



AVAG News

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In recent years, AVAG has developed a relationship with Anaheim City Councilwoman Denise Barns who arranges to provide tickets for veterans to attend Angels baseball game with free admission tickets. In the photo above, AVAG Diamond Bar team member Conrad Barrera gives a thumbs up during the game. Additional photos of this event are on page 15.

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AVAG steps up to the plate to assist a veteran and his family.

AVAG Serve Day

AVAG and Cottonwood Church Outreach volunteers gathered to work on seniors and veterans homes at Santiago Creek Orange.

AVAG In Action

The AVAG team members and volunteers have been busy providing assistance to veterans throughout our communities.

AVAG BBQ

AVAG volunteers and partners teamed up to host a summertime barbecue for our AVAG volunteers.

Summer Camp

For the first time, AVAG joined with Cottonwood Church to send youngsters from AVAG programs to summer camp.

AVAG Goes To Bat For Alfredo and His Family

Thanksgiving Day for Army veteran Alfredo Andrade and his family took a wet turn when water from a ruptured line in Santiago Sun Canyon Estates flowed into his home. The water leak was serious enough that it caused the wooden stand that held the water heater to collapse. When it went down, Alfredo lost his water heater.

“At first, it was fun like camping out,” Alfredo said. “It was a holiday weekend, we didn’t have hot water so we went elsewhere....but,
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Alfredo Andrade, left and Marine Corps veteran Danny Burnett take a brief break to admire their handiwork after assisting with installing the flooring.

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Chaplain's Corner

Diamond Bar Estates (Photos courtesy Doreen Matsumoto)

Diamond Bar Estates AVAG community celebrated Memorial Day with a dinner and featured guest speaker Richard Simonian, CEO of Santiago Communities and an original Green Beret.



Santiago CEO and an original Green Beret Richard Simonian explained how his Special Forces training helped to make him a successful businessman.



Above, before the eating and the meeting, there's the Pledge of Allegiance. Below left, veterans dig into the evening's gourmet meal, and, at right, enjoy a good meal with their loved ones.



(From left, clockwise) 1. Richard Simonian presents a gift card to assistant manager Delilah Adams for all her hard work decorating AVAG events with these beautiful balloons. 2. Korean War veteran Robert Dunbar and Richard Simonian compare notes on their service to our country during the Korean War era. 3. Army veteran Hector Avila and Richard Simonian. 4. Dottie Cosgrove, 90, enjoyed sharing light moments with the "young man" Richard Simonian, who was 86 when this photo was taken.



One of the highlights of a recent AVAG meeting in Diamond Bar was the distribution of the beautiful afghans crafted by team member Dottie Cosgrove. At left, Barbra Heim, assisted by AVAG volunteer Amanda Bruenig, left, and Diamond Bar Estates Manager Michelle Bautista, receives her afghan. Her husband recently passed away. At right, Alice Shouse receives her afghan.



From left to right, additional grateful recipients of afghans crafted by Dottie Cosgrove were Hope Lopez, Melissa Landis and Elizabeth Jolly.



The June AVAG meeting in Diamond Bar Estates featured the lively, entertaining and highly informative presentation by Hector M. Galicia (pictured at left being presented an AVAG challenge coin by AVAG Director John Meyer.), a VA Vocational Rehabilitation Specialist based out of the Long Beach Healthcare System. Hector kept everyone on their toes while answering every question concisely and with detailed information.



Left, AVAG Director John S. Meyer presents Korean War Navy veteran George La Prairie, his AVAG coin. This was the first AVAG meeting he attended thanks to assistance from his caregiver Jenny, pictured above, who is holding the In-N-Out gift card he won..



Left, Navy veteran Bill Lensky holds his AVAG challenge coin. At right, Army veteran and hard-working AVAG volunteer Conrad Barrera holds up his challenge coin.



The Diamond Bar team gathers for the post-meeting photo, along with Hector Galicia, third from right, and AVAG Chaplain Doreen Matsumoto and AVAG volunteer Gayle Bohnhoff-Vrabec.

Glen Aire Mobile Estates

(Photos courtesy Doreen Matsumoto)

AVAG volunteers and staff recently teamed up with the non-profit “Unleash YOUR Purpose” women’s ministry for an event at Glen Aire Mobile Estates community in San Bernardino.



AVAG Chaplain Doreen Matsumoto and AVAG team member Gayle Bohnhoff-Vrabec — who brought car loads of clothing, shoes, and numerous household items, make opening announcements during the event.



All of the 29 participants, both young and old, at the “Unleash YOUR Purpose” women’s program held at Glen Aire Mobile Estates.



AVAG volunteer and guest speaker Vicky Jackson discussed personal safety while talking about her Christian faith.



Women and children review the large selection of clothing provided by Gayle Bohnhoff-Vrabec.



Special thanks to long-time AVAG volunteer and team member Mellissa Arriola Breunig, who brought household necessities for every guest in attendance at the event. She also provided gift bags and raffle prizes for the women in attendance working through Richard Breunig Foundation. Above, she presented one gift package to a young girl.



A highlight of the “Unleash YOUR Purpose” women’s program was a presentation by AVAG team member and Santiago Desert View Estates Manager in Barstow, Maria Lugo. Maria shared her testimony about her love of Christ and she donated three Target gift cards to the residents at Glen Aire.

Below left, Maria hugs the winner of a Target gift card. At right, Patricia and Maria are all smiles after Patricia won a Target gift card.





AVAG team members Margaret and Charlene pause for a moment during the Glen Aire event.



AVAG Chaplains Susanna Gonzalez, left, and Doreen Matsumoto stand with Glen Aire resident Guadalupe.



A happy girl models a free kimono provided to her during this event, as AVAG team members read the AVAG News in the background.



As with every AVAG event, participants line up for a lunch and tasty snacks.

Hemet Valley RV Park (Photos courtesy Doreen Matsumoto)



AVAG volunteer Amanda Bruenig plays a game of Battleship with a young girl.



Barbecue master David Breunig is on the job during the hot summer day in Hemet.



Longtime AVAG volunteer Mellissa Arriola Breunig, of the Richard Breunig Foundation, is all smiles while handing out toys to youngsters.



The drama begins in the Jenga stick game.



AVAG volunteer Gayle, left, takes a brief break in the action for a photo op with area residents.



AVAG Chaplain Doreen Matsumoto prepares a plate of food for participants.

Sequoia Plaza Mobile Home Park

(Photos courtesy Doreen Matsumoto)

The June AVAG meeting at the Sequoia Plaza Mobile Home Park was a joyous event as veterans and family members enjoyed a celebratory 60th Anniversary dinner with John and Charlene Gibbs. John showed his marked proclivity for being a spendthrift by presenting Charlene the same “Happy Anniversary” card that he has given to her every year, since their first anniversary. The cute card has a circular number in that John changes every year. “Think of all the money I’ve saved over the years,” John said. Charlene commented, “Some might say you’re a tightwad.”



Above, Linda Eger, left, and Margaret Gurule listen to John and Charlene Gibbs, as he shares a joke with them.

Left, AVAG members, guests and family member listen to the guest speaker after enjoying a special dinner celebrating John and Charlene Gibbs’ anniversary.



Earlier this year, inspirational speaker and Marine Corps Vietnam veteran Phil Downer was the guest speaker for a veterans dinner held by AVAG in the Sequoia Plaza Mobile Home Park in San Bernardino. Here are several of the volunteers who made the night a successful event, from left, Tracey, Roberta, Patricia and Mike. Phil Downer is in the foreground.



AVAG Directors and Vietnam veterans Mike Keele, left, and John Meyer, right, join veteran John Gibbs and his bride of 60 years Charlene Gibbs.



AVAG Director John S. Meyer hands Mike Newminski an In and Out Burger gift card, as part of the nights activities.



Alice Guest receives her In and Out Burger gift card.



Phil Downer and AVAG Director Mike Keele (second and third from left) stand with the night's gift card winners, (left to right) Alice, Richard, Roxann and Kathy.



Upper left clockwise, AVAG Director Mike Keele had the audience and AVAG Chaplain Doreen Matsumoto laughing during early introductions.

John Gibbs receives a round of applause for his comments.

Marine Corps veteran Dave Rosales pauses for a photo with two of his children.

Guest speaker and former Marine Corps machine gunner Phil Downer leads the way through the chow line.

Mike Keele takes a moment with Ellie Finneran.



At far left, after a stimulating AVAG meeting at the Sequoia Plaza Mobile Home Park in San Bernardino, the AVAG team stopped by Handel's Homemade Ice Cream shop to cool off. AVAG team members Amanda Breunig, left and Gayle Bohnhoff-Vrabec pause briefly on the hot summer night.

Right, AVAG Directors John Meyer, left, and Mike Keele savor the flavor.

Santiago Parkside Estates

(Photos courtesy Doreen Matsumoto)

During the recent Community Give-Back-Day at Santiago Parkside Estates Linda Eger pictured at right, the wife of Marine Jim Eger, smiles after receiving a hand-crafted afghan stitched by Diamond Bar AVAG team member Dottie Musgrove.



Here's some of the free ice cream distributed during the meeting.

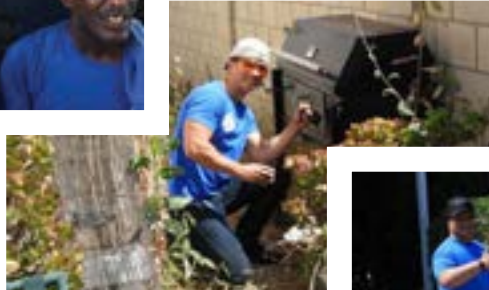
AVAG Serve Day

AVAG partnered with Cottonwood Church Outreach on Serve Day to work on 23 homes at Santiago Creek Orange for the seniors and veterans homes. Serve Day is a one-day event to love and serve neighbors in our local community through practical projects and acts of service.

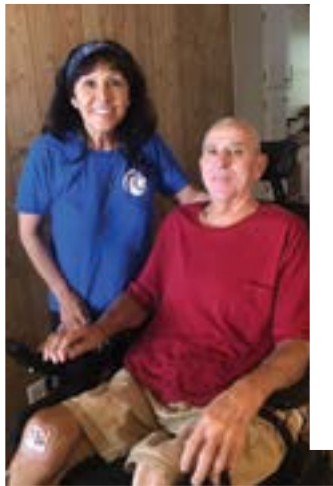
Thank you to our 50 volunteers and to Air Force veteran Ken Compton who cooked up hotdogs for our volunteer and to Pam Crawley and Pat Roth who are part of our AVAG group wives of veterans.

Photos courtesy Doreen Matsumoto

Thank you also to four veterans from Cottonwood Church who joined us that day: Charles Cruz, Army veteran Vietnam, Raul Gatewood, Army veteran, Renie Beasley, Air Force veteran, David Vera, Marine Corps veteran, Alex Godivia, a Marine Corps Veteran who lent his tools and his two nephews, and Chris Long, Marine Corps Veteran from Creek Orange.



1. Two of the more than 50 volunteers heading toward a veterans home to help.
2. Air Force veteran and AVAG team member Ken Compton takes a break from barbecuing duties with two volunteers.
3. Volunteers do a major yard overhaul.
4. Another team just getting started.
5. Final clean up.
6. Reporting for work.

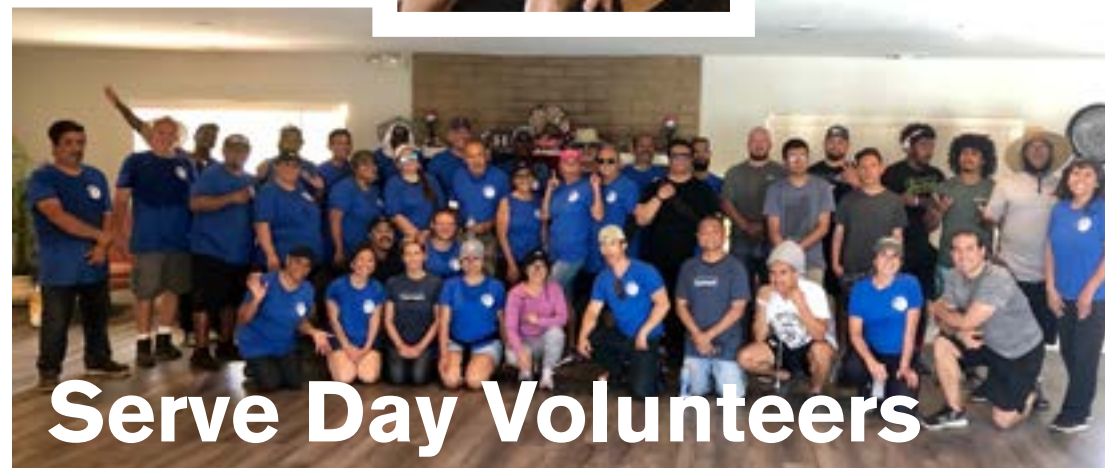


7. After a break and lunch, the volunteers return to work on a hot Saturday.

8. Most of the volunteers were bused. Some of the contractors that came out to help brought their own vehicle with tools. Some of the volunteers had also participated in a December Serve effort.

9. Two volunteers stand in front of huge trailer provided by Doug, aka Dog, from Douglas Masonry, which is loaded with debris gathered during the day.

10. Near the end of Serve in Orange, the AVAG team learned that veteran Stacy Vagenas' home needed work, because he had been in the hospital for an extensive stay. Volunteers rallied in the heat and removing tall weeds and cutting back shrubbery around his home. The wheelchair-bound veteran was grateful for the last minute effort by the AVAG team and the Serve volunteers.



Serve Day Volunteers

AVAG In Action

Photos courtesy Doreen Matsumoto

Throughout the year, as AVAG continues to develop more community connections, the people who benefit are veterans, their family members, loved ones and community members.



WWII Navy veteran Harold Gomer, 95, tries out a new walker — with a seat — provided by AVAG team member Gayle Bohnhoff-Vrabec and her connections. Harold is trying out his new walker with assistance from his daughter and AVAG team member Pam Crawley.



After a remodel of the Santiago Creek Orange Estates community room, a book shelf was needed. AVAG turned real estate agent and AVAG friend Maggie Shapiro who donated it at no cost to AVAG. Paul and Glen provided transport for the gift.



Earlier this year AVAG team member Roberta Gardner had extreme water damage to her ceiling from winter heavy rains in San Bernardino.

At top left, this is some of the damaged ceilings that greeted AVAG volunteer, Alex Gavidia, from Logic General Contracting when he arrived at Roberta's home. Right, this is how the repaired ceiling looked at the end of the project.



Left, during the summer, AVAG received a call from real estate agent and AVAG friend Maggie Shapiro asking if AVAG could use three TVs and a crib. The AVAG team responded and picked them up. Here longtime AVAG volunteer and photographer Paul Buron gets to work lifting one into his vehicle.

Below, thanks to AVAG volunteer Maggie Shapiro, she introduced the AVAG team to clients who donated this beautiful sectional couch to Margaret and Abel Gurule. The couple is enjoying it in their Sequoia Mobile Home Park residence with their grandchildren.



AVAG Celebrates Summer with a BBQ

Photos courtesy Paul Buron

As soon as summer arrived, AVAG volunteers and partners teamed up to host a summertime barbecue for our AVAG volunteers who have been assisting with our events over the last year.

Kathy and Vince Cisneros hosted the summertime event at their house and AVAG supplied the food. Participants said everyone had a good time and also took time to celebrate our veterans.



Amber Stewart from Helping Hands Ministry shows off the delicious desserts.



After the good eating and some fun and games, the team paused for a group photo, from left: AVAG Chaplain Doreen Matsumoto, Gayle, Vicki, Amanda, Charles and Mary, Amber, Alex, Rose, Vince and Kathy.



AVAG's Chaplain with Yvette and Isabella, who have been volunteering with AVAG and Unleash Your Purpose ministry.



Army veteran and host Vince Cisneros grills hamburgers for the event while Army veteran Charles Cruz supervises.



Isabella, left, and Amanda, right pose for a moment with happy hostess Kathy Cisneros.



Doreen with Marine Corps veteran Alex and Rose Smith



Above, long-time AVAG volunteer extraordinaire and photographer Paul Buron holds court with other volunteers, explaining one of his fascinating aviation stories. Photo courtesy Doreen Matsumoto

Left, Marine Corps veteran Alex Smith, left, presents host Vince Cisneros an Army Veteran with an AVAG challenge coin.

AVAG Bible Studies
(Photos courtesy Paul Buron)



AVAG volunteers held a youth Bible study before Independence Day at Santiago Creekside Estates in Orange. Besides enjoying pizza, ice cream, chips, juice and prizes, they learned the story of Ruth.



Jocelyn and Madison of Santiago Creekside Estates are partnering up in versus Jenga.



Rob is locked in a pose playing Twister.



Gloria and Miranda getting ready to start the game Twister.



Daniel and Vanessa are playing games.



Donna, left and Barbara right, took a break from their Orange Bible study recently to wish Nancy Gordon a most happy birthday.



During a June children's bible study at Santiago Creekside Estates the story of Jesus feeding the 5000 and Jesus walking on water were shared with children. Children and AVAG Chaplain Doreen Matsumoto, center, gather for a group photo after a fun pizza meal, treats and prizes for the youngsters.



AVAG volunteer Gayle Bonnhoff-Vrabec stands behind AVAG team member Donna at the Orange Bible Study.



Above, Carolyn Cotter of Orange shows off a patriotic raffle prize she's donated for AVAG veterans.



At left, Diamond Bar Estate's Dottie Cosgrove reads the Bible, taking a break from knitting the beautiful afghans that have been distributed to female veterans and wives of AVAG team members.



Members of the AVAG Diamond Bar Bible study group — this is a generation Bible Study where participants range from early 20s to 90s. And, even with Bible study group members taking summer vacations, the Diamond Bar Estates team continues to meet throughout the summer.

Summer Camp

Photos courtesy Doreen Matsumoto

For the first time, with the help of Travis Riley and Indigo Allendorf, AVAG team members joined with Cottonwood Church to send youngsters from AVAG programs in Hemet Valley RV Park, Santiago Creekside Estates in Orange, and Santiago Desert View Estates in Barstow to summer camp.

Among the students who attended summer camp were: Jocelyn Carranza, Guadalupe Alvarez, Arturo Alvarez, Arlene Garcia, Jennifer Carranza, Yoselin Carranza, Isis Harrison, Chris Harrison, Larissa Lugo, Eleana Lopez and Ruben Gaona.



AVAG Goes To Bat For Alfredo and His Family

Photos courtesy Paul Buron

before long life here became very difficult. The floor started to buckle, and it soon became so serious that I was afraid to walk on it, with my health condition, and I feared falling due to my health issues.”

At that time Alfredo's daughter, her husband and their two foster children turned to Santiago and eventually AVAG as he needed a temporary residence for his family during the holiday season. Santiago CEO Richard Simonian assisted in finding a temporary home for Alfredo, his wife Lorraine, his daughter Wendy Burnett, her husband Dan and their two foster children, aged 8 and 11.

Then in February County of Los Angeles Department of Children and Family Services entered the picture abruptly, sending written notification that one of the key provisos of caring for foster children included having individual bedrooms for each foster child. Thus, the first temporary home only had two bedrooms for Alfredo and his family.

Again, Santiago, led by Richard Simonian, found another temporary housing unit for Alfredo, who served in the military for six years, including a three-year stint with the famed 101st Airborne Air Assault unit in the late 70s and a reenlistment with the Navy. This manufactured home had enough rooms for the foster children and the two married couples.

By that time, AVAG Chaplain Doreen Matsumoto and several volunteers teamed up to assist Alfredo in finding everything from housing items, food and clothing during those difficult transitional weeks.

“I have to say that Doreen and the program she worked for was a blessing for us,” Alfredo said. “She and Mr. (Richard) Simonian were genuine with their concern and assistance. As a Vietnam-era veteran, I was tired of the mistreatment Vietnam veterans in general received from the public and on a personal, level I was sick of people coming to me and saying ‘thanks for your service’ and then walking away, neither caring about me personally or my service to our country. Doreen cared. She stuck with us and helped us.”

Meanwhile, the issue of repairing the water damage in their manufactured home dragged on. At some point, Alfredo and his wife discussed replacing the water-damaged flooring. Contractors ripped out the old flooring and over time, work progressed in cleaning up the other water damage in their home.

“Then during a discussion with Doreen, I casually mentioned the expense we were facing to replace the flooring. Doreen said that AVAG had a warehouse with many housing and home improvement items. It turned out they had tiles and flooring that needed to be cleared out of the warehouse and we obtained them at no cost to us.” Being a former contractor, Alfredo knew how to measure and plan for all the replacements in his home.

Throughout this difficult period of time, the AVAG program helped Alfredo obtain flooring for the kitchen, laundry room and other rooms. In addition, they were able to get slabs of counter-tops for the kitchen. “This was all found, thanks to Doreen introducing us to



This is the flooring and tiles AVAG provided to veteran Alfredo Andrade and his family before the countertops were installed — countertops also donated through AVAG.



Above, Lorraine and Army and Navy veteran Alfredo Andrade relax during a recent AVAG function in Palm Springs.



Left, Danny and Wendy Burnett wrap themselves in a Quilt of Valor received during a recent AVAG meeting in Palm Springs. They are joined by AVAG Chaplain Doreen Matsumoto, their two foster children and a friend.

the good people in the AVAG warehouse.” As of August, 2, new cabinets have been installed, the flooring has been installed and Alfredo is working out the final details for laying carpet in certain parts of their home.

“I’m just a poor kid from East L.A.,” Alfredo said. “I saw my military service as a way to get an education and to improve my station in life and I have to tell you, I’ve never had such genuine thanks for my service as I received from Doreen and her program.” 🦋

Summer Fun for AVAG Members At Recent Angels Games

Photos courtesy Doreen Matsumoto



Navy veteran and AVAG team member Paul Gomez and wife Dorene enjoyed the game.



Air Force veteran Darrell Palacio and wife Michelle thoroughly enjoyed the Angel's game.



Kevin and Nery Mitchell snuggle for the camera.



Chris and Deeanna Tomczak check out Angel history at the stadium.



Two best buddies, Marine Corps veteran Matthew Clark and Army veteran Patrick Van Leeuwen are all smiles before the game.



Post-game fireworks over the Angel Stadium..



Earlier this summer, AVAG team members George and Pat Roth attended a night ball game where they observed an impromptu memorial to Angels player Tyler Skaggs, who died suddenly.



George and Pat Roth enjoying a light moment at the game where they celebrated Pat's birthday. The Angels won.

Casitas La Verne Mobile Home Estates

(Photos courtesy Doreen Matsumoto)



At a recent Casitas La Verne Mobile Home Estates AVAG meeting, everyone celebrated Louie Perez's 91st Birthday, who is all smiles here.



After the AVAG meeting, team members delivered AVAG newsletters to La Verne Assistant City Clerk Lupe Gaeta Estrella for distribution at City Hall.



During the AVAG meeting, Josephine, Barb Alex, Tracy Marquand, and Kathy Pavzyk were presented afghans knitted by Diamond Bar AVAG team member Dottie Cosgrove.

AVAG Headquarters

(Photos courtesy Doreen Matsumoto)



Vietnam veteran and woodcraftsman Loren Applebaum and his wife Melissa, recently visited AVAG headquarters to drop off the hand-crafted flag box to display the flag and bullets from AVAG team member and Army veteran, Al Brewster's recent funeral.

The AVAG Board of Directors present to accept Applebaum's beautiful honorarium were from left, Loren Applebaum, Army Green Beret and AVAG Director Jim Duffy, Army Green Beret Richard Simonian, Melissa, Vietnam Veteran of the 1st Cav, Director Mike Keele and Director John S. Meyer, an Army Green Beret during the Vietnam War.

TAPS



AVAG Veteran James Gallardo Sr., Navy 1979-1983, who served on USS Nitro, passed away at 12:25 a.m., on Tuesday, July 23rd. We were able to help him in so many different ways and when he was strong enough, he came to our meetings at Creek Orange.

Below, a celebration of life was held recently for AVAG team member and Marine Corps veteran James Eger in Colton. AVAG Chaplain Doreen Matsumoto, second from left, presided over the service which was attended by Eger's son Bill, his daughters Trisha and Jenny and his wife Linda.



The Marine Corps honor guard Staff Sergeant presents the American flag to Linda Eger.

AVAG News

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