

Community Ambassador Program for Seniors Receives National Award By Asha Chandra

The Human Services Department's *Aging and Family Services Division* is a proud recipient of the American Society on Aging's NOMA Award for Excellence in Multicultural Aging for its **Community Ambassador Program for Seniors (CAPS)**.

The national NOMA Award is being granted to an organization that had demonstrated high-quality and innovation, in addition to developing best practices and implementing programs that meet the needs of a multicultural aging population. The award will be presented at the American Society on Aging's national conference on March 17 in Chicago, IL.



“We are fortunate to have received this prestigious award,” states Asha Chandra, CAPS Program Manager. “This is truly an honor, not only for our department, but also for the ambassadors who are dedicated, passionate volunteers committed to sharing their knowledge and experience in serving older adults in their respective ethnic and faith-based communities”.

The Community Ambassador Program for Seniors, through its volunteer ambassadors, builds capacity to serve seniors in their own communities, in their own language, within their own cultural norms, and does so where seniors live, worship, socialize, and learn. The Ambassadors serve as a bridge between the formal network of social services and faith based and cultural communities. CAPS Partners include the Taiwanese Community Help Association, India Community Center, Our Lady of Guadalupe Church, Muslim Support Network, Centerville Presbyterian Church, Sikhs Engaged in Volunteer Activities, and St. Anne Catholic Parish.

CAPS fosters an impressive level of trust among ambassadors and city staff, between ethnic leaders and local service providers, and between ambassadors from very diverse cultures and religious backgrounds. Ambassadors help immigrants connect with the larger community and help access the services to which they are entitled. It is a win-win situation for the ambassador, the senior, the family and the service providers. To date, 88 ambassadors have participated in extensive training and ongoing monthly meetings, and have served over 700 clients. The next CAPS training will be held in March, 2010.

In addition, a **How-To Guide for Immigrant Seniors** was recently published as part of the CAPS Program. The Guide has been developed to help older adults and their family living in the Fremont, Newark, and Union City locate community resources and social services. The Guide, while useful to anyone, is directed to recent immigrant seniors who may not be familiar with the US system and its rules and regulations. It assists in better understanding how to apply for health insurance, purchase a new car, or open a bank account, for example.

To learn more about the CAPS program, visit www.capseniors.org, or contact Asha Chandra at (510) 574-2055.

