Robinson, *County of LA, Retired*

Andrew Virzi Jr., *LADWP, Retired*

The opinions expressed in articles, photos, images and
responses contributed to the *Alive!* newspaper and Website, video
and social media by those outside the Club staff and vendors
are of the contributors, and not the Club. While the Club aims
to publish materials that are exceedingly enjoyable and enhancing
to Membership as part of the value we return to Club Members,
outside materials do not necessarily reflect those of the Club, its
staff and vendors or its Members.

In addition, the Club strives to publish only those elements that
are produced by the Club itself, are in the public domain, or whose
rights have been negotiated.

Club Members who have questions on these points may write
to: alive@employeesclub.com

Alive! does not accept advertising from persons or organiza-
tions believed to be unreliable or financially irresponsible. *Alive!* is
not responsible, however, for the performance of advertisers, the
delivery or quality of their merchandise or services, or the legality
of any particular program. Before making any purchasing decision,
we recommend you consult additional sources as needed. Please
contact the Club if you have any bad experiences with an adver-
tiser. LACEA management reserves the right, at its sole discretion,
to refuse any advertisement.

CLUB VIDEO PREMIERE!

COMING APRIL 15

Scenes from *Along
for the Ride* featuring
Members Cesar Ponce,
Chermaine Fontenette
and Kirk Broyard.



Cesar Ponce
Traffic Officer II, LADOT

'Along for the Ride' Premiere Set

Club's annual lunch video
reschedules YouTube world
premiere for April 15.

THE CLUB: Due to an unforeseen issue, the debut of "Along for the Ride" – the first in an expected series of short documentaries featuring Club Members at work and enjoying Club benefits that debuted at the Club's annual lunch in January – has been rescheduled for April 15 on the Club's YouTube channel. It's worth the wait!

That date will mark the first time most Club Members can enjoy the video, which features Club Members Cesar Ponce, Chermaine Fontenette and Kirk Broyard talking about the dignity and pride of their public service jobs, and how much they enjoy using their Club benefits.

Mark your calendars for April 15, and be moved! ●



Chermaine Fontenette
Waste Collection Truck Operator, Sanitation



Kirk Broyard
Retired LADWP

TELL US YOUR STORY

This first installment is planned to be just
the beginning of the Club telling the sto-
ries of its Members; the Club is planning
more productions for 2025.

Interested in having
Club video tell your story?
Write to us and let us know!
alive@employeesclub.com



Neil Sails On

NEIL GUGLIELMO, FORMER CLUB
BOARD MEMBER, RETIRES AS
GENERAL MANAGER, LACERS.

LACERS: More than 150 guests celebrated the distinguished
City career of Neil Guglielmo, General Manager, Los Angeles City
Employees Retirement System (LACERS). Neil retires with 34
years of City service.

The reception was held March 13 in the LACEA commis-
sion board room. The theme was Neil's fondness for sailing
and fishing.

The reception was attended by friends, family, former co-
workers, and new employees and General Managers alike.

"Food is love" – Neil's phrase was mentioned many times
during the reception, which featured many food items.

A longtime Club Member, Neil served several terms on the
Club Board.

Congratulations on your career of great public service, Neil!
And thanks for all you have done for the Club. ●



Retiring LACERS General
Manager Neil Guglielmo
(center) with (from left)
Nilza Serrano, past
LACERS board president;
Mike Wilkinson, current
Board Commissioner;
Cynthia Ruiz, past
LACERS board president;
and Janna Sidley, cur-
rent LACERS board vice
president.

From left: Dale Wong-Onguyen,
Assistant General Manager,
LACERS; Barbara Sandoval,
Investment Officer, LACERS;
and Laura Guglielmo, wife of
Neil Guglielmo, Retiring General
Manager, LACERS.



From left: Lucy Artinian, RLACEI treasurer and board
member; Ruth Perry, RLACEI past president; Tom Moutes,
Retired, LACERS General Manager, and past RLACEI board
member; Noelle Kauffman, Club Director of Sales; and
Robert Larios, Club CEO.



From left: Todd Bouey, Assistant General Manager, LACERS;
Vikram Jadhav, Chief Information Officer, LACERS; and Alex
Lombardo, Benefits Analyst, LACERS.



A Public Service Family: The family of Neil Guglielmo, Retiring LACERS General Manager, gathered at his retirement reception. They are, from left: Robyn Guglielmo (cousin), Administrative Clerk, City Attorney's Office; Isabella Guglielmo (daughter); Ann D'Amato (aunt), Retired, Deputy Mayor and Executive Officer, City Attorney's Office; Noah Guglielmo (son); Neil Guglielmo; Laura Guglielmo (spouse), Assistant General Manager, LACERA, County of Los Angeles; Neil J. Guglielmo (father); Laurie Guglielmo (stepmother); and Patrick Guglielmo (brother), Administrative Clerk, Personnel.

The Club Honors Public Employees

THE CLUB'S

Retire Ready!

For Active and Already Retired Members

Your Monthly Hub for:

- Smart Transitions Into Retirement
- Staying Connected, Having Fun



FOR ACTIVE EMPLOYEES RETIRING SOON

Planning a Smart Retirement

As you prepare to retire, are you making the right decisions? Start with a fun and productive party with the Club!

The Club is here to guide you through the retirement planning process every step of the way! If you plan to retire soon or are newly Retired, you have access to attend a retirement planning party with Club Retiree Specialist Counselors that will set you up for success in retirement.

We will be reviewing topics including pension deduction, Retiree Life Insurance, Retiree Legal Insurance, the Club's Retiree Mentorship Program, our Retiree Recognition Awards, and other valuable Club benefits. The Club strives to make your transfer from active to Retired as easy as possible by guiding you through the processes; educating you on new, important topics; and welcoming you to our Club Retiree Community.

Attend a Retirement Planning Party!

Date: Last Thursday of each month
(Choose one: Apr. 30, May 29)

Time: 1 – 2 p.m.

Location: Club Headquarters
311 S. Spring St., Suite 1300
Downtown Los Angeles

Parking: Validated parking provided.

RSVP today!

To reserve a spot at an upcoming Club Retirement Planning Party:

- Call us at (800) 464-0452, option 4, or
- Email us at info@employeesclub.com

Don't hesitate to contact our Retiree specialists at info@employeesclub.com • or (800) 464-0452



FOR THOSE ALREADY RETIRED

The Retiree Society

Club Retirement Networking Events

Meet your fellow Retirees. Make friends and have fun ... and the snacks are on us! Attend a Club Retired Networking Event this month.

For Retired Club Members and 1 guest each.

Cost to attend is free. The Club will provide coffee and an assortment of light refreshments.

More information about this new Club benefit will come soon.



**Friday,
April 25**

10 a.m.
Urth Café
4940 W 147th St.
Hawthorne, CA 90250

**Saturday,
April 26**

10 a.m.
Caffe Luxxe
6420 Pacific Coast Hwy.
Suite 145
Long Beach, CA 90803

**Monday,
April 28**

10 a.m.
Pillars Café
19700 Rinaldi St.
Northridge, CA 91326

**RSVP by
April 20**

Join the Fun!

RSVP with your preferred date, number of people (2 maximum) by April 20 to Dulce Lopez, Retiree Coordinator, at (800) 464-0452 (ext. 188) or email retirees@employeesclub.com

We look forward to seeing you there!



Volunteer With Seniors

The Club's new Retiree Events program seeks volunteers to bring joy and connection to Retirees.

Join us at the above events and share a meal, enjoy a laugh and lend a compassionate ear.

Much more information is coming.

For now, contact Dulce Lopez at the contacts listed above to get started. You will never regret it.



LACERS staff, front, from left: Sophie Chiang, Benefits Specialist, 4 years of City service; Lourdes Quintos, Sr. Benefits Analyst, 28 years; Karen Freire, Chief Benefits Analyst, 24 years; Micel Martin, Sr. Benefits Analyst, 26 years; and Joann Peralta, Chief Accountant, 16 years. Back: Tiffany Obembe, Sr. Benefits Analyst I, 10 years.



LACERS staff, from left: Erick Barrientos, Administrative Clerk, 1 year of City service, Club Member ("Go Dodgers!"); Veronica Flores, Administrative Clerk, 31 years, Club Member; Heather Ramirez, Sr. Benefits Analyst II, 18 years, Club Member; and Jennifer Romero, Benefits Specialist, 7 years, Club Member.



LACERS Assistant General Manager Todd Bouey hosted the retirement reception.



From left: Todd Bouey, Assistant General Manager, LACERS; Annie Chao, LACERS board president; Ani Ghoukassian, Commission Executive Assistant III, LACERS; and Dr. Sung Won Sohn, current LACERS Commissioner.



From left: Father and son Neil Guglielmo (senior), father to Retiring Neil Guglielmo, General Manager, LACERS; with Matt Hale, Deputy Mayor.



From Public Works/Sanitation, from left: Deborah Peoples, Management Analyst; Shari Kuroki, Chief Management Analyst; and Rafael Porter, Personnel Director.

NEIL'S CAREER

Here's a breakdown of Neil's distinguished City career:

- 1990 - Assistant Park Services Attendant II, Rec and Parks
- 1992 - Special Program Assistant III, Rec and Parks
- 1995 - Management Assistant, Aging
- 1996 - Mayoral Aide II, Mayor's Office
- 1996 - Administrative Analyst, CAO
- 2000 - Sr. Administrative Analyst I, CAO
- 2001 - Sr. Management Analyst II, Public Works/Sanitation
- 2002 - Sr. Management Analyst II, CAO,
- 2003 - Revenue Manager, Office of Finance
- 2003 - Sr. Management Analyst II, Public Works/Sanitation
- 2004 - Chief Management Analyst, Rec and Parks
- 2005 - Chief Management Analyst, Public Works/Sanitation
- 2011 - Assistant General Manager, Housing
- 2012 - Chief Financial Officer, Public Works/Sanitation
- 2013 - Executive Assistant to the General Manager, LADWP
- 2015 - Assistant General Manager and Chief Engineer, LADWP
- 2017 - Chief Financial Officer, LADWP
- 2018 - General Manager, LACERS
- 2025 - Retirement

THE CLUB HONORS NEIL

The following is a message from Club CEO, Robert Larios, on Neil's service to the City and the Club.

Dear Neil,

Congratulations on your retirement! It's truly an honor to reflect on the many contributions you've made throughout your remarkable career with the City of Los Angeles. Your tireless dedication, inspiring leadership, and unwavering commitment to public service have impacted countless lives—including mine. I had the privilege of seeing you serve as a board member for the Employees Club of California, where your insights and leadership helped strengthen our mission of honoring and uplifting public employ-



From left: Neil Guglielmo, Retiring General Manager, LACERS, and former Club Board Member; with Club CEO Robert Larios.

ees. Your belief in fostering a sense of belonging carried through every initiative you touched, leaving a legacy as enduring as it is meaningful.

Your ability to lead with both strength and kindness has set an extraordinary example for all of us. You've shown that leadership isn't just about decisions made in boardrooms but about the lives you touch along the way. The humor and humanity you brought to every interaction made challenging moments lighter and wins even more joyful. You truly created a sense of community wherever you went.

Neil, your work during moments of transformation—whether navigating LACERS through challenges or attending to the needs of retirees—illustrates a thoughtfulness and care that will long be remembered. You've inspired not

only your teams but also those who had the privilege of working alongside you. I'm certain your legacy will serve as a foundation for those who follow.

This next chapter is a well-deserved opportunity to focus on family, your passions, and maybe a bit more fishing. Knowing you, I'm sure this new adventure will be approached with the same humor, warmth, and dedication you've always shown.

On behalf of the entire Employees Club of California, thank you for your years of service and leadership to the City of Los Angeles and California. We are better because of you. May the coming years bring nothing but happiness, fulfillment, and many well-deserved memories.

Best wishes,

—Robert Larios

President & CEO, Los Angeles City Employees Association & Employees Club of California

THE CLUB INSURANCE CORNER

by Noelle Kauffman, Club Director of Sales



CA LICENSE NO: 0H45598

Resources for Club Retirees And Those About to Retire

Who Needs Accident Insurance? More People Than You Think

In a world full of uncertainties, one truth remains constant: accidents happen. From sprained ankles on the soccer field to unexpected falls at work, injuries can strike at any time and when they do, they often come with a hefty price tag. That is where accident insurance steps in, providing a financial cushion when life throws the unexpected your way.

Accident insurance pays out cash benefits for injuries resulting from a covered accident, regardless of your health insurance coverage. These funds can be used for anything from covering deductibles and copays to paying rent, mortgage, or even taking time off work.

The Club's Accident Plan is completely portable, meaning if you leave your job for any reason, you can take your coverage with you and stay protected, wherever life takes you.

According to experts, several key groups stand to benefit the most from this type of coverage:

Active Individuals and Athletes

Whether you hit the gym a few times a week, play pickup basketball on the weekends, or enjoy hiking, staying active comes with risk. Accident insurance can help cover treatment for sprains, fractures and other common injuries.

Parents with Young Children

Kids are famously accident-prone, and families often face surprise trips to urgent care or the ER. Accident insurance helps ease the financial burden of those unplanned visits.

Workers in High-Risk Jobs

Those in physically demanding professions such as manual labor, emergency response, or maintenance face a higher chance of workplace injuries. Accident insurance can help offset lost wages and medical bills.

People with High-Deductible Health Plans (HDHPs)

With healthcare costs on the rise, many opt for HDHPs to save on premiums. However, these plans mean higher out-of-pocket expenses. Accident insurance fills in the gap when injury strikes.

Frequent Travelers

Whether for business or leisure, travel increases your exposure to potential accidents. A slip on unfamiliar terrain or a minor crash abroad could end up costing more than expected.

Self-Employed and Gig Workers

Without traditional benefits like paid sick leave, independent workers are especially vulnerable to financial setbacks caused by accidents. A lump-sum payout can provide critical support.

Protect yourself today and protect your future.

Contact your Club Counselors to learn more and enroll in the Club's Accident Plan:

(800) 464-0452 | info@employeesclub.com

Your Club Retirement Experts We're here to serve you!



Dalila Vielma
Member Services
Counselor



Dylan Noel
Member Services
Counselor



Cynthia Ha
Member Services
Counselor



Cheryl Martin
Member Services
Counselor

Update your benefits and get all of your questions answered by booking a one on one or group presentation appointment with your colleagues at your job site.

Email help@employeesclub.com to request a Counselor visit today!



2025 Events

LARFPA

June 4 Annual Picnic

LA River Center and Gardens
570 W Ave 26, Los Angeles, CA 90065
10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

LADWP Retirees Association

April 12 Annual Picnic

Legg Lake, Meadows Picnic Area
Whittier Narrows Recreation Area
750 S Santa Anita Ave. 91733
10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Produced by the LADWP Retirees Association

Reservation information:

LADWP Retiree Association:
(949) 388-1206

LARFPA: events@larfpa.org

Contact Information

Club Retirees Dedicated Helpline:

Club contact:
help@employeesclub.com

LA City Employees Retirement System (LACERS) (City Dept.)

(800) 779-8328
lacers.services@lacers.org

LADWP Retirees Association

(949) 388-1206

Fire and Police Pensions (City Dept.)

(844) 885-2377
pensions@lafpp.com

LA Retired Fire and Police Association (LARFPA)

(888) 288-5073
membership@larfpa.org

Retired Los Angeles City Employees, Inc. (RLACEI)

See page 18

Stephanie Is Chief of Staff

HARBOR NAMES STEPHANIE MAGNIEN ROCKWELL AS CHIEF OF STAFF TO EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR.

HARBOR: The Port of Los Angeles has appointed Stephanie Magnien Rockwell as Chief of Staff to the Executive Director. In this position, Magnien Rockwell will manage special projects, act on executive and administrative matters, provide executive-level staff support and represent the Port before City of Los Angeles officials and other stakeholders. The Port's Internal Audit Division will also directly report to her in this new capacity.

"Stephanie brings a highly diversified set of skills and experience to this important position," said Port of Los Angeles Executive Director Gene Seroka. "With her proven track record of leadership and results, we're thrilled to elevate her into this new role."

At the Port of Los Angeles, Magnien Rockwell most recently served as Legislative Representative in the Workforce and Government Affairs Division, where she served as the Port's liaison to City Hall. In that role, she was responsible for providing legislative, policy and operational support across a wide expanse of Port's priorities. She first joined the Port in 2018 in the Contracts and Purchasing Division.

Magnien Rockwell began her career by taking on increasing roles of responsibility for elected officials. These included the Office of California State Assembly Member Judy Chu 49th District; the Office of the City Councilmember Jan Perry, Ninth District; and the Office of City Councilmember Bob Blumenfield, Third District. Two years prior to joining the Port, she also served as Principal Project Coordinator with the Office of the City Administrative Officer in Los Angeles.

Magnien Rockwell earned her bachelor's degree in international relations with a minor in business from the University of Southern California and a master's degree in public administration from California State University, Northridge.

Congratulations from the Club, Stephanie! ●



Stephanie Magnien Rockwell

Honoring the Earth

SANITATION TO HOST SEVENTH EARTH DAY SUSTAINABILITY EVENT IN BALDWIN HILLS.

PUBLIC WORKS: On Sat., April 26, Public Works/Sanitation and Environment plans to hold its eighth annual Citywide Earth Day LA event, this year at Norman O. Houston Park in Baldwin Hills.

Plans include City vehicles for kids to explore, games to play, prizes to win, sustainability workshops, plant giveaways, dozens of exhibitors, customer service, and fun for all ages. Free beverages and snacks will be available while supplies last. All exhibits will be related to City services and sustainability. Plans are subject to change. Free event. ●

LA SANITATION AND ENVIRONMENT
EARTH DAY LA 2025
OUR POWER. OUR PLANET
A ZERO WASTE EVENT

SATURDAY APRIL 26, 2025 | 10 AM - 2 PM
Norman O. Houston Park 4800 South La Brea Los Angeles 90008

Your Insurance Dollars at Work



More than
\$130 MILLION
in insurance
benefits paid!

When Members purchase insurance through the Club, they trust the insurance will help them in times of need.

Below are the monthly amounts of claims paid back to Members. **Club insurance plans will be there when you need them.**

INSURANCE PLAN	FEBRUARY	TOTAL SINCE 1992
Life/Accidental Death and Dismemberment	\$286,029	\$75,924,815
Disability Insurance	\$125,866	\$37,374,004
Long-Term Care Insurance	\$209,843	\$15,662,559
Cancer/Critical Care Insurance	\$70,400	\$5,541,900
Accident Plan	\$0	\$152,712
Totals	\$692,138	\$134,655,991

CLUB MEMBERS' PRAISE

The Club's claims service is "excellent. The representative Mikayla was very helpful and kind. She was willing to help fill out all necessary forms and answer any questions."

— Cynthia Gardner, December 2022



Monica Zamudio
Sr. Claims Administrator



Mikayla Sprague
Claims Administrator

Trust the Club's insurance and claims services when you need them the most. Contact a Claims Administrator today:

(800) 464-0452

Club Headquarters Closed for Renovation

April 1 – April 25

The Club will remain fully open and ready to serve you while we renovate our offices from March 18 – April 7.

HOW TO ACCESS THE CLUB DURING RENOVATIONS:

While the Club Headquarters is closed, Members can access Club Counselors, staff and the Mobile Team through the numbers below. We'll respond promptly to celebrate you!

Thanks for your patience.

Club Headquarters
311 South Spring Street, Suite 1300
Los Angeles, CA 90013



Help@EmployeesClub.com
Or Call **(800) 464-0452**

Welcome, Officers

AIRPORT AND PORT POLICE GREET NEW OFFICERS.

AIRPORTS, HARBOR: Port Police and Airport Police welcome new Police Academy graduates Officer Christian Ramos and Officer Jonathan Mansour, Club Member, respectively.

They graduated from the Academy March 7.

Officer Ramos is an avid swimmer, and played water polo through college. He came to the Port Police after serving as an open water lifeguard for the City. He also worked as a deckhand for Towboat U.S.

Officer Mansour's graduation reflects his dedication, hard work and commitment to serving the community.

Both Officers will now begin their FTO (Field Training Officer) program, where they will further develop their skills and gain valuable on-the-job experience.

Best wishes to Officers Ramos and Mansour! ●



Port Police Officer Christian Ramos is congratulated by Port Police Chief Thomas Gazsi.



Airport Police Officer Jonathan Mansour, Club Member.

Tingirides to Central Bureau

DEPT. VETERAN CHANGES LEADERSHIP ROLE TO WHERE SHE BEGAN.

LAPD: On Feb. 17, Deputy Chief Emada Tingirides announced her duties were moving back to the Central Bureau.

"I am honored to step into the role of Deputy Chief for Operations Central Bureau, where I began my career," she posted on social media. "I am excited for the opportunity to build new relationships and continue serving with the outstanding team in Central Bureau."

She moves from Deputy Chief and Commanding Officer of the Community Safety Partnership Bureau, a position she accepted in 2020. She had worked to create the Bureau in 2011.

The LA native began working for the LAPD in 1992, regularly being promoted to Sr. Lead Officer, Sergeant and Officer in Charge.

Congratulations, Deputy Chief and Commanding Officer Tingirides!



Dep. Chief Emada Tingirides

Looking for Promotional Products?

Print your logo on anything:

- Pens
- Coffee mugs
- T-shirts
- Magnets
- Key Tags
- And more!



ROSEBUD Marketing Group

(800) 426-0174
rosebud@getpromos.com

www.RosebudMarketing.com

The Alive! Kids' Coloring Contest

Coloring

with **The Club**

Deadline for submission:

May 9, 2025

Compiled by:



Guadalupe Lira
Retail Operations
Manager



DeAngelo Thompson
Mobile Operations
Representative

Mail completed coloring art to:

Club Coloring Contest
Employees Club of California
311 Spring St., Suite 1300
Los Angeles, CA 90013

The Club will do every-
thing it can to gather all
the submissions, but it
cannot be responsible for
lost or misdirected mail.

Kid's Coloring Contest Schedule

In the printed *Alive!* and on *Web Alive!*:

- **April** (winners published in June)
- **October** (winners published in December)



SCAN TO
DOWNLOAD ART



Download Coloring Art From the Web

You can also download and print art from *Web Alive!*:
alive.employeesclub.com/kidscoloringcontest



We want to know about you! Tell us a little about yourself:

Your name _____ How old are you? _____

When is your birthday? _____ What is the first name of your best friend? _____

What is your favorite snack? _____

What is your favorite television show? _____

Why do you want to go to Knott's Berry Farm? _____

For parents/guardian to complete:

Name of parent/guardian: _____

Job title and department with the City: _____

Parent/guardian phone number: _____

Child's address/city/zip: _____

Club Membership number: _____



KID's NAME:

Heroes Go the Distance

DEPTS. PROVE CRITICAL IN SUCCESSFUL MARATHON.

LAFD/LAPD/PUBLIC WORKS: Let's hear it for the dedicated City teams that made the recent LA Marathon hugely successful. We honor them for their service and dedication!

The 40th annual LA Marathon was held March 16. Many City departments played significant roles in the success of this event. Pictured here are efforts from the LAPD, LAFD and Public Works/ StreetsLA. Here are a few images. ●



Andrew Is Tops

Story and photo courtesy LAFD

CAPT. II ANDREW RUIZ NAMED FIREFIGHTER OF THE YEAR.

LAFD: The LAFD and the City of Los Angeles Firefighters Association have named Capt. II Andrew Ruiz as the 2024 Firefighter of the Year. Capt. Ruiz has dedicated 31 years to the fire service, with more than 26 of those years serving the citizens of Los Angeles.

Capt. Ruiz serves as a Unit Commander in the In-Service Training Section and has served as a Drill Master at the LAFD Training Academy. His past assignments have included Fire Stations in Battalions 1, 5, 11, and 13. Outside of his duties with the LAFD, he is the Lead Master Instructor for the International Association of Firefighters (IAFF) Fireground Survival (FGS) program and has been teaching internationally since 2009, where he has influenced thousands of firefighters on how to save their own lives.

Capt. Ruiz is an instructor at the Rio Hondo Fire Academy, where he has taught various disciplines since 2008, focusing his efforts on training the next generation of firefighters. He is collaborating with California State Fire Training (SFT) to revamp the Fireground Survival Program, Rapid Intervention Company (RIC) operations, and firefighter rescue techniques. Capt. Ruiz has also served as a panel member for the Underwriters Laboratories (UL) Fire Safety Research Institute (FSRI) focused on Coordinated Fire Attack and Ventilation.

Captain Andrew Ruiz's professionalism and selfless service inspire not only his peers within the LAFD, but also the countless individuals whose lives he has positively impacted. This honor reflects the deep respect and admiration he has earned throughout his career. He exemplifies leadership and humility as a public servant, striving to fulfill our Department's public safety mission. Congratulations, Capt. II Ruiz! ●



Capt. II Andrew Ruiz

THANK YOU!



The Club thanks all City employees, including those from LAPD, LAFD and Public Works for their very hard work making our City shine for this internationally famous event. Well done!

COLLEGE STUDENTS: Apply for Club's Mukai Scholarship



DEADLINE IS 3 P.M., JUNE 27, 2025.

CLUB: Applications are now being accepted for the Joannie Mukai Memorial Club Scholarship on the *Alive!* Website.

The 2025 Mukai Club Scholarship Program expects to grant at least 20 awards and is named after the late Club Board Member Joannie Mukai.

Eligible candidates include Club Members; their spouses; their children, grandchildren, step-children, and foster children; and nieces/nephews who are in college or will be attending an accredited college or university in Fall 2025. There is no age limit for Member or spouse, but all others must be under 25.

New for 2025: Club Member candidates, or the Club Member who is related to the candidate, must be an active Member in good standing for at least six months prior to application deadline.

All materials must be completed on the *Alive!* Website and submitted electronically by 3 p.m. June 27, 2025. Winners will be notified by July 31 before school starts.

The Club expects to give each recipient a stipend of \$750.



Garrett Viado, the son of Leticia Lopez, Recreation and Parks, City of Los Angeles, received a stipend last year as part of the Club's Mukai Scholarship Program.

Apply Today on the *Alive!* Website:
alive.employeesclub.com/scholarship

DEADLINE:
3:00 p.m., June 27, 2025



"It is a vital that the Club gives back to support the future success of our treasured young people," said Mariana Guevara, chair of the Club's Scholarship Committee. "We honor all Club Members for the work they do for LA, and the scholarship program is one way we thank them."

"We welcome all Club Members and their close family members to apply for this very important scholarship program. We honor Members by supporting the future success of our young people. We encourage all those eligible to apply."

Interested candidates may begin the process directly on the *Alive!* Website at:

alive.employeesclub.com/mukaischolarship

Send questions to the Club Scholarship Committee:
scholarship@employeesclub.com or call: (213) 873-1843

Eligibility requirements:

- All Club Members and their spouses of any age; and children, grandchildren, step-children, foster children and nieces and nephews of Club Members under the age of 25; are eligible to apply.
- Club Member candidates, or the Club Member who is related to the candidate, must be an active Member in good standing for at least six months prior to application deadline.
- The successful candidate must attend an accredited four-year college or university full time in the fall semester 2025. Current high school seniors matriculating to a four-year school in Fall 2025 are eligible.
- Candidates will be judged for academic excellence, community service and financial need.
- Scholarships are expected to be awarded in equal amounts of \$750 (each).
- Deadline: Applications must be completed online at the *Alive!* Website and submitted electronically by 3 p.m. June 27, 2025. All applications must be completed in their entirety and submitted at that time to be eligible. Sorry, but the Club is not responsible for delays in delivery.
- Decisions will be made by Club personnel and will be considered final.
- Incomplete applications will not be accepted.
- Application essays may be checked by the Club for originality and authenticity. Club may request applicants to provide draft history.

ABOUT JOANNIE MUKAI



Joannie Mukai was a pioneer as the LA Port's Director of Construction and Maintenance. A passionate supporter in the Employees Club and longtime Association Board Member, she died in March 2010. The Club's annual scholarship program was named in her honor. "She believed in education and training, and in preparing for success," CEO Robert Larios said. "That's what the Club Scholarship is all about, and we're delighted to name it after her. It's a perfect way to keep her memory alive."

Open Houses Are Back This Month

SANITATION'S POPULAR OPEN HOUSES AT SIX YARDS BEGIN APRIL 26.

PUBLIC WORKS: Public Works' Sanitation and Environment begins its series of popular Open Houses April 26, running through June 21.

Each of Sanitation's six waste shed district yards will open to the public in a series of free Saturday events. The Open House

program showcases Sanitation's residential curbside collection programs with the promotion of proper recycling practices and information about bulky item collections. Each event will feature trash truck and equipment demonstrations in addition to facility tours, information booths, recycling games, and refreshments.

In 2019, more than 6,000 residents attended the open houses with more than 230 City Employees who volunteered their time to give back to the neighborhoods they serve.



At the West LA Open House.



Will Brown, RCTO, 8 years of City service, and his son, Carter, 6 years old, with a young neighbor in the cab.



There is no charge for admission and all ages are welcome, but Sanitation requests that pets be left at home for safety.

By combining solid resources, clean water, watershed protection, and recycling education, and recycLA information with refreshments, music and games, Sanitation has succeeded in capturing the attention of families across the City. ●



Earth Day Celebration

Saturday, April 26, 2025

Norman O. Houston Park, 4800 S. La Brea Ave.

10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

The Public Works/Sanitation Open House dates and locations are Saturdays:

West Valley Yard	South LA District Yard	East Valley Yard	North Central District Yard	Harbor District Yard	West LA Yard
April 5	April 12	May 17	May 31	June 7	June 21
8840 Vanalden Ave. Northridge	786 South Mission Rd., Los Angeles	11050 Pendleton St. Sun Valley	452 N. San Fernando Rd. Los Angeles	1400 N. Gaffey St. San Pedro	2027 Stoner Ave. Los Angeles

THE ALIVE! INTERVIEW Part 2

Rita and the County

In Part 1 of our robust, frank and exclusive interview with Rita Robinson-Kane last month, she talked about fear, ambition, and moving up the City charts ... with integrity, always.

In this, the second and final part, Rita talks about her transition to the top of LA County ... her work to reopen Martin Luther King Jr. Community Hospital and to institute Measure H for homeless services ... her constant feeling that she wasn't adequate for the next promotion ... her reflections on a career of exemplary public service ... the promising future of Los Angeles ... her strong belief in the mission of the Employees Club, and much more. We thank Rita for her many years of service, and for sitting for this landmark interview.

On Jan. 10, Club CEO Robert Larios and *Alive!* editor John Burnes interviewed the legendary Rita Robinson-Kane, Retired, General Manager, LADOT, and Retired, Deputy CEO, LA County. She retired from the City in 2010 with 33 years of City service, and from the County in 2018 with seven years of County service.

Rita is a Club Member and serves on the Club Board.

City to Dungeon to County

Alive!: So you left the City – when you were General Manager of LADOT – because you were lured to the County, not because of some retirement calculus.

Rita L. Robinson-Kane: I was literally called out by Bill Fujioka, then the Chief Executive Officer of Los Angeles County. Bill, whom I knew from our days working at the City together – he was over Personnel, called me one day on the phone when I was at Transportation. I was not always happy to be there because everyone believed they were a transportation expert. However, we got so many good things done – every time I see a left-hand turn signal or a new solar parking meter, I remember the good things. We replaced all of the meters throughout the City on a wing and a prayer. Amir Sedadi and I got [then-] Councilman Bernard Parks to agree to it in budget committee as a pilot project, and it produced additional revenue for the City. I even did a road diet, and almost got my head bitten off by the Council. And we put in some of the first bike lanes. In truth, it was an exciting time. We were able to do many good things with a fantastic staff.

That's when I got a call from Bill Fujioka.

At the County?

Rita: Yes, he was CEO of the County. I thought his office was calling me about getting a parking ticket waived or something like that, which I could never do. I was never going to do that, and I never did. Cough up the money and get on working!

But that's not why his office was calling. He said, do you want a job? Me? Often I get called to recommend someone for a job? So I said, well, what's the job? For what job are you wanting me to recommend someone? He said, "I didn't ask you to recommend somebody. I asked if you wanted a job." Bill was very much like that. I said, I have a job. He said, "Well, do you want another job?" "What are you talking about?" I asked him. He wanted to meet. To this day, I don't know which restaurant we went to. I still cannot figure out. It was some dark, weird place; it was like in a dungeon or something.

Downtown?

Rita: Chinatown. This man opened the door and said, Mr. Fujioka is waiting for you. I kind of went into this dark place and he was sitting there at a table surrounded by a curtain. What the hell?, I asked myself.

But I sat down with him, and he said, "Look, I want you to come work for me." I said, "You're at the County. What are you talking about?"

Bill said it was top secret, and the only person I could talk to about it was Miguel Santana, who formerly worked at the County as a Deputy Chief Executive Officer. Miguel and I had become very good friends. Bill wanted me to become a deputy CEO in the County supervising Public Works capital projects, Beaches and Harbors, Library and Parks and Recreation. Everything that I'd ever done in the City was what I'd be doing in the County. It was a new position, he said, being developed; all the departments were going to have Deputy CEOs. I had never heard of any structure like that, but it was an offer I couldn't refuse. He said that I could parlay all the experience I'd had in the City into what the County was doing. He had already talked to all the County Supervisors, and they were positive. Fortunately, I had worked with Zev Yaroslavsky, Mark Ridley-Thomas, Gloria Molina and Janice Hahn as City Councilmembers. They knew who I was. I didn't know Mike Antonovich or Don Knabe.

Bill said he needed only three votes to get it done.

I didn't know what to say. It was all so overwhelming and weird. I said, "I'm just going to leave" the restaurant. He said, yes, you're going to leave, and then you're going to come over here. Miguel would work the numbers for you.

Bill and I left it in this really weird place. The car was waiting, the door was open, the car drove out this little alley, and then I was back on regular streets again. It was late at night.

Late at night? Were you, or Bill, afraid that someone would see you?

Rita: Bill was very secretive but always strategic. I will always be grateful to him for the opportunity of a lifetime. He had the votes on the Board of Supervisors. He had to know he had the votes before he presented my name, before he walked in the room.

That's how it happened. As the late Ron Deaton, former Chief Legislative Analyst, would say, always know how to count to ten!

Miguel worked the numbers – I'd get my City retirement, and if I worked at least five years at the County, at that level, I'd get that retirement, too. He knew how to negotiate the offer to be benefit me.

You said that sometimes you lacked courage, or belief in yourself. Was it scary or a little sad to leave the City?

Rita: All of the above. Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa was considering me for the City CAO job at the time, too. I was terrified because I knew I lacked the finance and Union negotiation skills critical to the job. I went home and I told [her late husband] Michael – he knew how stressful all these jobs were. He said, "I'm not in your world, babe. You run that world. I don't know anything about it. I don't have the education, the background or anything. But I will not condone you accepting a job that I know will kill you. I know that that CAO job will kill you because you will do it to your level best. But it is not the kind of job that you like. Plus the politics can be vile, and you'll be in direct line with all these people. I just don't see you liking it." So I respectfully declined the CAO consideration immediately.

Miguel finally said yes to the CAO job, which I was happy about. I believed he would be good for the City.

Fear and Acceptance

That's a theme that you've mentioned several times. You seem to have been terrified as new opportunities were given to you.

Rita: I felt unqualified for them. People would tell me, "I want you to do that, Rita." But I've never done that! It wasn't that I was unwilling, but I was just not sure. I think in my childhood, I was a chubby, chunky kid; my mother was athletic and beautiful and gorgeous and wore high heels. I would fall over in high heels. I would never have that same level of confidence. My cousins were able to play ball, but not me. My grandfather would always tell me, "You're going to go out there and play baseball. And volleyball. You're going to go out there and do everything that these kids do. You may not do it as well as they do, but you're never going to be afraid to do it."

Every time you accepted a promotion, you were up to every one of them. There was no turning back.

Rita: I would listen to him in my head. I hear him in my head now, even from this many years away. He has been gone for years, and I can still hear him say, you can do this, you can do this. Everybody else played a role in it. My grandmother said, "You're going to do it with excellence. Between those two forces of foundation, I couldn't lose. My mother would tell me I was the most beautiful thing in the world. I have nephews and godchildren, but I don't have children of my own. I always try to encourage them, acknowledge their accomplishments, and push them forward. They don't have to be perfect, but they always have to do their best.

King Hospital

Talk about your work reopening King Hospital.

Rita: Yes. I have often been asked the difference in leading between the City and County. The City serves the needs and functions of neighborhoods and communities. The County is the umbrella governing agency servicing major functions such as healthcare, child services, infrastructure, capital projects, hospitals, jails and judicial actions as well as servicing smaller city needs.

When I had the opportunity to lead projects in the County, the final phase of rebuilding and reopening of Martin Luther King Jr. Hospital was a monumental achievement. After years of turmoil and uncertainty, the Board and CEO of the hospital took steps to ensure the hospital's structure and staffing were intact to serve the community at a level of excellence. Each time I pass it, I see the automated entry doors, the baby trees planted that are thriving and the enhanced resources for mental health established on the campus, I am so proud of how the hospital fulfills its critical needs.

Read **PART 1** of Rita's *Alive!* Interview



Rita L. Robinson-Kane, Retired, LADOT; Retired, LA County; Club Member and Club Board Member.

LA County Parks and Prop. A

Alive! Another of your big projects at the County was working on a needs assessment of the County parks. Was that part of being Deputy CEO?

Rita: No. A few years after I joined the County, the Board of Supervisors dissolved the Deputy CEO positions. We heard rumors that this was going to happen. They reassigned us all to other functions. Bill [Fujioka] had left by then.

They assigned me to County Parks and Rec – I was asked to lead a County Parks needs assessment. They wanted to upgrade all parks to be accessible. They wanted something different, not just standard park equipment. The board wanted parks and open space throughout the County.

Doing that needs assessment was the joy of my life, working on an amazing project with an amazing group of people. That needs assessment culminated into Prop A, a half-cent sales tax, which meant long-term funding for parks in all communities. We identified 188 communities in LA County that needed attention. I went to many places in Los Angeles that I had never been to in my life, and I heard the concerns of the people in those communities. We prioritized the needs according to what they said. People were dumbfounded that somebody asked them what they needed and wanted. When Prop A was passed, that's where that money went. Just recently I went to a one of those parks. My little niece had a birthday party, and it was in Torrance. For some reason I felt I had been there before; that's because I had – it was in the needs assessment, to make it more accessible. It was the most beautiful park ever with the most unusual activities. I love it because that's what the community had said. They wanted something different. And it really turned out beautifully.

Another major success for you.

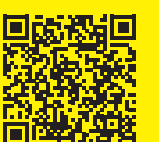
Rita: It was a good opportunity to work directly with the Supervisors on the needs assessment because they thought it would fail. The board thought it was never going to go anywhere. When it did – when it really resonated – that's when it became exciting to the Supervisors. They could overlay something on top of it. It took political minds like theirs to take something popular and overlay something else on top of it. This could really be a ticket; this could be the necessary funding source.

They all said it would never pass. But it did – it passed beyond the 70 percent threshold. And the money's in perpetuity! It worked out really well. It was an amazing flight.

County Measure H for homeless assistance is another hallmark of your County legacy.

Rita Robinson-Kane: That was my final assignment before retiring for good. I led County staff and consultants to educate the community on Measure H, the Homeless Initiative. In 2017, ...

THE ALIVE! INTERVIEW
CONTINUES ON
PAGE 26



Pay Tribute to Your Mom!

Pay tribute to your mom this Mother's Day ... with a photo and message of lifelong love, published in *Alive!*.

In our May issue, we'll print a photo of you and your mom (or just your mom) ... and a two- or three-sentence message of Happy Mother's Day from you. Your tribute will also appear on Web *Alive!* (if received by April 16), starting just before Mother's Day.

Send in your digital photos and your message now!

To submit, go to: alive.employeesclub.com/mothersday



DEADLINES:
 Publication in print and online: April 15
 Online only: May 7

RETIREMENT PLAQUE PRESENTATIONS

We Honor Your Service!

Association CEO Robert Larios honors Retired Club Members with a plaque for their many years of dedicated service to Los Angeles.

FREE!* CLUB RETIREMENT PLAQUE

Retired or Retiring Soon? Get started here:

Receive your own personalized Club Retirement Plaque, free! (Must be a Club Member for at least five consecutive years.)

* a \$499 value!



Edgar Maldonado
 Retired from LADWP
 25 years of City service



Neil Guglielmo
 Retired from LACERS
 34 years of City service



Teresa Bambao
 Retired from Personnel
 37 years of City service



Michael Kaitangian
 Retired from LADWP
 33 years of City service



Laura Perez
 Retired from LA County Board of Supervisors
 37 years of County service



Officer Jesse James Oliver
 Retired from Airport Police
 45 years of City service



Fred Torres
 Retired from LADWP
 38 years of City service



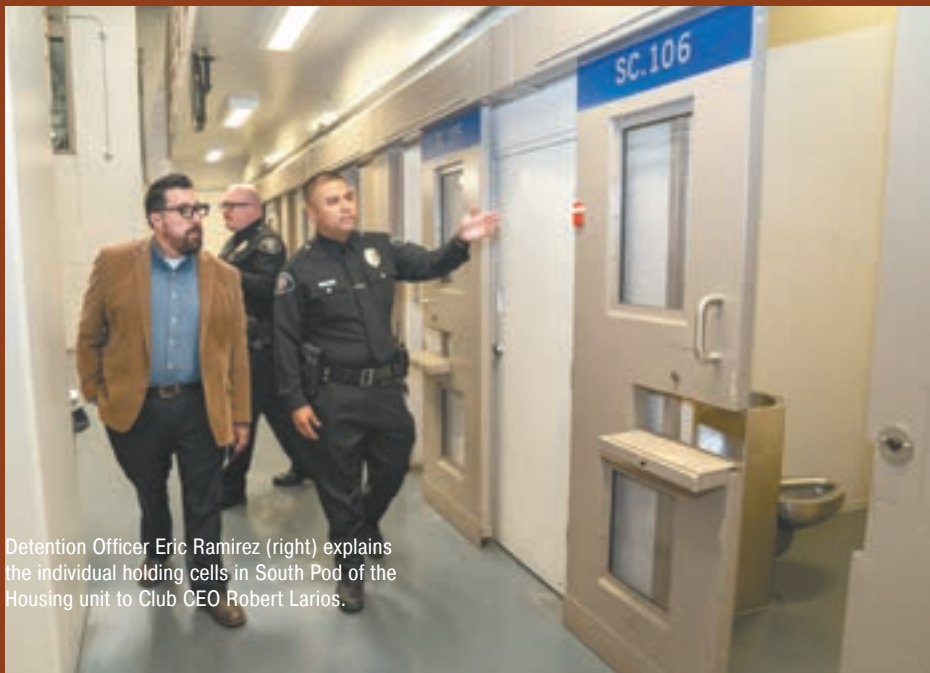
Bobby Perry
 Retired from Public Works/Sanitation
 24 years of City service

ALIVE! FEATURE



From left: Sr. Detention Officer Corey Gravel, 6 years of City service, with Detention Officers Eric Ramirez, 12 years, Club Member, and Francis Navarro, 7 years, Club Member.

HOLDING CELLS



Detention Officer Eric Ramirez (right) explains the individual holding cells in South Pod of the Housing unit to Club CEO Robert Larios.

DORMITORIES



Bunk bed dormitories are provided to inmates.

ROLL CALL ROOM



Sr. Detention Officer Corey Gravel at the podium in the MDC's roll call room.



The Division's roll call room. Each of two shifts meets in here once before their shift begins. The walls also act as a bulletin board for notices, including this fundraiser for an employee who lost her home in Altadena.

VISITATION BOOTH



Sr. Detention Officer Corey Gravel explains a visitation booth – family members can interact with inmates only through a video connection, not face to face. Visitation times are limited.

OLD-SCHOOL BOOKING CHAIR



Custody Services retains an old-school booking chair for photo opportunities, which are rare. Here, Detention Officer Eric Ramirez "interrogates" Club CEO Robert Larios.



PRIVILEGED BOOTH

Privileged booth: Inmates may converse with outsiders as part of privileged communication – attorneys, clergy or medical professionals. Only paper can pass between them; these meetings are unlimited in frequency, and are not monitored. Foreground: Detention Officer Eric Ramirez and Club CEO Robert Larios. On the other side: Sr. Detention Officer Corey Gravel.

LAPD CUSTODY SERVICES

Coming Into Their Own

Custody Services, critical but little known, is stepping up as a force within the force. And it's growing.



Between arrest and court appearance sits a critical function of policing.

The LAPD entrusts that function to its Custody Services Division. (From its beginning to 2016, it was known as Jail Division.) That mission: to provide professional and compassionate care and custody for those who are entrusted to its Detention Officers. The division ensured that the constitutional rights of these individuals, whom Officers take oaths to protect and serve, are adhered to as they move through the legal system.

The Division is responsible for the care and custody of all arrested persons within the LAPD. The Custody Services Division also physically

maintains and supervises all of the jails used by the department.

Jails operated by the LAPD are:

- 77th Street Regional Jail
- Harbor Area Jail
- Hollywood Area Jail
- Metropolitan Detention Center
- Pacific Area Jail
- Valley Jail Section (Van Nuys Area)

Administrative Section

The Administrative Section is responsible for maintaining records and processing reports concerning all arrestees incarcerated; regulating

arrestees' visitations and correspondence; conducting research of jail rules, procedures and related legal opinions, and developing projects and methods for improving division efficiency; training new Division personnel, civilian and sworn, in jail techniques and procedures; and developing and presenting specialized training.

Size

Custody Services staffs approximately 375 Officers. That includes 270 Detention Officers and 75 civilian Supervisors and sworn Police Officers and command staff. The division also includes approximately 50 medical staff, which reports to the Medical Services Division of the City. ●

THE *ALIVE!* INTERVIEW

Duty and Compassion

On Feb. 19, Club CEO Robert Larios and Alive! editor John Burnes interviewed Sr. Detention Officer Corey Gravel, 6 years of City service; and Detention Officer Eric Ramirez, 12 years, Club Member. The interview was conducted via Zoom from the Metropolitan Detention Center downtown.



Alive!: Thanks for joining us today as we feature Custody Services.

Let's talk first about your City careers.

Detention Officer Eric Ramirez: Of course. I started with the City in 2012, fresh out of high school. I was working as a Messenger Clerk with the Library and taking classes at East Los Angeles College. At East Los Angeles College I developed an interest in going into law enforcement – it has an administration of justice program. I just happened to take an elective. My instructor was a Retired LAPD Sergeant, and he pushed me to start a career in law enforcement. The class itself piqued my interest. Since I was already a City employee, I checked the Personnel website, and I saw this Detention Officer position. The unique thing about this position is that the LAPD would take you at 18 years of age, so you don't have to wait for 21 years to become a sworn Officer. When I applied, I was 19. I got in at 20 years old, and I've been here ever since.



Detention Officer Eric Ramirez

At three years on the job, I became a Jail Training Officer; I've been a Jail Training Officer for a little more than seven years now. As a Union Steward and Bargaining Chair for Detention Officers for the last 8 years, I've negotiated our contracts and have represented Detention Officers and other Public Safety Officers throughout the city. I've been nominated for the SEIU

721 Executive Board, our union, because of my work and am a current candidate for the SEIU 721 Executive Board of 2025. I also assist with our recruitment and attrition of Detention Officers. It's been a very rewarding career for me.

What drew you to wanting to be a Detention Officer?

Officer Ramirez: To be perfectly honest with you, I was very interested in the jail setting. I wanted to be in law enforcement. I wasn't sure about going to patrol. I felt that this was a good way to gauge my interest in that. I ended up enjoying the position and staying here for the last 10 years.

Sr. Detention Officer Corey Gravel:

I graduated back in 2009 with a Bachelor's degree in psychology. I started off as a behavioral therapist for special needs kids – I would teach them social skills and how to behave appropriately. And then I transitioned that into a school setting where I worked as a behavioral crisis response team for a junior high and high school district in my area. Basically I would instruct special education teachers and their staff on how to deal with problematic behaviors from their students. As things got more dangerous, they would call me and I would actually respond directly to it. I was always thrown in the mix of having to respond to dangerous or stressful situations that could be a liability. It wasn't a far stretch to come into Custody Services as far as that's concerned. I'm not going to say the clientele is the same. But I will say that being able to maintain your composure when the people you are working with are doing everything in their power to make you lose your composure made it a very easy transition to Custody.

As of yesterday, I've been promoted to Sr. Detention Officer. I'm now a Supervisor overseeing the wonderful Officers I get to work with.



Sr. Detention Officer Corey Gravel

Congratulations!

Officer Gravel: Thank you.

Absolutely. Talk about the parallels between what you did before and what you do now.

Officer Gravel: I have seen some of my old clients in the behavioral therapy setting come through our facilities here at Custody Services, and the easiest parallel to draw between them is that everyone deserves respect and fair treatment. That is something that the LAPD is looking for when they hire Officers on the sworn or civilian side. Can you be empathetic to people who are having a bad day or even having their worst day? That was the easiest sell for me – yes, I can maintain my composure when things are going wrong, but how empathetic am I to the situations that people wind up in, not necessarily to their own fault? That's a key ingredient that we look for in the Detention Offices we hire now.

The Division

In general terms, describe Custody Services – what it's all about, and simply put, what do Detention Officers do?

Officer Ramirez: Custody Services is the bridge between the arrest and the custody setting. We provide the custody expertise to our department when it comes to the arrest. Detention Officers are tasked with caring for and maintaining the welfare of LAPD arrestees. We're charged with screening them, processing them through the system to prepare them for arraignment, and to prepare them for the next facility that they may be going to or to release them from custody.

The job has changed a lot throughout the years with the duties that have been tasked to us from past years up until now. The division operates kind of in the shadows for the LAPD. When you think LAPD, you think patrol. A lot of people are unaware that there's a custody aspect to the LAPD as well. That's where we come in. It's a strong supporting factor of the department.

LAPD CUSTODY SERVICES

THE ALIVE! INTERVIEW — CONTINUED FROM PAGE 13

Officer Gravel: What people mostly don't know is that an arrest can be completed in a matter of an hour to hours, but a custody action holding that person in detention before they have their due day in court could be up to six days. The Custody Services Division is the care, safety and welfare of the individuals. Our facility is a pre-trial, type 1 facility. One of our crucial duties is to ensure that arrestees have their day in court and that they get there safely.

Officer Ramirez: We deal with everything. We have to. We have to care for arrestees as far as their medical services. Arrestees who have mental or medical issues. We provide to the best of our ability with medical care, if we cannot they will be transferred to a facility that can provide the medical attention. Any medical issues that are brought up to our attention will be provided with medical care. The wellness and safety of arrestees that come into our facility is a priority. But it could be challenging with the difficulties that we face with arrestees who come in with mental illnesses or with substance abuse who are going through withdrawal. The work experience and training we have, help us to identify factors to maintain an arrestee's welfare and safety of personnel. Our Detention Officers do a lot. We're the care professionals part of the LAPD. Our existence allows patrol to focus on patrol, and we focus on custody.

Providing healthcare to the arrestees must be a big part of the services that you provide.

Officer Gravel: Oh yes, I would say a majority of the clientele who come through our facilities have either mental illness, a drug addiction or a comorbidity combination of the two. Having to address those factors means that we have to have a lot of training and doctors on staff. We make assessments before they even come into our custody from the Officers in the field to ensure that we have everything necessary to ensure that these individuals will have their medications ready. Can we take care of them while in our custody? We have medical staff and Officers on duty 24/7. Seven days a week, 365 days a year, no days off.

Wow. And speaking about doctors and your medical staff, how many employees does the division have, including those in the medical area?

Officer Ramirez: Our division staffs around 375 Officers. That includes 270 Detention Officers, 75 civilian Supervisors and sworn Police Officers and Command staff. Our medical personnel correspond more with the Medical Services Division of the City, a different department. They're not directly under the Custody Services Division.

Officer Gravel: Each regional jail has a medical facility and is staffed, to ensure all arrestees needing medical attention gets evaluated.

How many locations do you have?

Officer Ramirez: The LAPD has 10 jails throughout the City. Currently we have only six that are open. We have three regional facilities. The Metro Detention Center is the hub, the main, the center. We have Valley Jail that's a regional facility in Van Nuys. We have 77th Regional Jail as a regional facility in South LA. Aside from those three regional jails, we have three outline jails – one in the Harbor, one in the Pacific area and one in Hollywood.

How many guests – inmates – do you have under supervision?

Officer Gravel: The number of arrestees in our custody is always changing, an arrestee can be held for court in our facility or cited out the same day.

Officer Ramirez: We have the capability to house around 300 to 400 arrestees here at Metro Jail. Because laws change and other factors, our population has decreased. But on a busy weekend we can book upwards of hundreds. Our facilities are considered level one facilities, which house the pre-arranged. Once they are ready for arraignment, we send our arrestees there. If it's decided that they continue to be jailed, they are transferred to the County jail. We don't get them back for that longer term of custody. Over the weekend is where we get a large population because we have nowhere to send them until the next arraignment date.

Is Metro the newest?

Officer Ramirez: MDC has been around for about 15 years. It is our newest facility. What I find really great about this facility is that it's very modern. I won't go into all the details for security reasons, but a lot of things are electronic. We have better technology here. The [technology] makes things easier.

Officer Gravel: MDC is updated with updated technologies, it gives us layers of control, and it spreads the responsibility farther as far as witnessing and ensuring we have eyes on every single person in the facility.

History

What's the history of the Custody Services Division? I would imagine that, as long as there's been an LAPD, someone has had to perform your function. Was it part of the sworn side, or has it always been separate?

Officer Ramirez: From my understanding, in the early 1990s or even prior to that, our Detention Officer position was known as a Station Officer, who wore a khaki uniform. They did not wear a utility belt, or what we call our duty belt or Sam Browne. They

handled mostly paperwork. But a lot of the custody aspect of it I believe might have been shared between patrol and the Station Officer. In the late '90s, our uniform transitioned to a black uniform, and our title changed to Detention Officers. The change came with a lot more duties.

Now we're fully in charge of caring for arrestees. Now we wear handcuffs and pepper spray. Now we are authorized to use tasers; we carry tasers on our belt. We have the same police radios that sworn police officers have and are trained in extensive Arrest and Control Tactics.

Officer Gravel: We have pneumatic rifles to utilize in riot situations or tactical situations.

Officer Ramirez: We're trained on arrest and control. Similar to Police Officers, we train further in uses of force such as cell extractions, cell placements, use of restraint chairs, use of safety cells, and mental health identification for corrections. Our position has really grown since the '90s, which is the earliest I have any knowledge of.

Originally we were known as Jail Division in the '90s when our Detention Officer uniforms became black to be more consistent with LAPD standards. In 2015 we were renamed to what it is now Custody Services Division under one of our Captains because our duties changed again. Rather than staying primarily in the jail and handling jail functions, in 2015 we established the Custody Transportation Unit, which goes to different divisions and picks up the arrestees from the divisions themselves. Our duties grew outside of the jail. We play a crucial point in field operations, supervising area field jails during times of civil unrest. Since our duties grew outside of the jail, our name was changed from Jail Division to Custody Services Division.

Is it all centralized now? Do the local Police Stations use the small jails they have?

Officer Gravel: Yes. All of the divisions in LAPD have some kind of smaller jail or holding cell that they still use. The only Custody Services facility that doesn't have a Police Station attached is us at MDC – but Central Division station is nearby.

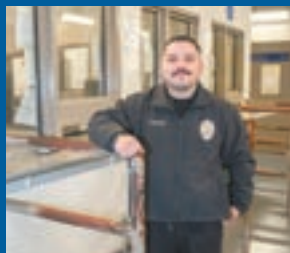
Again, the grand scheme of opening up these regional jails is to make sure that the Sworn Officers get back to their patrols as efficiently and as quickly as possible. And we want them to not be tied up with paperwork or administrative matters like holding someone in custody for a long period of time. Making a centralized area and function for custody services frees Officers from having to do it.

Officer Ramirez: All LAPD divisions have some kind of holding cell, but the arrestees are not permitted to stay there more than a period of time. If an arrestee is going to stay in custody, they need to be in a facility that is held to the standard of the Department of Corrections here in California. And that's where we come in.

Because of staffing and maybe other issues, those outer line facilities have been closed.

CUSTODY SERVICES TEAM MEMBERS

In the booking area: Detention Officer Eric Ramirez (left) and Sr. Detention Officer Esteban Guevara, Club Member.



LAPD Officer Oswaldo Sanchez, Club Member.



Detention Officer Eric Ramirez holds the Good Catch Award, presented annually to a Detention Officer for exemplary conduct in the line of duty.



LAPD Capt. III Anthony Otero, Commanding Officer, Custody Services.



In the Watch Commander's Office, from left: Principal Detention Officer Jorge Torres, Club Member; Detention Officer Eric Ramirez, Club Member; Sr. Detention Officer Marie Marin; Principal Detention Officer Andrea Noriega, Club Member; and Sr. Detention Officer Esteban Guevara, Club Member.



Sr. Detention Officer Corey Gravel (left) and Detention Officer Eric Ramirez (third from left) with Administrative Staff Detention Officer Demetrius Shaw, Club Member; and Office Assistant Cynthia Santarin.

THE DETENTION OFFICER FAMILY



Custody Services' running team at a recent Pride Run.



Detention Officers at a recent barbecue fundraiser for a fellow Detention Officer in need.



Detention Officer staff members form close support bonds, shown at this birthday celebration.

THE ALIVE! INTERVIEW — CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14

Right, makes sense. For what it's worth, I've seen the holding cell at Pacific Division. From outside the bars, I should add.

Officer Gravel: Well, no judgment. Everyone has a good day and a bad day.

Big Function, Small Awareness

We mentioned it earlier, that Custody Services Division is not well known. Do you think that your division should be better known?

Officer Ramirez: I think that's an accurate perception. We're not very well known, especially outside of this department. Every Police Officer knows of our existence because they arrest people, and they book arrestees into our facilities. However, to the general public, when you say Detention Officer, a lot of people relate us to juvenile halls or probation. When you say jails, a lot of people relate us to county jails, prisons or San Quentin. Outside of the people who have been arrested by the LAPD, some Angelenos may never know that LAPD has jails to begin with. It's a good thing in the sense that a lot of people may not know about us because a lot of people stay out of custody. But on the other hand... That also affects us as far as recruitment goes. When trying to get our name out, trying to get an awareness spread out of the existence of this job. Because people don't know that LAPD has jails and that they have correctional officers, it affects the number of applicants we receive for this position.

You're a really important cog in the process of law enforcement. It seems like your status is growing because of that.

Officer Gravel: Yes. An arrest is a very visual thing. People on the streets can see it happening and they can videotape it, and they have it all recorded via the Police Officer or someone witnessing it. Once the arrestee comes into custody, that situation changes. We like to think that we treat them so well that nothing really happens. And they leave here, it's been a blip on the radar considering what they have ahead of them. We do our due diligence to ensure that we meet the standards of the Los Angeles Police Dept., which are very difficult to meet. Yes, people don't know that the LAPD has a jail, but it's because the jail is nice, has few issues, and does its job. Or maybe because they're not in that jail, I hope.

Officer Ramirez: It's not as glamorized as the rest of the process. Or as glamorized as the bigger facilities that you see in movies in Hollywood.

Officer Gravel: Very few viral moments happen inside of a facility like this.

What do you wish people knew about the Custody Services Division?

Officer Gravel: It's a great job. It's a lot more rewarding than I anticipated. But there is a stigma that people have in their heads about what a jail looks like and how the people inside of it operate. A lot of it is more boring than you think. It's not as dangerous as anyone considers because of the way we manage it. The one thing that we worry about first and foremost is the safety and security of everyone in the facility, myself included. It is a lot safer than people anticipate. We do a lot of liability and litigation to ensure that everyone who comes into our facility, including the visitors, volunteers, contract workers, whatever, leave as safely as possible.

Officer Ramirez: When someone applies to be a Detention Officer, and you tell your family they think, oh, it's dangerous. They might try to change your mind. But the reality is, 90 percent of our arrestees are cooperative. They want to do their time, they want to get out. There are always going to be times where 10 percent of the population is combative and uncooperative. It's a high-risk job in that aspect. But not as much as people or the media think.

And it's a great job because, as I said, you can start your law enforcement career as early as 18 years old rather than 20 or 21. We're very well compensated for what we do. Our schedule is good, too. We work three-12 schedules. We work 13 days a month, with 15 days off. Very few places offer that schedule, offer you that much time with your family.

It's the greatest job I've ever had. I enjoy what I do. I love this job. It's a great place to be.

Training

How are Detention Officers trained?

Officer Ramirez: We get certified through the state as Correctional Officers. To be a Detention Officer, you must go through the adult core course of corrections. That is a state standard. It's 264 hours, a four-month academy program. On top of that, we train extensively in arrest and control. We do various hours of mental health training for corrections. We will do more training specific to the jail, such as cell extractions, cell placements, use of restraints, and use of different restraints tools. In total, candidates need around 350 hours of different training just to be a Detention Officer on day one. And then continues their...




**THE ALIVE! INTERVIEW
CONTINUES ON
PAGE 25**



**JOIN
CUSTODY
SERVICES**

Custody Services is hiring.

Scan for more information:

Members of the trainee class 11-24.

PROCESSING ARRESTEES



Arrestees are booked and wrist-banded at the booking windows. Demonstrating are Club CEO Robert Larios (back, left) and Detention Officer Eric Ramirez (back, right). Front: Sr. Detention Officer Corey Gravel.



Sworn Officers must accompany their arrestee into the jail for booking. Firearms are not allowed by anyone inside the facility, so Officers carrying weapons must lock their firearms into gun lockers before entering.



Arrestees accompanied by sworn Officers enter the prison here.



Sr. Detention Officer Corey Gravel stands inside the prison's garage. Arrestees in custody enter here before entering the prison.

At a station known as the Sally Port, Detention Officers prepare the paperwork necessary for intake, and arrestees are checked four times for contraband. Arrestees can also be checked at breathalyzers for being under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Later in the process, they are fingerprinted and photographed, and have their irises scanned.





The Club Responds: Still Helping

LA FIRES: The Club is very much still assisting Club Members and other public service employees facing hardships due to the historic and devastating fires that leveled Pacific Palisades and Altadena, and also damaged West Hills, Sylmar, Hollywood Hills, Encino and other locations.

Here's an update:
CLUB CARE TEAM

In late January and into February, the Club Care Team, first organized for the COVID emergency in 2020, personally called all Club Members thought to be affected directly by the fires. The team worked tirelessly to contact more than 1,100 Members. From those calls, the Club learned sadly that 14 Members lost their homes; 40 requested assistance of money for groceries and other day-to-day staples, and clothing. Some supplies were hand-delivered to those in the fire zones, including Altadena.

The Club's helpline remains active for all Club Members. Reach out so we can help you:
help@employeesclub.com

CLUB ANGELS: STILL OFFERING FINANCIAL HELP

Club Angels, the independent nonprofit charity run by Club staff, remains fully in operation to assist fire victims. Club Angels Director Arlene Herrero reports that Club Angels has raised nearly \$5,000 from Members, and that grocery assistance in that amount has been provided to public service employees in need from Los Angeles City and County.

"In times of hardship, kindness and generosity make all the difference," Arlene said. "Thanks go to those who have donated. We truly appreciate our community's willingness to lend a helping hand."

Club Angels, a nonprofit 501c3 charity led by the Club's Arlene Herrero and dedicated staff, is managing the Club outreach through grocery assistance to public service employees facing hardships. Your gift could be tax deductible; consult your tax professional.

Follow this QR code to give via Zelle:



MORE CLOTHING OPEN HOUSES SCHEDULED

The Club organized a second clothing donation open house March 22 at the Club Warehouse in Carson. The open house accepted clothing donations and in turn gave clothing bundles to those in need.

A third open house has been scheduled for 9 a.m. to noon **Sat., May 31**. A range of essentials for all ages is expected to be available. Reservations are required; contact the team at help@clubangels.org

The clothing drives and distribution are coordinated by Guadalupe Lira.

YOU CAN HELP: DONATE TO CLUB ANGELS

Club Angels, a nonprofit 501c3 charity led by the Club's Arlene Herrero and dedicated staff, is managing the Club outreach through grocery assistance to public service employees facing hardships. Your gift could be tax deductible; consult your tax professional.

Follow this QR code to give via Zelle:

REACH OUT IF YOU ARE IN NEED

Members are invited to reach out to the Club if you remain in need. Contact the Club at help@employeesclub.com

"While many of our Members and fire-affected communities are beginning to recover, we understand that some will face challenges in the coming months," said Club COO Summy Lam. "We will continue our efforts to secure more financial donations to ensure Club Angels is prepared to provide assistance as needed."

THANKS TO THE FIRST RESPONDERS

Finally, once again the Club thanks those First Responders – many of whom are Club Members – for their bravery and courage for saving lives during this historic emergency. We are grateful for your service.



The Club's Arlene Herrero (left) greeted Rodrigo Mendez, LADWP, 19 years of City service, Club Member, with his sister and mom, at the Club clothing drive March 22.



The Club's Arlene Herrero (left) greeted Julia Wilkinson, LAPD, 17 years of City service, Club Member, and her husband at the Club clothing drive March 22.



Put your graduation photo in *Alive!*

Club members: Have you had a family member graduate from elementary school... high school...or college? Send us a photo, and we'll publish it in *Alive!*

Make sure you tell us:

- The name of the graduate.
- The school from which they graduated. If a college, tell us their major.
- Their future plans (briefly)
- The name and department of the Club member they're related to, and how they are related



To send a digital photo and your message, go to:



alive.employeesclub.com/graduations

LACERS LOS ANGELES CITY EMPLOYEES' RETIREMENT SYSTEM

IN MEMORIAM

Stephanie Smith

LACERS Wellness Program Manager
4 years of City service



Stephanie Smith

With great sadness, LACERS shares the news of the passing of Stephanie Smith, LACERS Wellness Program Manager. She passed away Jan. 30.

Stephanie was the LACERS Wellness Program Manager since 2020. With Stephanie's extensive experience working in the healthcare industry and background in organizational management, she elevated the Wellness Program during the pandemic by developing virtual engaging webinars and seminars facilitated by outside partners, as well as building relationships with external nonprofit organizations to expand the value of Wellness content for LACERS Retirees.

"Thank you, Stephanie, on behalf of all of us at LACERS," the department said. "Our hearts go out to her husband, daughter and son; the Wellness Team that worked with her; and all her family, friends and colleagues whose lives she touched with her positive and energetic personality. She will be deeply missed."

FOR ACTIVE MEMBERS

Ready to Retire? Use the Decision Sheet

The Retirement Decision Sheet is a guide for important decisions to be made during the retirement process. Service Retirement Unit (SRU) Counselors at LACERS often utilize these sheets during counseling appointments with members, and based on months of usage, changes have been made to create a new, improved decision sheet.

Scan this code:



Sign Up for Retirement Benefits Seminar

Learn about your retirement options and benefits at an upcoming Planning for Retirement webinar, hosted by the LACERS Member Engagement team. Register via your MyLACERS account. Upcoming dates include:

- Thurs., April 3 (in person at California Endowment)**
- Tues., April 15 (webinar, Tier 3)**
- Thurs., April 17 (webinar)**
- Tues., May 6 (webinar)**
- Thurs., May 18 (webinar)**
- Sat., May 24 (in person, LACERS HQ)**

Check the LACERS calendar as events are scheduled.

Webinars/events begin at 9 a.m.

Noelle Kauffman,
Club Director of Sales



A NEW PICTURE PERFECT: **ON THE JOB!** A new photo contest from the Club



Hi Club Members,

Thank you for more than 15 years of your amazing, very best work in Picture Perfect.
It's time for something new: On the Job!

We want to celebrate your everyday moments. So submit photos of your coworkers (or just you) in action at work, working on something special, fun, behind the scenes, routine or even quirky.

Retirees: Send in a photo of you and your fellow City Retirees!

We'll give a \$50 gift card to the first five who submit each month.
I can't wait to see your "On the Job" photos!

— **Noelle**

SUBMIT YOUR
PHOTOS HERE:



DEADLINE: April 16



Noelle's Picture Perfect Contest

Noelle Kauffman, Club Director of Sales

This month's theme was: **Green**



"Smartphones and selfie-sticks swarmed Antelope Valley Poppy Fields in Spring 2023. I opted for a traditional-sized camera and three lenses during our trip. Parking space was even a challenge on the side of the dirt road. It was worth the shot."

— **Dominique Daito, LAPD**

Noelle's comment: No matter how you spell it, it still looks delicious ... And that's why your photo stands out and looks amazing, Dominique! The green highlights act as an important foundation for the poppies – and that face. Thank you for submitting incredible images consistently that clearly took time and effort to set up and get right. Much appreciated!



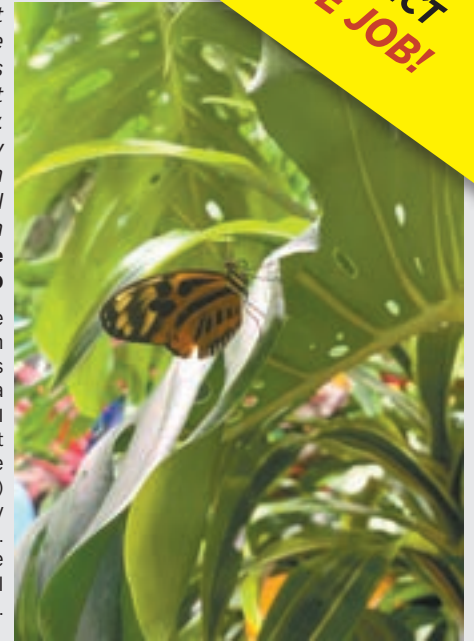
"Lone cypress tree, Monterey, California."

— **Alex Andrews, Building and Safety**

Noelle's comment: Magnificently framed and sharply rendered, Alex. All angles lead to that one cypress tree at the edge of the cliff. Now I want to go back to Monterey. Thanks for submitting!

"I was trying to get a closer look at the butterfly. This was as close as we could get before it flew away. Taken at Butterfly Vivarium, American Museum of Natural History, NYC, March 2024." — **Christine Isidro, LAFD**

Noelle's comment: The image is so sharp I can even see the butterfly's eyes. Amazing; it's like a Pixar movie. (Readers, I recommend you look at this on the *Alive!* website online, for true clarity.) The image is masterfully framed, too, Christine. Thanks for your patience in getting this careful shot, and for submitting.



"From Banff, Canada, Emerald Lake, and Yoho National Park." — **John Otoshi, Retired, LADWP**

Noelle's comment: I count at least three, maybe four, shades of green in this beautiful shot, John – the foreground, the lake, the near pines and the far-away pines. Nature's palate is truly breathtaking; it's amazing what we can see when we take the time. Thanks!



"While looking for 'green,' I came across this macro photo of raindrops on a leaf. I looked at this photo and was wondering why the drops were round. It has to do with surface tension called hydrophobicity. Not enough characters left to explain." — **John Nance, Retired, LADWP**

Noelle's comment: So incredibly delicate, John! Thanks for the image ... and the lesson!



Arlene on the Scene

Alive! follows Arlene Herrero as she meets Club Members.

by **Arlene Herrero**
Vice President of Business Development

Arlene represented the Club in supporting the Los Angeles Port Police Association at its holiday gala in December.



Arlene with LAPPA President Angelo Cumpian, LA Port Police Officer II, Club Member.



Arlene with Capt. Daniel Cobos, LA Port Police, Club Member.



Retired Los Angeles City Employees, Inc.

RLACEI

CONTACT INFORMATION

Retired Los Angeles City Employees, Inc. (RLACEI)



Ann Seales, President
Terminal Annex
P.O. Box 86264
Los Angeles, CA 90086
PHONE: (800) 678-4145, ext. 706
EMAIL: Ann.Seales@RLACEI.org
ON THE WEB: www.RLACEI.org

2025 Executive Board of Directors

Ann Seales, *President*
Beverly J. Clark, *First Vice President*
Mark Blunk, *Second Vice President*
Loucin (Lucy) Artinian, *Treasurer*
Nancy Hammoudian, *Secretary*

RLACEI DIRECTORS

Dial (800) 678-4145 plus extension

Beverly Anderson, <i>Nominations Chair</i>	Ext. 702
Loucin (Lucy) Artinian, <i>Treasurer</i>	Ext. 718
Mark Blunk, <i>Audit Chair</i>	Ext. 704
Beverly J. Clark, <i>Publicity Director</i>	Ext. 716
Nancy Hammoudian, <i>Secretary</i>	Ext. 705
Vicki Keoseian, <i>Entertainment Chair</i>	Ext. 719
Joe Quan, <i>Technology Director</i>	Ext. 703
Ann Seales, <i>President</i>	Ext. 706
Larry Tinson, <i>Director</i>	Ext. 708
Leonard Torres, <i>Director</i>	Ext. 707

RLACEI RETIREE HELPLINE: (800) 678-4145, Ext. 0

For retirement assistance, call the Retiree Hotline and leave a message. A Director of RLACEI will return your call and assist you with your concerns.

RLACEI WEBSITE

Visit the RLACEI website www.RLACEI.org to find the latest news. Call (800) 678-4145 Ext. 0 to make suggestions. EMAIL: Contact@RLACEI.org

MAILING ADDRESS:

Retired Los Angeles City Employees Inc.
Terminal Annex
P.O. Box 86264
Los Angeles, CA 90086

Change of Address?

Please notify Ann Seales, Membership Chair, at (800) 678-4145 ext. 706 or Ann.Seales@RLACEI.org for a change of address or to add or change your email address. Also notify LACERS, ACEBSA, LAPCU, and LAFCU as applicable.



Send in your
Interesting
News
Contributions!

Contact: **Beverly J. Clark**, Publicity Director
Email: Beverly.Clark@RLACEI.org
Phone: (800) 678-4145 ext 716

RETIREE EVENTS

Thurs., May 15	Spring Fling: Western Theme Friendship Auditorium 3201 Riverside Dr. 11:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.
Thurs., Sept. 18	Summer Picnic- Luau Friendship Auditorium 3201 Riverside Dr. 11:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.
Thurs., Dec. 11	Holiday Party Friendship Auditorium 3201 Riverside Dr. 11:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.

RLACEI EVENTS RESERVATION LINE

Call: (800) 678-4145, ext. 701
or Email: contact@rlacei.org

Due to staffing, telephone confirmation cannot be provided.



Beverly J. Clark

THE NEXT CHAPTER: ENJOYING RETIREMENT

by Beverly J. Clark, Publicity Director

The Three Stages of Old Age

Did you know there are several phases of old age? I didn't, until my son, who is working on his doctoral degree, told me about the classifications. I found it interesting and wanted to share it.

Here's what I found: Old age is a natural phase of life, marked by unique experiences, challenges, and opportunities for growth. It is commonly divided into three stages: the "young-old," the "middle-old," and the "old-old." Each stage encompasses distinct characteristics that shape one's journey through the later years of life.

- 1. The Young-Old (ages 65–74):** This stage is often characterized by vitality and active engagement with life. Many individuals in this phase are newly Retired and have the opportunity to explore hobbies, travel and spend more time with family and friends. Physically and mentally, most people in the young-old stage remain relatively healthy, though they may notice subtle changes in energy levels and physical stamina. Social connections and maintaining an active lifestyle are key to thriving during this time.
- 2. The Middle-Old (ages 75–84):** The middle-old stage can bring more noticeable changes in health and mobility. Physical limitations may arise, requiring adjustments to

daily routines. This period may also prompt introspection as individuals reflect on their achievements, relationships and legacy. Emotional well-being becomes especially important, and staying socially connected can help combat feelings of isolation. Many find new meaning through volunteering, mentoring or spiritual practices.

- 3. The Old-Old (ages 85 and above):** The old-old stage represents a time of significant physical and cognitive changes. Independence may be more challenging to maintain, and caregiving support is often necessary. However, this stage also offers opportunities for profound wisdom and deepened connections with loved ones. Storytelling and sharing life experiences can create a sense of purpose, leaving a lasting impact on younger generations.

Each stage of old age offers its own set of opportunities and challenges. By embracing these stages with resilience and a sense of purpose, individuals can navigate the later years of life with dignity, grace and fulfillment. Society plays a vital role in supporting older adults by fostering environments that promote inclusion, respect and care. ●



Western Roundup

Thursday, May 15, 2025

11:30 – 2:00 PM

FRIENDSHIP AUDITORIUM

3201 Riverside Drive

Los Angeles, CA 90027

Open to all Retired Los Angeles City Employees, Inc. members!

RLACEI member plus one(1) guest limit at no cost

To join RLACEI, call (800) 678-4145 Ext. 706

Please RSVP no later than Thursday, May 8, 2025

RLACEI 2025 Western Roundup Reservation Form

Name _____ Phone _____ Email _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Number of Attendees _____ (Limit 2)

Email to: Contact@RLACEI.org

or

Mail to: RLACEI, P.O. Box 86264

Los Angeles, CA 90086

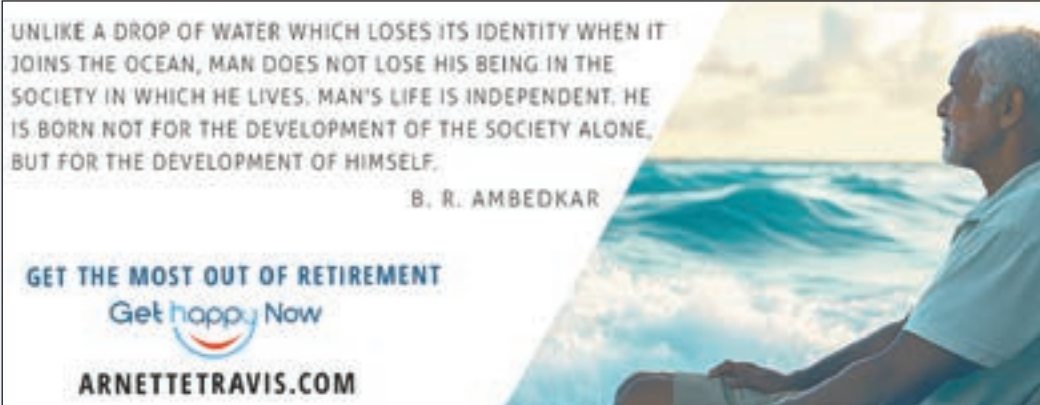
or

Call: (800) 678-4145 Ext 701

Only RLACEI members are eligible to win prizes.



For Retired Club Members



GET HAPPY SERIES

By Arnette Travis
Author/Activist/Advocate, RLACEI Contributing Author



The Power of Choice



Arnette Travis

"Unlike a drop of water which loses its identity when it joins the ocean, man does not lose his being in the society in which he lives. Man's life is independent. He is born not for the development of the society alone, but for the development of himself."

— B.R. Ambedkar

These days, many people are in a heightened state of awareness of cultural and political events that affect our values and way of life. To be more specific, many people are "tuned in" to the point of being anxious in some cases, and hostile in others.

Between our consumer-driven culture, the 24-hour news cycle and social media messaging, we seem to have little need or opportunity to form our individual beliefs. The pressure to buy-in to the beliefs of others can be intense, and often results in feelings of inadequacy, FOMO (Fear of Missing Out), arguments or estrangements. A wholesale buy-in to what others believe - no matter who they are - often is a dangerous proposition.

How can we become and remain happy in this environment? Exercise the power of choice!

There are five important choices: We can choose our focus, what things mean, and what to do.

- **Focus on the good** - When life is good, enjoy it. Happiness doesn't come to people who don't appreciate what they have when they have it.
- **Create your own culture** - Avoid watching too much TV or reading/watching social media postings. Instead, fill your time with meaningful experiences. The time you spend watching TV or social media is time you disempower yourself: your wants, hopes, plans, loves; your family, etc. Also, remember that what you own is not who you are. Things are just things.
- **Don't worry** - Worry is an unhealthy and destructive mental habit that has never, and will never, result in anything good. We now know that our physical condition is largely determined by our emotional life, which is regulated by our thoughts.
- **Embrace change** - As people who have decades of lived experience with cultural change, we Retirees can look back and see that change is inevitable, constant and many times chaotic. It pays to remember that no matter how good or bad a situation is, it will change.
- **Protect yourself** - Time and energy are the most valuable resources we have in life, and both are limited. Your very existence is defined by how you use these resources and when you realize this, you start to understand why you feel drained when you spend time in activities, places or with people that are not suitable for you. Make your life a safe haven in which only compatible people are allowed.

In Closing

Your life is yours alone. Others can try to persuade you to their way of thinking, being and doing, they can't decide for you. Make sure that your thoughts and actions align with your intuition, values and desires. ●

Happily yours,
Arnette

LACERS BOARD UPDATE

by Michael R. Wilkinson, LACERS Commissioner MikeWilkinson4LACERS@gmail.com



Michael R. Wilkinson

LACERS Reports Investment Gains

The LACERS Board has set a 3 percent Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) for Tier 1 and Tier 1 enhanced members starting July 2025. They also requested a 2.6 percent discretionary COLA from the City Council to offset inflation losses.

The Los Angeles area Consumer Price Index was 3.3 percent, which resulted in the maximum 3 percent COLA for Tier 1 and Tier 1 Enhanced retirees, and .3 percent going to a COLA bank. The bank can be used to increase the COLA in future years when the CPI drops below 3 percent. Tier 3 members receive a 2 percent COLA and no banking.

There is no longer a Tier 2, and Tier 3 is made up of members who started with the City on or after Feb. 21, 2016, unless they qualified for Tier 1 membership.

The LACERS board made similar requests for a discretionary COLA in April 2023 for an additional 2.6 percent, and March 2024 for an added 2.85 percent, but the City Council did not act on the requests.

I generally get some questions about why some other pension system or Social Security has a different COLA. The answer is that each plan has its own rules to determine the CPI and has different measuring dates and methods. Some use a specific month to measure the CPI while others use an average for the entire year. The result is that sometimes the LACERS COLA will be less than that of another plan, but sometimes it is more. ●



RLACEI MEMBERS

Not an RLACEI member?

**Join and
like us on
FACEBOOK**

Call (800) 678-4145 x706 or visit our
website at RLACEI.ORG

Join today!



Become an RLACEI Member!

RLACEI is dedicated to advocating for retiree interests. Members of the Retired Los Angeles City Employees, Inc. enjoy all RLACEI events such as, member picnics and holiday party.

**Call (800) 678-4145 x706
or visit our
website at RLACEI.ORG**

**JOIN
TODAY!**

*"Protecting Retirement
Benefits since 1973"*

CLUB AWARDS

Meet the Best

CLUB HONORED 6 AT RECENT ANNUAL LUNCHEON. MEET THEM!

THE CLUB: These are your Employees of the Year, Club Members! A new program that began at the Club annual luncheon in January celebrates, honors and thanks treasured Club Members ... and they're nominated by fellow Club Members like you. Meet your 2025 Employees Club of California Employees of the Year. Congratulations to all the very worthy recipients! ●



Club CEO Robert Larios delivered remarks to open the luncheon.

EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR AWARD

City of Los Angeles

Larna Jordan

Management Analyst
Public Works/Street Lighting

- 17 years of City service
- 9 years of Club Membership

"Larna Jordan is outstanding because she's very knowledgeable and always works outside of her job description," a nominator wrote in the application. "She is a very understanding Supervisor."

Larna began her City service at Airports 17 years ago. She was promoted to Sr. Administrative Clerk in Street Lighting more than 10 years ago.

"Larna has been the greatest supervisor I have ever worked with," a nominator wrote. "She always challenges me in a great way ... to always prepare [me] for all promotions. Not only does she prepare you, she supports you in every aspect. She encourages me to be a better worker and leader."

"We created a family in our department."



Larna Jordan

State of California

Porsha Rodgers

Office Service Supervisor
California Dept. of Social Services

- 7 years of State service
- 5 years of Club Membership

"Porsha is a fantastic person, Supervisor, leader," wrote a nominator. "She has compassion and understanding. [She's a] great problem solver, and stern when necessary."

"Whenever I have an issue, I can always go to her with any situation. If she doesn't know the answer, she will find out and get back to me."

Porsha began her service to the State of California in 2017, and has been with the Dept. of Social Services since 2022.

"When I started, I was taught to do things a certain way," a nominator wrote. "When Porsha arrived, she showed me very simple ways to do the same thing."



Porsha Rodgers

Retired

Cynthia Billingslea

Customer Service Representative, Retired
Los Angeles Dept. of Water and Power

- 30 years of City service
- 25 years of Club Membership

Since her retirement, Cynthia founded the Hey Girlfriend Network, is a nonprofit that provides grassroots assistance to those in need, including but not limited to low-income families, women, underprivileged youths, homeless individuals and human trafficking victims.

Her network "stands as a testament to fostering community empowerment and catalyzing impactful change," a nominator wrote. "In addition, she has several community events throughout the year for men and women to engage in community, networking, and the promotion of small businesses."

Cynthia began her civil service career with the LAPD in 1991 as a Property Officer. She retired from the LADWP in 2022.

"Her guiding principle, 'be the positive change you want to see in others,' not only inspires but is a call to action for people to actively instigate positivity and transformation within their spheres She is firm on the sentiment that if everyone did just one thing to make their local community a better place, it could truly change the world."



Cynthia Billingslea

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Ruth Perry

Personnel Officer, Retired
Los Angeles City Employees Retirement System (LACERS)

- 27 years of City service
- 31 years of Club Membership

Past President, Retired Los Angeles City Employees, Inc. (RLACEI) – 2019-2024



Ruth Perry

"Ruth's impact [on the City of Los Angeles] is monumental," said Club CEO Robert Larios in introducing Ruth Perry at the Club annual luncheon in January. "Serving as the first Latina and female President of RLACEI, she broke barriers and set a powerful example of inclusion and leadership. Her presidency marked a new chapter for the organization and its commitment to diversity."

Before her retirement, Ruth had a remarkable career with the City of Los Angeles. Starting as a Clerk Typist in 1991, she was promoted to Sr. Personnel Analyst II and ultimately Personnel Officer for LACERS, retiring in 2018. Her work laid a foundation for fairness, professionalism and excellence.

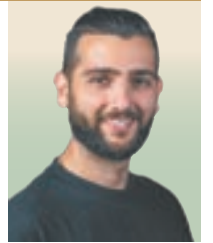
"Throughout her tenure with RLACEI, Ruth has shown a tireless dedication to serving Retired City employees," Robert continued. "She championed Retiree benefits, facilitated crucial partnerships, and worked to reform federal laws like the Windfall Elimination Provisions and Government Pensions Offset. She also prioritized fostering community, ensuring retirees felt engaged, informed, and supported at all times."

"Ruth's legacy is one of strength, advocacy and inspiration."

PRESIDENT'S AWARD

Petros Khachatryan

Director of Information Technology
Employees Club of California



Petros Khachatryan

The annual President's Award – one of the Club's most meaningful and distinguished honors, celebrates a Club employee. The awardee is nominated entirely by Club staff peers.

"Petros, your leadership does more than produce results," Club CEO Robert Larios said in honoring Petros. "It builds trust, drives collaboration, and fosters an environment where everyone is encouraged to excel. With a remarkable ability to connect with the hearts and minds of the people you work with, you've shown an unmatched level of empathy and understanding. Your innovation and pioneering vision have propelled us forward, but it's your care and encouragement that have inspired us all to grow and thrive."

"Thank you for all you've done for this organization. You've set a benchmark with your compassion, innovation and dedication that will continue to guide us for years to come."

LADWP

Monique Ortiz

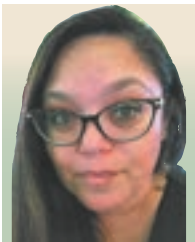
Sr. Administrative Clerk
Los Angeles Dept. of Water and Power

- 27 years of City service
- 12 years of Club Membership

"Having worked in a male-dominated field, Monique has been promoted twice since arriving at LADWP," a nominator wrote. "Monique still gets calls and emails from her past [departments] at the LADWP for assistance, even though she is not at that department. She is still willing to help, while still fulfilling her own duties."

"Monique has taken her past leadership skills to a new level ... and made a better working environment by leading by example – motivating and inspiring not just by being a team leader, but doing what's best for the team."

"Monique has made a positive impact by volunteering to supervise, having a positive attitude, inspiring others to do the same, mentoring and coaching, embodying the organization's mission and ethics. She kills with kindness and professionalism with whomever she interacts. She's a great listener."



Monique Ortiz



21% off *Pizza* Fest!

with your Club Membership

April 26 & 27 at the LA Live Event Deck

More Details at EmployeesClub.com



Includes
Pizza,
Drinks,
& Dessert

Noelle Kauffman,
Club Sports
Commissioner



CLUB SPORTS

APRIL 2025

Club Sports Gears Up for a Fun-Filled Summer!

The Club Sports program is heating up just in time for summer, with exciting events on the horizon and more opportunities for Members to get involved, get active and have fun! summer evenings outdoors, the Coed Softball League is perfect for all skill levels.



Softball

SUMMER SOFTBALL LEAGUE - JUNE-AUGUST

Batter up! A Summer Softball League is coming to Glassell Park on Tuesday evenings from June through August. Whether you're swinging for the fences or cheering from the sidelines, this league promises friendly competition and great community vibes under the evening lights.



Soccer

SOCCER TOURNAMENT - DATE TBD

Cleats at the ready! A Club Sports soccer tournament is in the works, with the date still to be determined. Get your teams ready and stay tuned for more details on registration and format.



Basketball

BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT - DATE TBD

Calling all hoop stars! A Club Sports basketball tournament is also on the way. While the official date is still to be announced, now's the perfect time to start practicing your shot and rallying your squad.



CLUB SPORTS IS EVOLVING We Want Your Input!

Club Sports is growing, and so are the possibilities! What new sports or activities would you like to see added to the program? Whether it's pickleball, volleyball or something totally unexpected, your voice matters.

Email your sports commissioner, **Noelle Kauffman**, at nkauffman@employees-club.com with your suggestions, ideas, and requests.

Stay tuned for updates, and don't miss your chance to be a part of the action this summer.

Consolidate your debt

with a Personal Loan
that fits your needs



- ✔ Low rates & flexible terms*
- ✔ Use it to consolidate debt
- ✔ Easy application process

Ask us for details

Call our special hotline at 213-451-4738. Click <https://info.wpccu.org/a125d> for rates.



800-300-9728

wpccu.org

@wpccu



Water and Power Community Credit Union

* All loans are subject to credit approval. Restrictions apply. Consolidating multiple debts into one monthly loan payment can help manage debt. Ask us about our loan details, including refinancing options for your existing loans. WPCCU membership required.



Life's Important Moments

Share your news... and send in a photo!

Have you gotten married? Had a baby? Graduated? Is a family member in the military? Send in a photo and a paragraph, telling us the details. We love to share your good news.



- Births**
- Weddings**
- Graduations**
- Special Achievements**
- Military Service**
- Tell Their Story**



Send your photos and text online:

alive.employeesclub.com/lifsmoments

Retirements*

We honor the people who have spent their working lives building, managing and imagining a better LA, and are now Retired. We thank and appreciate all you have done!

Below is a listing of those who Retired from the City. To all we say, welcome to the best years!

NAME	TITLE	DEPT.	YEARS	NAME	TITLE	DEPT.	YEARS	NAME	TITLE	DEPT.	YEARS
Alejandro, Roberto M.	Special Prog. Asst.	Rec and Parks	9	Garcia, Michael A.	Customer Service	LADWP	—	Reyes, Michiko M.	Chief Admin. Asst.	City Attorney	27
Alonso, Patrick	Water Quality	LADWP	—	Garcia, Rogelio	Cement Finisher	LADOT	14	Richardson, Mary	City Planning Associate	Planning	23
Alvelais, Lucia V.	Power System	LADWP	—	Gardiner, Denise R.	Water Distribution	LADWP	—	Robinson, Edward	Refuse Coll. Truck Op.	Public Works	12
Andelin, Richard A.	Civil Eng. Associate	Public Works	31	Garibian, Victor	Sr. Construction Insp.	Public Works	23	Sainz, Grace B.	Sr. Mgmt. Analyst	Housing	30
Baek, Bonggun	Librarian	Library	6	Green, Steve C.	Wastewater Treat. Elec.	Public Works	13	Samonte, Jason M.	Transp. Eng. Assoc.	LADOT	11
Ballesteros Jr., Art	Power C&M	LADWP	—	Guirguis, Mona T.	ITS	LADWP	—	Sapone, Lori A.	Fleet Services	LADWP	—
Banayad, Ligaya F.	Water Executive	LADWP	—	Han, Jen Pin	Materials Test. Tech.	Harbor	18	Saunders Jr., Robert F.	Fleet Services	LADWP	—
Barraza, Sandra G.	Sr. Admin. Clerk	LAPD	26	Howard, Andrew	Wastewater Treat. Op.	Public Works	10	Schaefer, Beth A.	Animal Coll. Curator	Zoo	10
Benson, Andrew P.	Management Analyst	Comm. Invest./Fam.	30	Jimenez, Braulio A.	Sr. Construction Insp.	Public Works	30	Shakhov, Oleg N.	Security Officer	LAPD	8
Berumen, Jose	Rehab Constr. Special	Housing	23	Kilayko, Gerard	Sergeant	Airports	25	Shiu, Irene	Water Operations	LADWP	—
Biros, Joseph D.	Water Operations	LADWP	—	Koerner, Steven R.	Power Safety	LADWP	—	Spellman, Brian W.	Metering Services	LADWP	—
Brothers, Amy	Deputy City Attorney	City Attorney	31	Liera, Augustine	Comm. Electr. Supv.	LAPD	26	Strouse, Maria V.	Pub./Comm. Rel. Dir.	Airports	25
Brown, Lance D.	Refuse Coll. Truck Op.	Public Works	35	Magaw, Victoria	Sr. Librarian	Library	35	Swoger, Douglas W.	Director	Housing	18
Buenaventura, Dominic	Civil Engineer	Public Works	36	Martin, Brian D.	Fleet Services	LADWP	—	Takai, Christopher T.	Air Cond. Mech. Supv.	Gen. Services	16
Case, James E.	Power Transmission	LADWP	—	McDaniel, Tajuana C.	Customer Services	LADWP	—	Thompson, Clinston M.	Custodian	Gen. Services	23
Chamo, Arturo	Recreation Asst.	Rec and Parks	3	Medina, Miguel S.	Wastewater Treat. Op.	Public Works	21	Toburen Jr., Randall G.	Water Distribution	LADWP	—
Chang, Marina J.	Engineer	LADOT	35	Miramontes, Maria T.	PR Commun. Operator	Airports	27	Tuey, Joel C.	Heating/Refrig. Insp.	Bldg. & Safety	20
Chapman, Catherine L.	Secretary	Airports	28	Miranda, Ernesto D.	Power New Business	LADWP	—	Turner, Timothy W.	Security Officer	Airports	20
Cunanan, Marites A.	Sr. Mgmt. Analyst	Housing	34	Morishita, Scott O.	Pt. & D Energy Dist.	LADWP	—	Veraldi, Tracy E.	Bckgrnd. Invest. Mgr.	Personnel	21
Danganan, Marlo C.	Sr. Building Oper. Eng.	Gen. Services	30	Muller, Roberto E.	Power Supply	LADWP	—	Vincent, Tobias A.	Water Distribution	LADWP	—
Duarte, Adolfo	Customer Service	LADWP	—	Ng, Becky M.	DEI/Human Resources	LADWP	—	Wang, Julie	Database Architect	LAPD/LADWP	7/—
Everitt III, Wills S.	Customer Service	LADWP	—	Nicosia, Joseph M.	Sr. Plumbing Inspector	Bldg. & Safety	16	Westbrook, Theatrice	Customer Service	LADWP	—
Ferreira, David R.	Power C&M	LADWP	—	Nwosu, Tia L.	Corp. Strategy	LADWP	—	Wright, Anita M.	Power Supply	LADWP	—
Folling, Peter N.	Building Mech. Insp.	Bldg. & Safety	18	Orellana-Knight, Christine	Customer Service	LADWP	—	Yuhan, John K.	Sr. Admin. Clerk	LADOT	14
Gallego, George L.	Water Operations	LADWP	—	Pastrana, Apolinario C.	Water Operating	LADWP	—	Zeisl, Walter S.	Corp. Strategy	LADWP	—
Garcia, David M.	Sr. Construction Insp.	Public Works	24	Pyles, Ronald E.	Refuse Coll. Truck Op.	Public Works	35				
Garcia, Jaime R.	Power Transmission	LADWP	—	Reid, George L.	Fleet Services	LADWP	—				

* NOTE: If you wish to have a listing deleted from our online posting of Retirement notices, please email us at admin@aliveemployeesclub.com, stating the name and department of the Retired person. The request must come from the actual Retired person. We derive our lists from official public records provided by the City and LADWP.



FREE!* CLUB RETIREMENT PLAQUE

Retired or Retiring Soon?

Receive your own personalized Club Retirement Plaque, free! (You must be a Club Member for at least five consecutive years.)

*a \$499 value!

Get started here:



IN MEMORIAM

We honor those who have passed away and recognize their lifelong service to the City of Los Angeles. Their lives mattered to our City and our region. Our thoughts and prayers are with the family and friends of the following current and Retired City employees who were reported to have passed away.

DEPARTMENT	YEARS OF SERVICE	DEPARTMENT	YEARS OF SERVICE	DEPARTMENT	YEARS OF SERVICE	DEPARTMENT	YEARS OF SERVICE				
ACTIVE		Burton, Schuyler	—	Johnson, Clyde M.	General Services	15	Radford, Ozzie D.	Bldg. and Safety	32		
Bolin, Courtland P.	General Services	36	Butler, Wellington C.	LADWP	33	Jones, Patricia	Rec and Parks	30	Reyes, Ray S.	Public Works	27
Dailey, Anthony	LADWP	19	Calleja, Joseph	LADWP	13	Juarez, Benny	—	—	Riggs, Eugenia	LADWP	25
Guzman, Joaquin C.	Public Works	8	Carey, Troy M.	LADWP	29	Kane, Michael F.	LADWP	35	Riley, James P.	Bldg. and Safety	35
Kim, Nam	Public Works	1	Daniels, Helen M.	Airports	28	Kitchen, John F.	—	—	Rincon, Santos R.	Rec and Parks	30
Liggins, Rafael M.	Rec and Parks	6	Dellefield, Richard A.	LADWP	19	Langlois, William J.	LADWP	29	Robertson, Johnny	LADWP	30
Nix, Nancy J.	Library	49	Farrington, Yukue	—	—	Lankes, Paul J.	LADWP	24	Romano, George V.	—	—
Smith, Stephanie G.	LACERS	3	Fick, Sally M.	LADWP	34	Luevano, Stephen L.	LADWP	30	Sklar, Anna	—	—
RETIRED		Ginevan, Richard S.	—	—	Lum, Robert S.	LADWP	29	Smith, Sandra	LADWP	25	
Antwine, Michael	Public Works	35	Godinez, Peter	Library	12	Maxwell, Randyle	LADWP	27	Sreedharan, Santhakuma	Public Works	31
Arakaki, Lawrence T.	—	—	Golden, Irvin H.	—	—	Miller, John E.	LADWP	29	Public Works	31	
Bailey, Judith A.	—	—	Grace, Gilbert M.	LADWP	33	Mir, Mike A.	Airports	25	Thomas, Clive	Public Works	30
Bair, Eugene A.	LADWP	31	Gray, Frederick E.	Public Works	32	Muniz, Gilberto	LADOT	17	Vega-Perez, Imelda	LADWP	21
Barroso, Eliseo A.	—	—	Greenwalt, Edward J.	Animal Services	32	Nichols, Wendell L.	—	—	Weston, Chester A.	LADWP	27
Baxter, Jerry	Rec and Parks	17	Gustafson, Allan R.	LADWP	15	O'Brian, George N.	LADWP	34	Williams, Odom S.	—	—
Biagi, Delwin A.	—	—	Hall, Dahna S.	Rec and Parks	20	Oliver, John L.	LADWP	16	Willis, James G.	—	—
Britt, Jennifer G.	Airports	9	Heisel, William	—	—	Parrett, Gloria	LADWP	41	Wishnak, Ruth	LADWP	23
Brown, Dave A.	ITA	22	Hookstratten, James S.	Rec and Parks	22	Pearce, Robert K.	LADWP	37	Yoshinaga, James M.	—	—
Brown, Thomas L.	LADWP	15	Rec and Parks	22	Placencia, Manuel A.	Public Works	30	Young, Scott D.	Animal Services	30	
			Jackson, Dylan	Public Works	36	Purvis, Henry	Airports	14			
			Jackson, Rogers	—	—	Pusateri, Richard A.	Animal Services	33			

Honored for Their Service

AIRPORTS HONORS EMPLOYEES FOR SERVICE MILESTONES.

AIRPORTS: On Feb. 19, Airports honored 14 employees celebrating service milestones of 30, 35 and 40 years of City service. The celebration was held at the Flight Path Museum on West Imperial Highway.

The event was produced by the Human Resources Dept. **HONORED WERE:**

40 Years of Service

Darline Beatty, Systems Analyst
Raymond Hernandez, Storekeeper

Verneiza Benwikere, Sr. Personnel Analyst
Adriana Renteria, Director of Airports Administration

35 Years of Service

Raymond Jimenez, Sr. Systems Analyst
Michael Gentry,
Airport Police Officer III, Club Member
Rhonda Johnson,
Sr. Accountant, Club Member
Valerie Brown McCain,
Management Analyst, Club Member
Renee Gonzalez Fong,
Chief Management Analyst

30 Years of Service:
Carlette Colvin, Communications Engineering Associate IV, Club Member
Tomi Brent, Chief Management Analyst, Club Member
Maria Rojas, Departmental Chief Accountant IV, Club Member
Cynthia Farris, Security Officer
Denise Sample, Executive Assistant, Airports

Airports CEO John Ackerman congratulated those who had dedicated so many years to City service. Congratulations to all those honored for their service milestones!

The Club thanks Martha Hernandez, Coordinator, Airports/HR, for her assistance in producing this story.



Minerva Gutierrez, Personnel Director III, Club Member, gave welcoming remarks.



Airports CEO John Ackerman congratulated the honorees.



Honoree Carlette Colvin, 30 years of City service, Club Member (center) Aura Moore (left) and Uyen Cat.



Honoree Darline Beatty, Systems Analyst, 40 years of City service, with Aura Moore and Florinda Carlos.



Honoree Renee Gonzalez Fong, Chief Management Analyst, 35 years of City service, with Aura Moore and David Reich.



Honoree Adriana Renteria, 35 years of City service, Director of Airports Administration, with Douglas Webster.

In Memoriam

Anna Sklar

1936-2025

Retired, Mayor's Office, Library, Cultural Affairs, Public Works



Anna Sklar, a longtime public relations writer for several City departments for more than 10 years; a published author; a public radio correspondent; editor of the Los Angeles Historical Society newsletter; contributor to periodicals throughout the country; a letter-writer to *Alive!*; author of *Brown Acres: An Intimate History of the L.A. Sewers, 1860-2008*, reviewed in *Alive!*; among

many other credentials; died in February. She was 88.

A funeral service was held Feb. 27 in Mill Valley, California.

Anna, born in the Bronx, New York City, was also at times a professional dancer, a college instructor of history and broadcast journalism, a union organizer and other pursuits. She was known for her strong advocacy for truth and justice.



Alive!

AROUND THE WORLD



Captain's Log

Traveling with Capt. Michael Barnes, Retired, Harbor

Letter From Brussels

Sprouts, Waffles and Liquid Velvet

Brussels is the trilingual capital of Belgium and is famous for its chocolate, beer, waffles and medieval architecture.

It is a small, walkable city that is easy to explore. Many tourist attractions are within walking distance of the Grand Place or Grote Market Square. The Flemish Baroque-style buildings surrounding the Square, ranging from the former trades Guildhalls to the city's museum in the Neo-Gothic King's House near the Flamboyant Town Hall, are richly decorated with ornate statues and sculptures. If you look closely, you will find a Hard Rock Cafe in one of them.

It's a city full of gastronomic delights; it gave its name to Brussels sprouts (sometimes called mini cabbages), which have been cultivated here since the 16th Century. The humble Belgium waffles we all love began in the Middle Ages as light and thin cakes cooked between two irons sold as a crispy street snack outside churches. Today, there are more than 30 types of waffles in the supermarkets here. Still, most don't taste anything like Belgian waffles, which gained popularity in the United States after the New York World's Fair in 1964 when they were introduced as Bel-Gem waffles. Those waffles are called Brussels waffles here, being airier and not as sweet as the other popular waffles from Liege, which are very thick, rich, and full of pearl sugar.

Brussels' "oldest citizen" and most popular tourist attraction is the Manneken Pis, a small bronze statue cast by Jerome Duquesnoy in 1619, depicting a naked boy urinating into a fountain. Originally called "Petit Julien," the most popular legend claims that the city was under attack, and the enemy had placed barrels of gunpowder by the city gate, lit the fuse and retreated. Fortunately, a little boy desperately needed to relieve himself, and in doing so, he extinguished the fuse. Today, the statue is dressed up in costumes for special occasions. Not to be outdone and to be more politically correct, there is a female counterpart fountain called Jeanneke Pis and a dog, Het Zinneke Pis, who is not a fountain but a bronze statue doing what male dogs do when they see a post!

Close by is the beautiful Saint-Michel-et-Gudule Cathedral, which, like all buildings, was plagued by pigeon droppings. However, the cathedral installed a falconer on the roof, so there are no droppings now.

If it rains, there are many fascinating museums, like the Comic Art Museum and the six museums at the Royal Museum of Fine Arts. Or check out one of the many colorful local bars. The beer here is like liquid velvet, even though the IPAs are not as bitter or exotic-tasting as they are in the USA. All breweries have a special glass for their product. There is even a specially shaped glass holder for coach drivers so that the beverage does not spill while driving their horse-drawn carriages. For more than 500 years, the national spirit has been jenever, from which gin evolved. It's great with tonic.

The Middle Eastern area around the central train station is full of exciting ethnic restaurants, many of which, like the Zain al-Sham and most of the restaurants in the city, are staffed by immigrants. There are also many small, clean, inexpensive hotels here.

Note of interest: Famous actress Audrey Hepburn was born in Brussels.

If you want to see more tourist attractions, ride a Hop-On-Hop-Off bus. They cover much of the city quickly and tell you what you see when you see it.

– The Captain



Market Square in Brussels



Assorted waffles.



Leaving on a fast train from Brussels.

Send in a travel picture holding *Alive!*



- Snap a high resolution photo of you holding *Alive!*
- Go to: alive.employeesclub.com/alivearoundtheworld. You'll find an online form to send your text and pics for publication.

Cooking with the Club

with Chef Robert Larios



Photos: Patty M. Larios

The Art of Comfort Food: A Nostalgic Dish for Rainy Days

I've been thrilled to hear from so many of you! Recently, I received calls and emails from our wonderful Cooking with the Club community, asking for the grilled cheese recipe featured in a previous article. Your excitement and love for this comforting classic inspired me to revisit it and share an updated version that enhances the flavors we all cherish. While sharing this new twist on an old favorite, I wanted to mention that the images used in this article are from the original piece, but don't worry—I plan to post a video on social media soon, demonstrating how to make this updated recipe step by step. Keep an eye out, and let me know what you think!

There's something magical about the cozy aroma of comfort food on a rainy day. It's the kind of magic that brings warmth to your soul and gives you a sense of home. Picture this: soft rain tapping on the windows, the sound of cartoons in the background, and the anticipation of a delicious, hearty meal. That's the feeling I wanted to bottle up and share with you through today's recipe.

Growing up, one of my fondest memories was a rainy Saturday morning spent watching cartoons as my mom whipped up a comforting breakfast. The coziness of those



"Comfort food is not just a meal, it's a memory served warm – a reminder that the simplest dishes often carry the richest stories." – **Chef Robert Larios**

moments inspired me to create a dish that captures that same warmth and nostalgia. This recipe for red pepper tomato basil soup paired with a golden, gooey grilled cheese sandwich is my take on comfort food perfection.

The beauty of this duo is its simplicity. Comfort food should be easy to make, satisfying and adaptable to fit your taste. Don't fret if you don't have sharp cheddar or Havarti cheese on hand. Use whatever cheese melts well and brings you joy. The same goes for the soup. While I love the depth of flavor in tomato and roasted red pepper soup, a classic tomato soup works just as well. This recipe invites creativity, so feel free to make it your own!

Enjoy this dish as a reminder that sometimes the simplest meals create the most comfort. Whether it's a rainy afternoon or just a quiet moment to yourself, this updated recipe is here to warm both your body and your spirit. Keep an eye out for the video demo, and happy cooking!

¡Buen provecho!

Follow this recipe online:



Red pepper tomato basil soup and grilled cheese.

INGREDIENTS

- 2 slices of your favorite bread
- 2 tablespoons dried parsley
- 1 tablespoon dried basil
- Dash of dried dill
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- ¼ cup red onion, diced
- 1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
- Sea salt and pepper to taste
- 2 slices sharp cheddar cheese
- 2 slices Havarti cheese
- 2–4 tablespoons butter, softened
- 1 cup tomato and roasted red pepper soup (low-sodium preferred)

Food Lover's Dictionary:

Havarti cheese: Named after the Danish experimental farm where it was developed, Havarti is often referred to as the Danish Tilsit because of its similarity to that cheese. It's semisoft and pale yellow with small irregular holes. The flavor of young Havarti is mild yet tangy. As the cheese ages, its flavor intensifies and sharpens. Havarti comes in loaves or blocks and is often wrapped in foil.

Bibliography: The New Food Lover's Companion, Sharon Tyler Herbst, 1995, Barron's Educational Series.



DIRECTIONS

Total prep time is 40 minutes Serves 1 - 2



Step 1: Gather and Prepare Ingredients

Cooking is an act of love, so begin by honoring the ingredients. Lay them out on your counter like a painter setting up their palette. Mince your garlic with care, and dice the red onion into uniform, delicate pieces to ensure even cooking. Thinly slice the sharp cheddar and Havarti cheeses, appreciating their creamy textures. This moment of preparation sets the tone for your dish.



Step 2: Build the Base of Flavor

Heat a medium saucepan over medium heat, and add the extra virgin olive oil. Glide the minced garlic and diced onion into the pan, letting them sizzle and weep their fragrant oils. Season with a pinch of sea salt and pepper. Stir occasionally, ensuring the garlic doesn't brown but rather softens and melds with the onions. This step is what Anthony Bourdain might call "building flavor at the foundation."



Step 3: Elevate the Soup

Pour the tomato and roasted red pepper soup into the saucepan. Stir gently, and sprinkle in the dried parsley, basil, and a whisper of dill. Take a moment to pause and taste. Adjust the seasoning, if needed. Let the soup warm slowly over low heat, allowing the flavors to meld like old friends catching up.



Step 4: Prepare the Bread for the Sandwich

While the soup bubbles softly, turn your attention to the bread. Softened butter should glide over each slice, creating an even, glossy coat. Heat a cast iron skillet, reversed by chefs and home cooks alike for its ability to deliver the perfect crust. Once hot, lay down the buttered side of each slice, listening for the gentle hiss of bread meeting pan. Toast until they achieve a golden hue that speaks of care and patience.

Cooking Tidbit

Maximize the flavor of dried herbs by rubbing them between your fingers before adding them to your recipe. This release of natural oils enhances their aroma and taste. If you're using fresh herbs, keep in mind their flavor is much stronger, so adjust the quantity accordingly.



Step 5: Create the Cheese Symphony

Turn one of the toasted sides up, and carefully layer the sharp cheddar and Havarti slices. Ensure the layers are even, promising perfect bites throughout. Top with the second slice of bread, butter side up. This simple yet meticulous choice invites balance to every bite.

Step 6: Perfect the Grilled Cheese

Press gently with a spatula, encouraging the cheese to soften and spread. Flip the sandwich after about three minutes, ensuring the crust develops evenly on both sides. The cheese should transform into molten layers that pull with each bite, a comforting tug that evokes nostalgia and warmth.



Step 7: Assemble and Serve with Elegance

Slice the grilled cheese diagonally to reveal its gooey interior and place it artfully beside a bowl of the velvety soup. Here's where plating matters: Add a sprig of fresh basil or a sprinkle of dried parsley on the soup for a touch of finesse. Say, "Bon appétit!" as you serve this dish

THE *ALIVE!* INTERVIEW

Duty and Compassion

— CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15

On-the-job training.

Officer Gravel: It's a four-month academy and a six-month probation. The academy is the pinnacle of a training facility for Detention Officers. We try to set the highest standard possible. That comes with being a part of the department. When you say you've been trained by the LAPD, that carries a lot of weight. Anywhere you go in the country and in the world, people know us globally of course. It's not out of the realm of possibility that other agencies ask to attend our Detention Officer academy or our sworn academy. Long Beach, Santa Monica, sometimes Pasadena and sometimes Burbank have sent their Detention Officers to our academy because they like the standards that we set.

So the state program is in Sacramento? And the LAPD Detention Officer academy is taught at the LAPD Academy in Elysian Park?

Officer Ramirez: No. Our LAPD Academy is certified through the state to teach the course. We go through the LAPD Academy for that state course. We don't have to go to Sacramento.

Officer Gravel: And the LAPD Detention Officer academy is led at the Ahmanson Recruit Training Center near LAX [on Manchester Avenue in Westchester], not in Elysian Park.

Only about two months of the LAPD training is required by the state. The additional two months are tactics, training and agency-specific training. The LAPD gets us more prepared than just the basic state standards.

Compassion vs. Duty

What does success look like for you, and for the division?

Officer Gravel: Success in a jail is that there's peace in the jail. Everything's quiet, everyone's taken care of. When everything's going right, it's very mundane. We like to have a peaceful work area, as everyone does. Unfortunately, I don't work as a typist or a banker, where someone comes in and yells, and that would be very unusual. Most of the time when people come in, they're usually upset. It's the worst day of their life or near it. They may be withdrawing from drugs or suffering from some kind of mental illness. Having to deal with that on an individual basis for every single person brought in is a challenge.

When our jail is quiet and when our arrestees and our inmates are taken care of, and the morale and mental and physical wellbeing of our Detention Officers are taken care of, that's a successful day. It doesn't look like much from the outside when we're doing well, but that is a good thing. I would say almost every day is a very successful day.

Officer Ramirez: Success is that arrestees are healthy, that they're fed, that our Detention Officers go home safely, that nobody is injured on the job, and that we kept everyone alive. One of the struggles that we deal with here is losing somebody in custody from a withdrawal or suicide. A successful day or successful year – a successful calendar – means not losing anybody in custody.

We do a very great job in that. Last year, we booked more than 40,000 arrestees into our LAPD facilities. We had various suicide attempts and saved them all except one that we weren't able to save.

Those are the struggles that we deal with. Those are the statistics that we have. When we put up our statistics compared to other facilities in the country, we do amazingly well. We outperform them. But at the end of the day, if you lose one out of 40,000, that's still one person's life. That's someone's family member, someone's father, someone's child, someone's mother. For me, success is keeping all our arrestees alive, and keeping our officers safe.

It seems like one of the central conflicts that Detention Officers might have, is emotion versus duty, or compassion versus duty. How do you deal with that?

Officer Gravel: Yes, of course. When people first come in, we've booked some of them for allegedly having done the most heinous things you could think of beyond imagination. How terrible some of these crimes are. But the training that we put all of our Detention Officers through reminds us: I'm not a judge, a jury, or an executioner; this person is a human being, and I'm at work. We have to treat this person with diligent respect and ensure that they are given every possibility that you would give your own family member, regardless of what crime they're in there for. They're innocent until they're proven guilty, even if with all the evidence in the world against them that they've done all these terrible things. I consider every single person in our facility innocent because they haven't been proven guilty yet. We're just holding them until they get to that day in front of a judge.

Officer Ramirez: The things that we see and the things that we have to encounter on a regular basis – those things desensitize us to a lot of things. We go through implicit bias training that helps us identify any implicit biases that we have and to act in correspondence with our core values here at the department. It is definitely a challenge, but it's something that we're well equipped to handle. It's something that we do regularly. We have to forget our personal biases or how we feel about someone's charges and remember that they're only accused at that point. We have to treat everybody the same. We have to treat everybody fairly.

Officer Gravel: As far as the psychological toll it will take on someone who works in a facility like this, I'm not going to say that it is free from bad days. But the department has an enormous breadth of free services to our Detention Officers and to our family members that includes behavioral science. We advertise it every other day or every third day to ensure that the Detention Officers have psychological help when necessary. The department offers a lot of outside free services to help out in case something beyond the scope of your job happens.

Who's allowed in your facilities? Attorneys? Families?

Officer Ramirez: Each facility has visiting hours. Typically they're from 8 a.m. to noon and 1 to 3 p.m. We allow all arrestees to have one visit a day. It's a 15-minute visit; it's what we can allow because of the restraints that we have here. Typically a visitation is limited to one adult and if needed, one adult and one child. Families are allowed to see their loved ones regularly if they wish to.

Privileged visitation – attorneys, clergy, DCFS, doctors and bail bondsmen – can come at all hours of the day or night, and take as long as they need to. Privileged visitors can come and go without any time restraints within our meeting rooms or visiting rooms.

Protecting and Serving

What do you love about what you do?

Officer Ramirez: I grew up in South LA, South Central. I've seen some of the people I grew up with, my neighbors or distant family members, come through here. It's rewarding to help them through the situation they're in. When people come here, it is likely the worst day of their life. It is a difficult time for them. And the quality of service and understanding that we provide helps them get through it. It can help shape their perception of law enforcement.

What's become very clear is that we do serve our community. LAPD's motto is "To Protect and Serve." We're also serving here. I'm serving the community, the families of our arrestees, and the arrestees themselves. We get them through a difficult time during their stay – although they

may still have a lot ahead of them.

Officer Gravel: I know it's kind of a cheesy thing to say, but you spend a lot of time with your coworkers, and you get to know them very well; it's almost like a deployment. I might see my coworkers more than I see my family, even with our 15 days off a month. I have plenty of days off to enjoy with my family. But the people I spend my time with while I'm at work make it worthwhile. When you spend 12 hours in a place per shift, you essentially live there; you're going to eat several meals with the people you're around. You're going to share a lot of stories with them and develop camaraderie.

They back you up, too. How can I help you? What do you need help with? How can we make sure the ship is running correctly? They're good people. The department does a very good job hiring outstanding individuals.

Officer Ramirez: We like the individuals that we work with. When you have a good work group, it just makes the job a lot easier. I love all my partners.

Officer Gravel: I say it a lot. I say I love you to my family, but I say, "I love you" to my partners a lot because I care about their wellbeing. I'm constantly calling them on my days off to ensure they're doing okay.

Officer Ramirez: It becomes a second family.

Officer Gravel: Here's a story. One of our partners recently lost her home in the fires that took place in Los Angeles. Devastating. It is not something you want to have happen to anyone you care about. This division – being tight, family oriented and really caring for one another – donated as much money as we had; everyone donated as much cash as we had in our pockets and tried to give her enough to pay for rent or a hotel or whatever she needed to get her through the next couple days. She had nothing.

It didn't stop there. We are still running fundraisers to try and get her more in her pocket, bringing her things for her kids to play with and read, and doing everything we can in our power to help her. She would do the same for me.

It's not just the people who work in this building, it's the entire division of 400 individuals who put forth to try and prop up our family. The LAPD has also reached out. Everyone is rallying to support someone who has fallen on hard times.

We get together for barbecues all the time. We might as well dedicate them to a good cause and invite other divisions to buy a couple burgers and chips and support a good cause.

Officer Ramirez: Our supervision is very compassionate. When our Detention Officers have been diagnosed with cancer, when our Officers are going through a difficult time in their lives, when our Officers lost their house in the fire, we band together.

I mentioned arrestee suicides before. Well, I've resuscitated people back to life. Holiday weekends are the most difficult times – that's when we get the most suicide attempts. It's when people are the most depressed, when they are the most saddened that they're in custody and missing time with their family. We mention that in roll call during the holidays, to be aware of it, to notice people who are more withdrawn, maybe crying more than usual. We have been able to successfully prevent suicide attempts because we're aware of it.

Sometimes situations can be tough, but saving that life sticks in my mind. We're fortunate enough to have been able to save a life.

Right. Of course it would, and should. Detention Officers, thank you so much for your time today. I have learned a lot. And thank you for all you do for the City of Los Angeles. We honor you.

Officer Gravel: Thank you.

Officer Ramirez: Thanks! ●

THE ALIVE! INTERVIEW **Part 2****Rita and the County**

— CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

Measure H passed by nearly 70 percent to provide revenue to combat the homeless crisis in the County. It was passed initially for 10 years, ending in 2027. But in 2024, Measure A replaced Measure H, imposing a half-cent sales tax countywide to fund homeless services and affordable housing development for the future.

Lasting Influence

You went through some of the most vital and consequential departments in the City exclusive of the sworn departments. You were involved in almost all of them. Do you ever consider that a lot of the work that you did was foundational and important to what those departments are trying to do now?

Rita: Absolutely. Take trash, for example. I could go into a meeting about trash, and they would be all mad about paying a trash fee. It would be real contentious. I would be sitting at the table with my Diet Coke, and I'd ask – is there anybody in this room who hasn't thrown away a piece of trash or flushed the toilet today? Not a soul could say no. We couldn't keep doing what we had been doing, and we needed resources to do things better. I believe that's paying off today. I think all the things we worked on – Hyperion Water Treatment Plant, wastewater, recycling, landfills – are vital today.

At Transportation, we worked on left-hand-turn signals, parking meters, street diets, bike lanes ... all of these things were in their infancy of development, and they've gotten much, much, better since my time. When I was on the MTA board, we did a lot of work on rail lines. Where would we be without that?

I'm proud of everything we did; it was a team, not just me. People would come to us with their problems, and we'd work at solving them. Because I always had an open-door policy, people felt like they could come in and whine to me and lay it on my lap, and it would go away. I'd say, "No whining! Let's work on it together and see if we can solve it." That's where the sign comes from. No whining!

Growing up, I was never allowed to whine. I was always encouraged to solve problems, not whine about them.

People who worked with me know I had two sayings: "This too shall pass," and "no whining."

Do you still use the sign?

Rita: Sometimes!

Aging and Service: The Future of LA

From your view, is Los Angeles on a good path? What gives you confidence about LA and its future?

Rita: Having had that opportunity to work for both the City and the County gives me a unique perspective, I guess. I don't want to say I was impactful, but I was "in the room." I was at the seat of decision-making many times, and I think it gave me a perspective of how leadership and staff have to think about the constituency. My hope is that we can just continue to do things well, but that we will accept that there will be mistakes. You can't just build something, you have to build it and maintain it so that it will be sustainable. That's why I think the County parks issue was so important, because we made something sustainable. We thought about not only building parks but how to maintain and take care of them.

My hope for the City is that we'll continue to do excellent things. We have so many more challenges than we used to have. Oh, my God. The unhoused – and housing in general for everybody – are critical issues for the City. And then jobs: How are we going to prepare our young people in education? How do we prepare them for the next level of what's to be?

I've been working lately on aging in the County and the City. How are we preparing ourselves for the aged? The City's getting older. More and more people are aging. How do we address those issues?

What are you working on, specifically?

Rita: I'm working with Sankofa Elders Project, an Eco-Group that is funded by the SCAN Foundation and supported by Supervisor Holly J. Mitchell, 2nd Supervisorial County District. Over the past year, we have been led by Carlene A. Davis, an exceptional social impact leader. We will finalize our Black Eldering Bill of Rights in May.

As ambassadors, we're trying to put together a platform of actions that can turn into legislation for the advancement for elders in the City and County. It's really becoming a problem of addressing what

services are offered in the City and County, and how people can get to them. We did a needs assessment. What do elders need? Sankofa is advising the County on some of these issues. It troubled me when Mike [her late husband] got Alzheimer's. I wasn't sure where to go or what to do. He wasn't an elder, but it's a disease that effects mostly elders. We're trying to find out what we can do and figure that out.

The Club is looking at that, too.

Rita: Yes, right. With Sankofa, I sit at a table with women and men from all over the County, and we're all addressing this issue from so many different ways. How to take care of yourself, or who will put your trash can out if you can't put it out. Building a community of neighbors and other people will be helpful – some kind of way that we can start helping one another. How to establish a village.

Sounds like you're still very much involved in public service. What makes public service so important?

Rita: The first thing that's important is service, even in your own family or household. I'm teaching young people that being a public servant starts somewhere; it doesn't start only when you get a job with the City or the County or the State. It starts with how you've served people in your life. You want the best of whatever you have to be given to the community. I've met amazing, amazing, people who have touched my life, oh my God. I've learned from people who are willing to do anything, who will do whatever you need them to do. Just walking to my car I run into janitors and parking attendants, and I get to know them. When the City or County had job openings for entry-level jobs, I would give them applications. A lot of those guys got jobs in the City as a result. That's part of being of service; we are part of each other's lives. Public service is seeing people thrive in their lives. I've had the opportunity to thrive, and I love giving the opportunity to others.

I hope you're taking care of yourself, too.

Rita: Self-care is essential for survival. In every key position I had, more than salary, I negotiated that I would be allowed time for my weekly hair appointment. Even in retirement, I enjoy a weekly Rita-beautification day for hair, nails and a lovely lunch.

Welcome to the Club

You've been an Employees Club Member for decades. You've served on both Club boards. How did you get started with the Club?

Rita: Phyllis Currie at the CAO's Office had been associated with the Club. She recommended that I become a Club representative; I think I was already a Member at that time. She said, "You can speak for employees. You would represent us well." That's when I stepped up at the Club. It was an amazing experience to see the kinds of things that the Club was doing even back then.

What do you love about the Employees Club?

Rita: The Club represents what public service is. It serves people whatever their job is – parking meter attendant, bus driver, Police Officer, or whatever it is that they do. It offers people the opportunity to see the City from a different perspective as well – we have outings and activities. It gives Members a respite from their job into something else that they may want to do, whether it's recreational or entertainment.

In its infancy, that was the Club's pulse – recreation and entertainment; the Club ballooned from there into so many other services. With insurance services, it offers Members the opportunity to understand how to take care of yourself through unexpected events or disability, Aflac products, and other things to support you in case of unexpected life events so that you can keep your family supported.

It's oriented to the whole person. I would've never had long-term care insurance or life insurance if it hadn't been for the Club introducing those things into my life. I know a lot of people use the Club's pet insurance. The Club has prepared us for life – for the births of children, for deaths, for illness, or for the accidents we might have. All of those things are covered.

Then there's legal services, how to make a will, how to do a power of attorney. The Club has advanced into all those areas. It gets into people's real lives. People tell me how grateful they are that the Club was there when they needed it. Those additional services have been life-changing for people. I would not have survived without long-term care for [her late husband] Michael. He lived seven years on it, being well cared for. I would've never been able to provide the care that he received. Also, I've had surgery and I had to be off work longer than I expected one time; my disability insurance through Aflac picked up the bulk of the costs of me missing work. It was just unbelievable.

The Club honors, celebrates and express gratitude to public service employees across the state. We just happen to be experts in providing these benefits and services, like the ones you just mentioned.

Rita L. Robinson-Kane. Indeed.

A Life of Love and Faith

What do you love about your life, Rita?

Rita: Oh wow, one of those RAND Corporation questions!

I love that I was raised in an environment of love. I love that. My mother was 17, unmarried, getting ready to graduate from high school in the 1950s in a small little Midwest town. I never knew we were poor, but I knew we weren't rich. It didn't matter because we had a lot of love. Her parents took me in and took care of me. They were old; I'm sure the last thing on their agenda was to take care of this baby. My grandfather worked nights and my grandmother worked days. They probably didn't even see each other.

Rita: I learned how to read by sitting on my grandfather's lap as he read the paper every day. I was raised on love, faith and strength. I always went to church with my grandmother.

Somebody asked me what percentage of my life was driven by faith. I said, 100 percent.

I don't think there was a moment that I wasn't in church growing up. It's an indelible part of who I am. I love the fact that that never left me. I don't have to wear a huge cross, carry a big old Bible or drag around some dictatorial dialect. I just need to be who I am. I remember when I left the City, one of the Councilmembers asked me, "What can you leave behind that we can do in the future?" I said, "Love the people who work for you." I've led with love. Even when I had to do difficult things. I was never a mean person. I learned how to balance firmness with kindness and love.

I appreciate the confidence and trust elected and executive leaders had in me to deliver. I always saw that my job was to provide my supervisors the facts, the unvarnished truth, upon which they could make sound policy decisions. I appreciate so many staff members who allowed me to lead and gave me their ultimate best to meet our goals.

I want to make it perfectly clear that every accomplishment my name is associated with, was a result of the trust of my supervisors; the best and brightest minds I was blessed to work with; and never being afraid of speaking truth to power.

I have been blessed beyond all measures. My whole career has been a humbling experience and a reminder of God's grace.

By giving and receiving service, you've led a life of real meaning.

Rita: Multitudes. More than I gave.

That life of service continues without hesitation. But given that, eventually, how do you want to be remembered?

Rita: As a person who's grateful for everyone who has helped me along the way. I express to them how much I've appreciated their support, love and friendship. From the day I walked into the City to the day I walked out of the County, it's been a lovely ride of genuine care. I've had a whole life because of the people in the City and the County of Los Angeles. Their gift to me was their love.

I want to be remembered for my resilience, willingness and courage to reinvent myself at stages in my life, even now. Whether it's letting go of something or someone; losing weight to preserve your long-term health; changing your hairstyle or color; taking a deep dive into unknown experiences; loving unconditionally; knowing who you really are and having no fear in unapologetically being your authentic you, well – I worked at all those things to have my definition of success. Anyone else can, too.

Really, though, I don't think about how I want to be remembered when I die. I want to be remembered while I'm living. I would love for people to remember that I gave them a smile or a hug or a hand.

Wonderful. Thank you, Rita, for your amazing career of service with the City and the County, and the Club.

Rita: Thank you for letting me tell my stories. I thought I'd been long forgotten.

There is no chance of that happening. You're very much appreciated.

Rita: You're welcome. ●