

# County DIGEST



NOVEMBER 1996

COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

As she counsels welfare recipients coming into the GAIN (Greater Avenues for Independence) program at the GAIN Region VI office in the City of Bell, Amy Ovalle remembers what it was like to be sitting on the other side of her desk. Having been a second generation welfare recipient, a foster child, teen mother, welfare mother, and successful GAIN participant, Ovalle has a clear understanding of welfare from the recipient's perspective. But, unlike many whose circumstances have taken them spiraling down into the darkness of poverty, abuse, and low self-esteem, Ovalle slowly lifted herself out of despair through the realization that she had better options.

Equipped with a strong sense of her difficult beginnings, Ovalle uses that knowledge in her position as a Department of Public Social Services GAIN Services Worker to help welfare recipients find a new life of self-sufficiency. As one of the County's top 10 GAIN staffers, she develops and monitors employment plans for 10-12 clients each month. Her success was recognized on October 22 when the Board of Supervisors announced her selection as October 1996 County Employee of the Month after only five and a half years of County service. Ovalle cut short a planned speech in the Board room because she felt so overwhelmed by the experience, but clearly recalls the time when she was a GAIN participant herself.

"I remember when my GAIN worker tried to convince me to give up welfare and take a job. I was resistant at first, but she encouraged and motivated me to try it," Ovalle says.

She began earning money as a card casino waitress, but realized that her meager earnings and seventh-grade

## EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH

### AMY OVALLE: MOTIVATING PEOPLE OUT OF WELFARE



OVALLE ACCEPTS A SCROLL OF COMMENDATION FROM MAYOR MICHAEL D. ANTONOVICH.

education would just keep her hovering above poverty. She enrolled in evening adult basic education classes at the Ford Park Adult School, where she eventually earned her GED (General Education Diploma). During the nine months she spent in the GAIN program in 1989, she also studied office skills at the East Los Angeles Skills Center and left her waitress position to become a receptionist in a family law office.

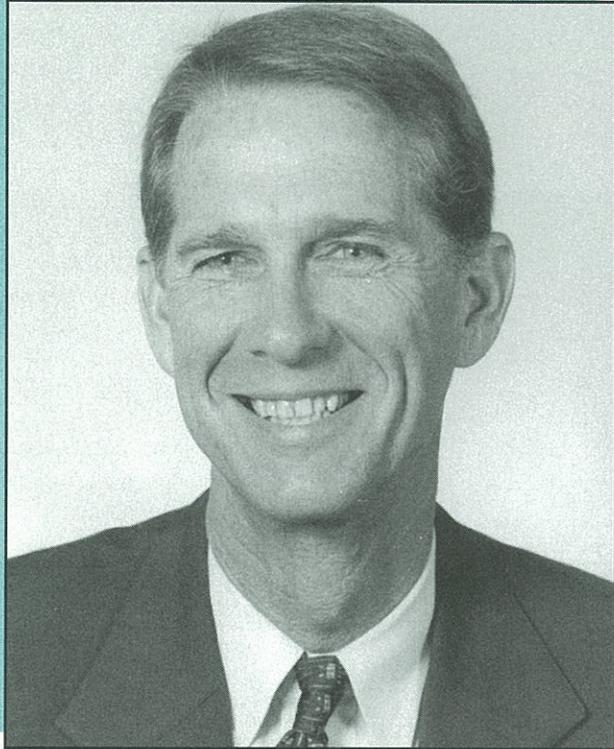
With two small daughters to care for at home, Ovalle never gave up on her own dream to become college educated, and began studying business at East Los Angeles Community College while training to become a paralegal for a family law firm. From there, she transferred to Azusa Pacific University in Glendora, and she will graduate next June with a Bachelor of Science degree in Business.

Afraid that her daughters would fall into the same juvenile delinquency that befell members of her family and others, Ovalle spent any extra money she was able to earn on positive activities for her daughters, including cheerleading and sports. At the same time, she spent all of her extra time going to dozens of job interviews until she decided to take a position in 1990 with the County Department of Public Social Services as Eligibility Worker I and promoted to Eligibility Worker II within one year. In 1993, she spotted a GAIN Services job announcement and applied to join the staff — with a strong goal in mind.

"I just knew that I would be a success at that job, because I totally relate to the welfare recipient's mentality. I've been exactly where they are and they believe me when I tell them that it's possible to

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# MEET DAVID E. JANSSEN, NEW CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER



Former San Diego County Chief Administrative Officer David E. Janssen, Ph.D., was appointed on August 26, 1996, by the Board of Supervisors as Los Angeles County's new Chief Administrative Officer, the County's top administrative position. With many successes as the top administrator of California's second largest county to his credit, the Board is confident that they picked the right person for the job.

Janssen comes into the County at a time when fundamental changes in many of our nation's social programs, such as welfare reform, and the implementation of managed care in public hospital systems, will significantly impact Los Angeles County. He will play a major role in how the County will react to these changes in public service. After demonstrating his ability to strategically resolve some of San Diego's most complex public issues, Janssen is ready to resolve even greater fiscal demands here.

"The sheer size of Los Angeles

County is an obvious challenge for any government agency, and I wanted to be a part of that challenge," says Janssen, who left San Diego County in March 1996 to pursue other career opportunities. Before joining Los Angeles County, Janssen completed a five-month stint as a government affairs consultant for a private foundation.

In his new position, Janssen is responsible for the preparation of budget and operational recommendations for the Board of Supervisors; the monitoring and controlling of County-wide expenditures; the analysis and advocacy of legislation; the coordination of capital projects, asset management, leasing and space management, and the performance of demographic and geographic research. The CAO is also responsible for employee relations and compensation systems for County employees; workplace programs, and the County's centralized marketing and public information programs.

Changes in California's economy directed Janssen into dealing with San Diego's most difficult problems, similar to those experienced over the last several years by Los Angeles County. There, he led the development of a County strategic plan which moved the County toward a collaborative, community-based, integrated service delivery model that resulted in San Diego's selection as one of the AB 1741 counties. He also spearheaded the effort to overhaul their legal defense system and substantially reduce costs to taxpayers by several million dollars, while establishing the San Diego County's first

Public Defender and Alternate Public Defender's offices. During a six-year period of drastically declining revenues, Janssen maintained solid bond ratings and labor stability for San Diego County, as well as the respect of bond rating agencies, while reducing net County cost by over 20 percent.

"The issues are the same, but the CAO's responsibilities are different here," explains Janssen. "In San Diego, the CAO is responsible for all County operations, but in Los Angeles, department heads are responsible for their operations and report directly to the Board of Supervisors. I look forward to serving the Board and working with departments to focus on improving County systems and our credibility in Sacramento and Washington, D.C."

Janssen possesses more than 20 years of experience at the local and state government level, having also served as San Diego County's Assistant Chief Administrative Officer, Director of the State of California Department of General Services, Assistant Secretary of the State Agriculture and Services Agency and Program Analyst for the State Department of Finance.

A native Californian, Janssen was educated at the University of California at Davis, where he earned Bachelor of Arts, Master of Arts and Doctorate degrees in political science. He is married and has one grown daughter.

*JANSSEN COMES INTO THE COUNTY AT A TIME WHEN FUNDAMENTAL CHANGES IN MANY OF OUR NATION'S SOCIAL PROGRAMS, SUCH AS WELFARE REFORM, AND THE IMPLEMENTATION OF MANAGED CARE IN PUBLIC HOSPITAL SYSTEMS, WILL SIGNIFICANTLY IMPACT LOS ANGELES COUNTY.*

# WORK AND FAMILY: THE IMPORTANCE OF READING TO YOUR CHILD

You're exhausted from a long day at work as you head in the back door and realize that there's still dinner to make and an evening of family activities before the day is done. What you may not realize is that the short time you'll spend simply reading a story to your child each evening may be the deciding factor in what helps your child grow up to be an avid reader and a successful adult.

According to County librarians Donna Banos and Pamela Woods, recent presenters of "The Importance of Reading to Your Child" to a group of employees as part of the Department of Human Resources' Noontime Parenting Seminar series, the library can be an invaluable resource for parents who want to give their children the best start in school.

"Parenting is challenging, just plain

hard," says Banos, who shared stories of how her promotion of reading and using the library helped her raise her daughter. "Even with all of the technology we have, literacy is still number one. We still have to read that computer screen."

"Even as babies, children have the ability to associate books with the thing they love most — hearing their parent's voice. By making an early pleasant connection with reading, toddlers will begin to like books, beginning with the 'chubby' cardboard-type books," says Banos.

As toddlers, children are like sponges, absorbing the world around them. Reading to toddlers helps them transition into "pre-literacy" and begin to con-

nect feelings with the written word. By school age, reading becomes a powerful thing. Reading early to children will help them learn faster if they have enjoyed listening to others read to them at an earlier age.

The County Public Library is a system of 88 community-based libraries serving 52 cities and the unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County, including Catalina Island, Lancaster and Altadena. Banos and Wood invite employees to learn how the library system has changed with technology.

"The library is not the same place that it was when we were in high school," adds Banos. "We have videos, compact discs, books on tape, and public access to the Internet at 41 sites. It has something to offer for people of all ages, not just children."

## NOVEMBER RETIREES

Congratulations to the following employees who are joining the ranks of the retired, after 30 or more years of service to the people of Los Angeles County:

**ASSESSOR:** Kenneth P. Kuntz

**HEALTH SERVICES:** Ezra C. Davidson, Jr., S.D. Frazier, Bobbie J. Maxwell

**INTERNAL SERVICES:** Betty J. Phillips

**MENTAL HEALTH:** Maple Smith

**MUNICIPAL COURT:** Marjorie R. Blasingame

**PARKS AND RECREATION:** Ruth E. Ello, Delbert L. Gamble, Samuel V. Jones

**PROBATION:** Richard B. Dunn, Fred Pruitt, James B. Putnam, Jr.

**PUBLIC SOCIAL SERVICES:** Gene J. Hickie, Doris L. Jones

**PUBLIC WORKS:** James E. Russell

**SHERIFF:** Joseph D. Barrett, J.B. Brazier, Kenneth P. Fasulo, Walker R.

Force, Paul R. George, John M. Glendinning, James D. Harding, Patrick J. Johnston, Robert M. Kelba, Walter J. Miles, Kathleen B. Wade

**SUPERIOR COURT:** Cecilia T. Terry

Congratulations to the following employees who retired after serving the County for 25-30 years:

**ANIMAL CONTROL:** James D. Clark

**BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:** Yvonne Hayes

**CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES:** Joan M. DeMello, Bruce Friden, Mary A. Paul, Louise Phillips

**COMMUNITY AND SENIOR SERVICES:** Ana Lucia DeRey, Susan C. Widman

**FIRE:** Joe A. Adams, James H. Davids, Kenneth M. Harms, William H. Harrison

**HEALTH SERVICES:** Shirley Brannon, Jean Broglia, Gloria Jean Brown, Charles L. Guine, Jacqueline Hamot,

Billie Holt, Barbara J. Kaplan, John Mantle, Jack M. Ogata, Domingo Salanga

**INTERNAL SERVICES:** James T. Holefield, Germaine Lin

**MENTAL HEALTH:** Beverly M. O'Rourke

**PARKS AND RECREATION:** Adrian Swick, Jr.

**PROBATION:** Marcia Frank, Frank C. Nagel, Jr., Ruthie M. Renford

**PUBLIC SOCIAL SERVICES:** Karen B. Brown, Ada Lee Humber

**PUBLIC WORKS:** Steven L. Ryan, Judy Semless, Charles B. Williams

**SHERIFF:** Danny J. Craig, Robert J. Hanley

**SUPERIOR COURT:** Ronald M. Vernon

**TREASURER/TAX COLLECTOR:** Gerrie C. Dobmeier



COUNTYWIDE WORKPLACE GIVING CAMPAIGN COORDINATOR MARJORIE EDMONDSON DISPLAYS SAMPLES OF CAMPAIGN LOGO MERCHANDISE AVAILABLE FOR SALE. SUPPORT THE COUNTY'S 1996 WORKPLACE GIVING CAMPAIGN THROUGH YOUR PURCHASE OF ONE OR MORE ARTICLES OF CAMPAIGN MERCHANDISE AVAILABLE FROM YOUR DEPARTMENTAL CAMPAIGN COORDINATOR. PROCEEDS WILL BENEFIT THE EIGHT CHARITABLE AGENCIES PARTICIPATING IN THIS YEAR'S CAMPAIGN. FOR MORE INFORMATION, CALL MARJORIE EDMONDSON AT (213) 974-2466.

## RETIREMENT BOARD ELECTION REMINDER

General Members of the Los Angeles County Employees Retirement Association are reminded to vote in this year's election for Second Members of the Board of Investments and the Board of Retirement. All ballots must be re-

ceived by the Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk before 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday, December 10, 1996 to be eligible for counting. Questions? Contact your departmental election coordinator.

## OVALLE

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change their lives," Ovalle says.

"Some clients have such a fear about working and taking chances. I used to be like that, too, especially during the two years I spent taking buses back and forth in the dark to evening classes," she explains. "But nothing happened to me except that I got a college education."

On her office wall next to the scroll of commendation she received from the Board hangs a card depicting the Statue of Liberty on the cover and this inscription inside:

"I accept this commendation for myself as well as the Los Angeles County GAIN staff, in honor of their dedication, honesty, patience, tolerance, compassion, endurance, understanding and respect of the welfare GAIN participants. Because of their humanitarian virtues, I, as well as others, have been able to climb the ladder of success which proves GAIN delivers justice for the indigent and liberty from welfare poverty! Thank you for your vision in accomplishing your mission to bring the welfare population to self-sufficiency. Amy Ovalle."

# METROLINK OFFERS HOLIDAY DISCOUNT DURING DECEMBER

Presents, parties, plane tickets — Metrolink knows that everyone incurs extra expenses around the holidays. To help commuters stretch their dollars, Metrolink is offering a holiday bonus: 25% off the December monthly pass. Get your discounted holiday pass from ticket vending machines at any Metrolink train station, or buy it at the Union Station ticket window during the regular December pass sales period from November 20 to December 10. The discount is not valid on one-way, round-trip or 10-trip tickets. For more information, call 808-LINK.



### Members of the Board

**Michael D. Antonovich**  
Mayor  
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**Gloria Molina**  
First District

**Yvonne Brathwaite Burke**  
Second District

**Zev Yaroslavsky**  
Third District

**Deane Dana**  
Fourth District

**Michael J. Henry**  
Director of Personnel

**Sandra A. Hoodye**  
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