

September 28, 2008

## Race, help seniors, ride!

### *Kiwanis Club hosts 5K Run at Magic Mountain*

Ensuring no senior in need ever goes hungry. That noble goal will be supported on Sunday when the Kiwanis Club of Santa Clarita's 17th annual Six Flags Magic Mountain 5K Run is held. Beginning at 8 a.m. and winding through the promenades of the 260-acre amusement park, the fun and challenging event raises funds for the SCV Senior Center's Home-Delivered Meal Program and other Kiwanis charities.

Known for its world-class roller coasters, rides and other thrilling attractions, Magic Mountain has an extra bonus for run participants: Each receives a free general admission ticket (\$59.99 value) and free parking (\$15 value) to Magic Mountain for race day.

This is an important fundraiser," said Brad Berens, executive director of the SCV Senior Center and the SCV Committee on Aging.

"Money raised benefits the more than 800 local seniors who can no longer take care of their own nutritional needs," Berens said, noting the majority are in their 80's and older, homebound, chronically ill or disabled, and have little or no support networks in place other than the Senior Center.

"Their most ardent desire is to stay in their own homes in their own community, and avoid premature institutionalization, which almost always results in physical and mental decline," Berens said.

The Senior Center needs HDM donations to keep the meal program going.

"We are not currently receiving enough funding that keeps pace with the 'age wave' of our older seniors and the tremendous growth of our frail elderly. In addition, an inherent deficit exists within the program that stems from an inability for clients to donate, and the double digit cost increases we've all seen in gas, food, and packaging supplies," he said.

Provided by the SCV Committee on Aging/ SCV Senior Center, the meals have been volunteer-delivered for nearly 30 years, Monday through Friday - through rain and heat and earthquakes and fire and winds. Approximately 360 meals per day are provided with increases some weeks as much as 3 percent per week. And while a suggested donation of \$2.50 is requested, money is never required to receive a meal. Home-Delivered Meals are provided in a 450 square mile area that includes the Santa Clarita Valley and the city of San Fernando.

A grateful home-delivered meal recipient is 87-year-old Doris Swarz of Newhall, now in remission following a lengthy battle with lung cancer.

Swarz, who uses oxygen around the clock, says the meals are tasty and make living on her own more "palatable."

"I get out of breath all the time when I try to cook so home-delivered meals is really a lifesaver for me. They're great," said Swarz, an Iowa native and 16-year SCV resident.

Prior to her cancer treatments, Swarz went to the Senior Center for weekday lunches. But while in the throes of radiation and chemotherapy, a friend told her about the Home-delivered Meals Program. That tip was a useful one. In the five years since, Swarz has come to view her home-delivered meal as a pleasant ritual she looks forward to.

"With a home-delivered meal, I'm having one really good meal that has everything I need, my meat, or fish, a salad, vegetables, and so on," Swarz said.

Swarz encourages the community to support the Home-Delivered Meals program, saying that "it's wonderful to help others in need."

"It's also great to know somebody cares," she said.

A special invitation to participate in the Kiwanis 5K is extended to local junior high and high school students, such as those in track or cross-country.

"This is an excellent opportunity for young people to learn stewardship and altruism for those less fortunate," Berens said. "Helping this way instills school pride while supporting the frail and elderly of our community." Students signing up prior to the event date will pay \$15.

Magic Mountain, along with sponsors for both Kiwanis and the Senior Center, are to be commended, Berens said. He cited those sponsors as including: Wells Fargo of California Insurance Services; Tek-Smart; Paul Bowler and Wells Fargo Home Mortgage; Filipino-American Association of the Santa Clarita Valley; Time-Plus payroll services; Antelope Valley Community Clinic; Owen, Patterson, Owen Law Firm; Placerita Homeowners Association; Dave Davis Plastering; Castaic Lake Senior Village, and Whole Foods.

"We're immeasurably grateful for this support and the knowledge that people in this community truly care about ensuring that our home-delivered meals trucks keep on rolling," he said.

Founded in 1915, Kiwanis International is a global organization of volunteers dedicated to "changing the world one child and one community at a time."

Bob Endress, an SCV Committee on Aging board member, said Kiwanis, the oldest service club in this valley, started in 1927.

"Kiwanis addresses many Senior Center needs," Endress said. "Some \$500,000 or more has been raised through the years to help the center."

That money has helped in significant ways, including paying for the supportive services modular building, and helping the meal program, and congregate meals, Endress added.

Endress hailed Magic Mountain for its philanthropy.

"Every year they give away 500 tickets and parking to 5K entrants," Endress said. "It's a great deal, and all the money comes back here."

Frank Pascoe, who heads up the Senior Center's handyworker services and home modification program, recalled years back when the race began.

"At the time, Stan Sierad, an activist for the center who is now deceased, approached Magic Mountain to put on a run. Bob Endress was very involved with Kiwanis and offered the club to help put the race on, so having been a Kiwanian for a long time, that's how I got started," Pascoe said.

A former 5K race director, Pascoe says he hopes many people will embrace the cause.

"Seniors have to eat, and yet our funding for the center, and more specifically home-delivered meals, seems to always get cut back, so I am truly grateful when the Kiwanis makes the Senior Center a recipient of some of their donations," he said.

Registration begins at 6:30 a.m. Race time is at 8 a.m. The run allows for all age ranges to participate with free commemorative T-shirts for the first 500 runners, and awards given to first, second and third place winners in each group (male and female).

For information e-mail [kiwanis5krun@yahoo.com](mailto:kiwanis5krun@yahoo.com) or call the Senior Center at (661) 259-9444 to receive a registration packet by mail. You may also register online at [www.active.com](http://www.active.com) (user ID event 1605743). For information about the Senior Center visit <http://www.scvsc.org/>