MSSG
Mountain Shadows Support Group

Mountain Shadows Community Homes
Fall ♦ 2003

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Chakarian expects $25,000 from tourney

Tooling up for Golf Classic on September 15

BRIAN WIERSEMA

Robert Chakarian

Every September, MSSG board member Robert Chakarian gets even busier. Chakarian founded and heads Chakarian & Associates, the firm that does all the accounting for Mountain Shadows. He also is in his fifth year as chairman of our biggest annual fund raiser, the Golf Classic.

The tourney, to be held again this year at the outstanding Bernardo Heights Country Club, starts officially at 12:30 p.m. Sept. 15. But a lot of golfers get there early to meet others and participate in the pre-tourney putting contest—and score a free goodie bag of golf accessories.

Some 150 golfers will pony up $250 (or $900 for a foursome) that buys them greens fees, cart, complimentary driving range, embroidered golf shirt, lunch, complimentary beverages, an assortment of valuable tee prizes, and dinner and entertainment. For many, it's a fun 12-hour day. Additionally, these charity golfers spend an average of $100 in cash supporting the tourney's various fund raisers from raffle to auction.

Supervising this whole show takes some doing. And that's when Chakarian gets spread even thinner.

Chakarian graduated with a degree in accounting from Shippensburg University in Pennsylvania. Shippensburg's business offerings are highly regarded and is accredited by the Association of Advanced Collegiate Schools of Business. Part of his education came from the extended studies program at SDSU.

Chakarian & Associates provides individual, partnership, and corporate tax planning and preparation. The firm offers accounting services, management consulting, and retirement planning. It also advises high-net-worth individuals and physicians. Chakarian has been Mountain Shadows' accountant for ten years and has over 15 years of experience in the public accounting field.

This finance veteran is married to Mary. They've been Mr. and Mrs. for five years and have two children, daughter Carson and Son CJ, who they call "Stitch" for his ability to destroy much of what he touches.

A man of very little free time, Chakarian still finds the time to surf once a week. "Nothing rejuvenates me like a good surf session," he said.

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Mountain Shadows Foundation gains $7,500 grant

The Mountain Shadows Foundation has been awarded a $7,500 grant from the Union Bank of California Foundation, according to Doug Cook, Foundation Board President.

This grant will be used for the continued development of Mountain Shadows' Adopt-a-House program, which seeks private and community partnerships in providing enrichment, beautification, and social development of individual Houses.

In unsure and deficit financial times for the State of California, providers like MSCH that are almost 100% Medi-Cal dependent need to find creative ways to maintain fiscal stability. Thus, programs like the Foundation's Adopt-a-House seek to enhance the qualities of life and care for our MSCH residents.

"The Foundation's purpose," said Cook, "is to continue the momentum of fiscal stability that Mountain Shadows Support Group, Inc. has provided since going nonprofit in October 2002."

The "critical mission" of the Foundation is the creation of a $5 to $10 million dollar endowment within ten years. Mountain Shadows Foundation and Mountain Shadows Support Group are separate entities and both are nonprofit organizations.

Foundation board members include Cook, Ken Melton, Mary Ellen Alton, John Martindale, and Chris Meacham. This board has scheduled an all-day retreat in September for strategic planning. The Foundation was formed in July 2003.

"This industrious board not only has the depth of business experience acumen to succeed, but also the passionate and burning desire to make a difference for the residents of Mountain Shadows," Cook said.

In future editions of this newsletter we will feature the biographies of the board and keep you appraised of the progress of the Foundation. This information will include updates on the board's business plan and new directions in further linking the North County community and Mountain Shadows Community Homes.

"It is important for long-time Mountain Shadows supporters to note that all of the original MSSG objectives remain as bearing planks in the bridges to the future," Cook said. "These address and resolve all open issues connected with the building of a Recreation Platform for the residents.

Tourney *continued from page 1*

Additionally, this consummate professional got involved with Mountain Shadows when "I realized how special the organization was." It's one of his many affiliations. Chakarian is also a member of the California Society of Certified Public Accountants and the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants.

He currently serves on the board of directors of the Children's Dental Health Association in San Diego. The association operates an outreach program to educate and screen children in schools within low-income areas. It also operates a dental clinic in the Golden Hills area of San Diego for needy youngsters.

As part of past service, Chakarian served a three-year term on the Pacific Beach Planning Committee. He did not seek re-election in order to "devote more time to charitable causes," he said. Also, Chakarian has many years of lecture and mentor experience with college students majoring in accounting and business.

When Chakarian took over as golf event chair, the event raised a healthy eight to ten thousand dollars per tourney. He rather quickly doubled that figure. The sell-out tourney brought in a net of $21,000 last year. "My hope is that we can raise $25,000 this year."

Something new and exciting happens at every golf tourney. This year, as the fall newsletter went to press, there remained a very good chance that the Channel 7/39 celebrity news team will be at the Golf Classic as a foursome.

"The Bernardo Heights Country Club venue is a perfect host for our event," Chakarian said. "Everyone in their organization from General Manager Buzz Colton to their food service staff is behind our event one hundred percent."

This links venus IS important because the Country Club is a "class organization," said Chakarian, "and represents the good value and quality tourney that our golfers participate in. The event we put on every year goes beyond their expectations and gives high profile recognition to the sponsors who make the Golf Classic possible."

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Mountain Shadows would like to thank our many sponsors who so vitally supported last year's Golf Classic—our mega fund raiser. These are good, solid folks. They have earned our thanks.

Sandy Sterling: Willow's angel

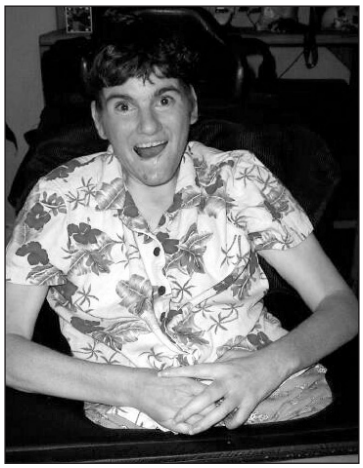
BRIAN WIERSEMA

Nearly every Saturday, Sandy Sterling drives an hour from her home in Lakeside to cheerlead a party for residents of Willow House. When she arrives, she announces, "Hey, what are we having for lunch?"

Sandy then takes a vote (majority rules) and goes to fetch the take-out cuisine of the day: Italian, Chinese, KFC, whatever. She spends three hours with the residents, including her daughter Sally Whynott, and drives the long ride back to Lakeside to get ready for her swing shift at Viejas Casino. Each visit is the "highlight" of Sandy's week.

It would be difficult to find a parent more devoted to residents—or one with greater enthusiasm for Mountain Shadows. Call Sandy Willow's unofficial "house mother" and ardent booster. "Willow is a great house," said Sandy, and it's filled with terrific personalities."

There are some variations in the Saturday party menu. Sometimes, Sandy brings a home-made dish prepared by her mother, Dorothy Weston. It might be lasagna or a big salad or tasty soup. The food frequently comes with dessert. The residents favorite: Jell-O.



Sally Whynott

What's more, Sandy is very big on sharing the news at Mountain Shadows with Sally's twin sisters, Julie Wines in Maryland and Patrice Whynott in Virginia. Faithfully, Sandy sends a copy of the MSSG newsletter to each because "they want to know what's going on in Sally's life. The newsletter information goes a long way toward putting us all closer to Sally."

Sandy is also a big fan of house décor. The current theme in Willow is sunflowers. Sandy calls it "lovely, refreshing." Too, this active mother never misses a Circus Day, where she buys tee shirts for every daughter and praises the many volunteers.

Here is Sandy's summary of the Willow gang:

- Sally is a happy kid. She can't express herself very well, but she's always promising us a thousand dollars. Of course, we never get it. That's her little joke with us.
- Kristen is funny and laughs at everything I tell her. She's getting a computer to talk for her. This replaces her language board, which is good for me because I seldom wear my glasses and can't see the letters or words Kristen points to.

Residents of Willow, L to R: Brian, Kristen, Karen, Debbie and Bob

- Debbie is the optimist of the house. She's always happy and cheerful and is the one who we call upon whenever we need a song.
- Karen is the one ambulatory resident, and she's the runner for everybody. When we need things, or need things done, Karen is off to the races. She's a dear who answers the House phone like a secretary—and is a very important person to Willow.
- Brian's the selfless sweetheart with a concern for others. He sure loves to get out, takes a lot of field trips and loves to be outdoors or visiting.
- Bob is the philosopher, a sweet dear person. He's always giving advice and telling people what he thinks is right or wrong and what might be done about a situation.

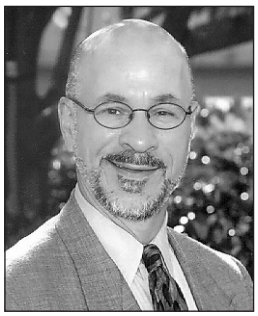
Sandy, we should point out, is an outgoing person who is a big believer in laugh therapy—and who just plain likes a joke. "Laughter doesn't cost anything," said Sandy. "And it makes you feel good for the rest of the day."

Her favorite holidays with the residents are Christmas, "festive" Easter, birthdays, and of course, Halloween, "because it's fun and they get to dress up and add plastic spiders and artificial webs to the House."

Big on staff, Sandy reminded me to mention "all the wonderful caretakers" at Willow. "We parents are really grateful and appreciative of staff. With them, I don't have to worry about Sally. I feel that if I were gone, Sally would be taken well care of. It's such a big relief to have her at Mountain Shadows." ■

Notes from the Executive Director

WADE WILDE



Wade Wilde

We're spared—but we take another hit

The California state budget was passed and signed. Finally. Before it was approved, there were fears of a rate cut to Medi-Cal providers like us. The good news—providers for persons with developmental disabilities were exempt from cuts in the budget. However, other cuts eliminated a total of $65.04 million in services in the developmental disabilities field. The bad news—no Medi-Cal rate increases and continued rough financial sailing for at least two more years. Meanwhile, Mountain Shadows keeps getting sandbagged by hikes in workers' compensation insurance. Over four months into fall 2003, our MSCH premiums are expected to jump by a whopping 50%, from $30,000 to $45,000 a month—and there is little relief in sight.

Much of the workers' comp problem centers on soaring medical costs. But that alone sure doesn't explain why California comp premiums have doubled over the past three years. *Doubled!* This while the number of claims per worker per year declined 20% between 1996 and 2001. Only system reform will alter the upward-cost spiral trend.

Major credit goes to Chakarian, Adriana, and golf committee

On page one you'll find (if you haven't already) a profile of Robert "Chico" Chakarian. He's "up" as our featured MSSG board member this issue because the timely and vital Golf Classic fund raiser is set for September 15 at the Bernardo Heights Country Club in Rancho Bernardo. Proceeds benefit our 117 residents at Mountain Shadows.

September is when Chakarian really shines. And that's competing with a lot of luminosity from a whole bunch of folks who really put an effort into pulling off this long-running event now in its 11th year. My personal thanks and a tip of the hat to Chakarian and his Chakarian & Associates office manager, Adriana Guevara, who lent a great deal of volunteer time in making the Golf Classic a first-class tourney, second to none.

"Adriana handles the mailing of all the golfer and sponsor packets," Chakarian said. "It is actually quite a monumental job. I helped her with about one-tenth of it and I was crying like a baby."

Adriana maintains the golfer list as we get closer to the event and manages all of the deposits and check writing. "This is a job that I know most 22-year-olds could never handle, in terms of accountability and responsibility," Chakarian said. Adriana even showed up at Circus Day this year to lend a helping hand.

Chakarian jokes that in his fifth year as tourney chairman "my role is to take credit for all of the great work done by the golf committee." That committee includes Chakarian, John Martindale (also a MSSG board member), QMRP Fred Lindahl, Sherry Robinet, Doug Cook, Carol Haskin (MSSG board member), Angie Busby, Dick Marrs (MSSG board president), Adriana Guevara, and Portia Bibb. Many of these good folks have worked for years on the golf committee and all are responsible for making each tourney run like clockwork.

Let's also thank the Friends of Mountain Shadows (FOMS) who provide many volunteers and the strong support that the Golf Classic gets from a lot of businesses. These include Marrs Maddocks & Associates, Mountain View Services, Newman & Associates, and Ken Melton, to name just a few of the heavy hitters.

Some $25,000 in net revenue is expected from the tourney this year. That brings funds raised from all tourneys to a total of a whopping $150,000. ■

Oops, we goofed!

The MSSG summer newsletter incorrectly identified the organization sponsoring the popular two-man "camel" that participated in the Circus Day parade. The camel team is part of the Order of the Alhambra. We also omitted the name of the back of the camel—Ed Ehrhart. The MSSG newsletter regrets these errors.

MSSG launches staff newsletter

Mountain Shadows Community Homes has launched an employee newsletter. It's called *Just for Staff,* and it runs from two to four pages and comes out monthly on the first pay day.

The first issue ran in July. The August issue contains some 59 bold-faced staff names—virtually a fourth of all employees—and their news item or accomplishment. Purpose of the publication is enhanced communication and morale—and *Just for Staff* fills the bill in praising workers who do outstanding work and giving recognition to a host of others.

Publication structure has HR Directory Toni Albright as publisher, QMRP Dan Myer as Managing Editor, and news writer Brian Wiersema as City Editor. Their system establishes a staff reporter for each triplex. Additionally, "beat" phone calls are made to between nine and twelve Houses a month as a supplemental news source.

We invite your interest in reading staff news postings. Here's a sample from the August issue:

Cedar House was the House of the Month in July. In Crepe Myrtle DCS **John Kalisek** graduated in June from San Pasqual High—and completed his first year as a MSCH employee. "Doing a great job in Ash" is **Dion Funk.**

Tres Amigas (three girlfriends) in Apple are **Marilu Sanchez, Olga Kulhava,** and Team Leader **Nancy Goodlow.** The women are close personally and professionally—and they're from three different cultures (Hispanic, Czech, and American). Spruce Team Leader **Barbara Novak** is earning high praise from co-workers. Relief Team Leader **Mike Main,** too.

Newest Spruce DCS **Alvaro Mendez** "is awesome with residents." Willow Team Leader **Angela Bean** has two families: her six boys and Willow's staff and residents. Orange House, under new Team Leader **Latifa Betaous,** "works well as a team and pulls together."

"Above and beyond" in Birch: **Martha Cannon** and Senior DCS **Ken Van Hook.** Among the best cooks: **Andrea Luna** in Orange and **Mary Luna** in Pine. Expecting a baby this fall are staff **Heather Tidwell** in Palm, **Annette Suitaivi** of Olive, and Specialist **Rowena Garay** in Pine.

You get the idea—and that's just 16 of the 59 name mentions that help to build staff pride and take morale up to an even higher notch. And you can help! Here's how:

Like something you see in a House? Want to comment on job performance? Would you like to give credit to the staff angel or angels in your child's House? *Just for Staff* would love to hear from you. Write down your comments. Be sure to add your name and phone number. Then, pick from one of the three contact options:

1) Fax directly to 619.222.8432. No cover letter is needed.
2) Email our City Editor at Gnarlym@aol.com.
3) Send a note to B. Wiersema, 4336 Pt. Loma Ave., San Diego, CA 92107. ■

Mountain Shadows celebrity readers help their community

Once again, a group of Mountain Shadows residents are helping better their community by helping their fellow citizens. This time it is a newly named group called the "Mountain Shadows Celebrity Readers."

Who are they? Get a load of this: **Travis Groff, Tara Nason, Harry Thompson, Karen Trogden,** and **Sheri McKinney.**

Here's the lowdown. In conjunction with Barnes & Noble, the Kiwanis Club of Escondido is putting on a Book Fair on September 27, 2003. The proceeds from the event will be used to buy books for needy children and youth in the Escondido community.

Karen Trogden was the first to volunteer. Once she understood the plan, she recruited Harry, Sheri, and Tara. Travis is another story. He is going to the Book Fair because he works at Barnes & Noble and felt that it was a good enough cause to volunteer without pay!

So-o-o-o, if you want to have some fun, show up at Barnes & Noble at 11:00 a.m. on September 27, 2003 and meet the real "Clifford the Big Red Dog" and Patch, the pirate from the Time Soldier series of books.

The Mountain Shadows Celebrity Readers will be reading stories to young children from noon until 1:30 p.m.

PLEASE WAIT UNTIL SEPT. 27th TO BUY YOUR BOOKS . . . Then use the voucher on the last page of this newsletter (they will be at the store too). You will really be helping us help the kids of this community. ■

August Meeting

Resident Activities win FOMS praise

BRIAN WIERSEMA

The August meeting of *Friends of Mountain Shadows* (FOMS) aired several operational reports, and all were received with enthusiasm. But one department summary—resident activities—also drew a hefty round of applause. Credit Activities Director Donna Ponomarenko and the job she has done this summer.

To say social action is running high understates what really is a buzz about many goings on, from Saturday flower arranging to ice cream socials. Plus, with the addition of Lola, a new bus driver hired, residents are getting away more—and often as a triplex activity. The Orange House made a road trip to Laughlin. "The residents had a good time in Nevada," said Ponomarenko. "They wore us out."

Residents in the Special Olympics program (some 25 of them) recently toured the facilities at the San Diego Olympic Training site. They were impressed and took some time out to play some bocci ball there. We have *two* bocci ball teams!

Challenger Baseball playoffs begin in September, also with two Mountain Shadows teams. (We had one last year.) Add to this a flurry of floor hockey. In all, it's been an excellent year for sports participation. And the coaches deserve special thanks.

"Plus, we've had a blast at our parties," said Ponomarenko. These include sessions in flowers, karaoke, video screenings in the Office, socials on Tuesdays and Fridays (Wednesdays for Oak and Elm). On warm days, residents flocked to the roomy grass outside Orange and Tangelo and let loose on bocci ball, 21 lawn games, and several wet sponge and water-throwing events.

"No residents are just sitting around," Ponomarenko said.

On a fine day in August, some 30 youth volunteers showed up on campus to lead lawn games and read to residents. Over at Mission Bay in San Diego, a total of 50 of our residents attended Camp-by-the-Bay over four days, and down in Coronado there was Camp Able. Jacaranda and Palm have added an extra level of activities, with school out for the summer. On Sundays, the Rev. Jamie Miller drops in to lead nondenominational services.

Executive Director Wade Wilde: "Donna is doing a super job." Operations Director Stacy Kendall: "Our activities are *well* organized." Thanks, Donna!

Residents in the Community

Entertainment at the August 16 Ham and Beans Dinner sponsored by the Knights of Columbus and held as a fund raiser for MSCH at the K of C Hall was provided by residents Harry of Birch and Debbie of Willow. They offered readings and singing, respectively. At the Barnes and Noble Book Fair on Sept. 27, Sherri and Harry will read to youngsters in the community.

Wilde reported MSCH is "near 100% census" and that "we are meeting our financial goals." Interestingly, we have a backlog of resident candidates, enough to fill another House—if we had one vacant. But placement is exacting. There has to be a House "fit" with the prospective resident profile. Additionally, donations continue to come in to Mountain Shadows as a nonprofit agency: gently used living room and bedroom furniture, and Mary Lou Swarner found us a soda dispenser! A new virtually free van arrives in the fall from State and County funding via a grant proposal written this year primarily by QMRP James Arp. "Nonprofit is definitely picking up momentum," Wilde said.

An historic footnote: Mountain Shadows' nonprofit effort goes back 16 years to 1986, when Mary Lou Swarner and Doris McCarthy drew up the first nonprofit proposal.

Kendall reported Jacaranda, Oak, Elm, and Spruce passed their licensing survey with flying colors. Apple, Plum, Maple, and Willow are next. After that, the staff get a three-month break from the state surveyors. Heather Cross, Olive QMRP, is leaving to return to Tennessee. RC Cheryl Mitchell has left the Lemon-Orange-Tangelo triplex and is being replaced by QMRP-in-Training Eden Stever. (Denise Kadar, QMRP for Cedar-Ash-Pine also went through the QIT program.)

Recruiting is being stepped up to combat a seasonal shortfall in staffing.

Doug Cook, president of the nonprofit Mountain Shadows Foundation, offered an upbeat summary of that new organization's progress. The $7,500 grant check from Union Bank of California arrives in September, Cook said. Meanwhile, he's gaining on community participation in the Adopt-a-House program to improve physical plant facilities. "By the end of the year, you'll see a substantial improvement in our ability to raise funds," Cook said. ■

Knights of Columbus hold dinner benefiting Mountain Shadows

The Knights of Columbus Regina Council 4953 held a Ham & Bean Dinner on August 16 at their Hall on West Valley Parkway. All funds raised went to the Mountain Shadows Support Group, Inc.

Tickets were a modest $65 for a table of ten, or any amount diners wished to assist with. Menu included ham, beans, dessert, and soft drinks.

This is the FOURTH annual event that benefits Mountain Shadows. These vital functions include the fall Tootsie Roll sale ($5,200 net to us last year), the Benefit Dinner, and two of the biggest bashes of the season for residents: the Halloween Dance for all at the K of C Hall (donated) and a yearly Christmas Party.

Chuck Ayash, a long-standing member, served as Dinner chairman. He also replaces Col. Lou Silva (ret.) as the 2003 Tootsie Roll chairman. "Our goal is to shoot for $10,000 this year," said Ayash.

Many diners who paid for tickets passed them along to someone needy or simply declined to accept the tickets—thus boosting revenues. We are very, very appreciative for all that the K of C does for us—including their colorful appearance every day at Circus Day.

Both the Knights of Columbus and MSSG are nonprofit, tax exempt organizations.

Sharon Mead—a salute to dedication

Sharon Mead

Sharon Mead, Palm's Team Leader, celebrates eight years at Mountain Shadows in October. But that's only part of the story. Sharon also works as an instructional assistant in the Transition Class for Escondido High School.

You wouldn't want her weekly 60-hours-plus schedule: to Palm from 4-7 a.m. to get the kids off to school. Then, she's in the classroom from 7:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. By 2 p.m. she's back in Palm until 5 p.m.

One of her EHS students, Brittany, age 18, is an Orange house resident. With Brittany and her other pupils, Sharon teaches life and job skills, independent living, and work experience. Beginning in September, Brittany will get hands-on training at a job site.

Check out our web site

Biographies of our distinguished MSSG board members are available on the Internet at **http://www.mountainshadows.ws**. Plus, you will find regular updates on what's new. Check us out and keep current on what's happening or look at back issues of this newsletter. And while you're visiting, be sure to give us your e-mail address and comments.

Donations accepted here

Mountain Shadows Support Group, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation. We are authorized to accept donations of cash, boats, furniture, computers, cars—you name it. And you can write-off your gifts as an IRS tax deduction. We win. You win. Think about us and give what you can.

Note: Free publicity in the *North County Times* recently generated several donations of clothing and furniture to Mountain Shadows. These gifts help us out substantially. Keep us in mind when that apartment suddenly empties or the garage runs out of storage space.

BARNES & NOBLE
BOOKSELLERS

BOOKFAIR VOUCHER

STORE #:_____ LOCATION: _____

I support the Bookfair for:

THE KIWANIS CLUB OF ESCONDIDO
Organization

_____
Date/Time

Name: _____ Address: _____ E-Mail: _____

Present this voucher at the designated register at the time of purchase. A percent of the net sale will be donated to the organization according to the following: For net sales under $2,000, 15% will be donated to the organization; between $2,000 and $10,000, 20% and over $10,000, 25%.

The following transactions are not included in Bookfair totals: 1) The purchase of Gift Cards; 2) The purchase of Readers' Advantage memberships; and 3) The purchase of café consumables.

For Office Use Only: Register #: _____ Transaction #: _____
Amount of sale before tax less purchases of Gift Cards, Readers' Advantage memberships and café consumables: $_____.

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