

A heart that reaches out to seniors

Jacqueline Lehn Dupont is a large moniker for the petite person who meets to talk with me about her love of people, and the help she gives to them that goes above and beyond what most people do.



MIKI CUMMING
CITIZEN OF THE DAY

Dupont, a San Clemente resident is a single mom, with four children, ages 3 to 14. She did her undergraduate work at the University of San Diego, her graduate work was at USC, her doctorate at Oxford and her two masters at USC in Gerontology, Geriatric Medicine.

One of her passions is the annual South County Senior Service's Captain's Ball, coming up March 10. Dupont is the underwriting chair this year and has co-chaired the event many times in the past.

Q: I understand that you have a big heart for seniors in the community, how did that begin?

A: I think at age 12, in Catholic School, we had to do community service, which back then was unusual. I chose nursing homes. I loved it and loved my grandparents who were very close. My mom's a Greek immigrant and my father's German. My Greek relatives were so warm and I loved my grandfather, who ended up with Alzheimer's.

Captain's Ball

South County Senior Services is hosting its seventh annual gala, "Polynesian Nights" on Saturday, March 10 at the Ritz Carlton, 1 Ritz Carlton Drive, Laguna Niguel, starting with the Silent Auction and reception followed by dinner and dancing. Being honored for their longtime support and dedication to South County Seniors Service are: Bristol Park Medical Group; Hoag Memorial Hospital; Edward J. Schrum and Young's Market Company. Tickets are \$250 per person. To purchase tickets, call 949-855-8033.

When I was doing my graduate work, I became an Alzheimer's researcher at USC. That was the direction I wanted to go in because of him. I didn't like the care (he was receiving). I wanted to make a difference. My whole life, I've been passionate about old people.

Q: Tell me about your assisted homes

A: There are two companies, Assured Horizons in Fountain Valley and Irvine Cottages in 1995, with one six-bed facility. I now have 10 homes in Irvine and Mission Viejo and eight in Fountain Valley. We're a corporation. California Law requires that there be no more than six residents per facility."

Q: How do you manage such a



CITIZEN OF THE DAY: Jacqueline DuPont at home in San Clemente. She was inspired to get involved in geriatric medicine after her grandfather came down with Alzheimer's.

PAUL BERSEBACH,
SUN POST NEWS

large group of facilities?

A: I mainly hire nurses, but we also have social workers and a wonderful Social Services Director, Aileen Sherman, who's been with me ten years. I have very little turnover. In our caretakers, it's 2 percent, but we pay well and have good benefits - which are usually missing in health care.

Q: How do you see this segment of our society growing and changing?

A: As a gerontologist, I

would say the fastest growing segment of our population is the 85-plus age group. Demographics are everywhere, and we're hoping to increase by 30 percent within five years. There's so much data - older patients seem to be increasing, because we're living longer, but not necessarily healthier. The system can be very complicated for senior adults. We need to educate our senior population more.

Q: What's the most difficult problem?

A: Caregiver burden is the most difficult problem in America. The burden is on the spouse or children - not so much the patient. The spouse and children lose workdays - have to take time off - lose sleep - the depression is huge. I think areas of impact will be therapy, getting more support groups, more education and funding toward the caregivers. I think respite care is number one. The caregivers need stress breaks, relief and they cannot be up all night.

Q: What's the most rewarding?

A: It's giving good care - seeing a resident smile - even if they don't say 'thank you', the look in their eyes shows they're happy, peaceful. I may not be able to get everyone better, but I want to give everyone peace and comfort. If they're happy and I did that for them before they died, how lucky am I? It's very rewarding.

Q: Tell me about the Captain's Ball

A: I founded the Captain's Ball over lunch with Marilyn Ditty (South County Senior Services) because she needed funding for her Alzheimer's Day Care.

Adult Daycare is underfunded all over. We have wonderful programs in San Clemente - the Leisure World one is great - South County Seniors and others, but they're all underfunded. We did the first ball to pay for that.