

AGING

Gray Panther Karen Reside volunteers for joy of helping others

Seniors show their pride through community service

By Rich Archbold
rarchbold@seng.com

Karen Reside has spent most of her life helping others and making them smile.

In her 74 years on Earth, she has helped thousands of people, including members of youth organizations and other nonprofits, women and artists of color and those who are homeless. And, more recently, she has helped seniors as president of the Long Beach Gray Panthers, working tirelessly to advance the causes of older adults. She also is a commissioner on the Los Angeles County Commission for Older Adults and chairs the Legislation and Advocacy Committee.

She has done all of this while working at her day job as a department store jewelry buyer (now retired) and raising two boys.

What has motivated her to help so many people?

"I find people are so thankful when you help them," she said in an interview. "It is so enriching and joyful making people happy. I love it when they smile. It makes me happy."

Reside said she first got interested in helping people when she was young, living in Lakewood and babysitting for a family that included survivors of the Holocaust. She said she couldn't believe how people could be so cruel to others. She said their treatment inspired her to find ways to help others in need throughout her life.

She said she finds her volunteer work with the Gray Panthers particularly satisfying because the organization is such a strong fighter not only for the rights of elderly citizens but also for younger adults. The Gray Panthers nonprofit is one of more than 200 participating in this year's Long Beach Gives campaign to help continue offerings its services.

A key philosophy of the Gray Panthers, Reside said, is "Age and Youth in Action,"



COURTESY OF LONG BEACH GRAY PANTHERS
Bill Sive, Bill Logan and Jim Dawson marched with the Gray Panthers at the 2018 Pride Parade.



COURTESY OF KAREN RESIDE
Karen Reside, president of the Gray Panthers

ever since the national Gray Panthers was organized in 1972 by Maggie Kuhn. Long Beach founded its chapter of the Gray Panthers in 1974.

After Kuhn visited the New York Black Panthers to observe their community programs, Reside said, a television producer dubbed them the Gray Panthers and the name stuck.

Eliminating age discrimination continues to be a key focus of the Gray Panthers, Reside said, along with preserving Medicare, Social Security and the environment; nursing home reform, and developing affordable housing, transportation and technology "so no one is left out economically."

One of the most pressing issues in Long Beach now, she said, is helping people who are homeless. About one-third of the city's 3,376 people who are experiencing homelessness are elderly, Reside said.

"We encourage older and younger peo-

ple to be active and engaged in policy and legislation," she said, "to ensure aging with dignity and respect for everyone."

The Gray Panthers also partner with other local organizations that provide educational, social and personal opportunities for older adults, such as the Long Beach Aging Service Collaborative, Long Beach City Office of Equity, Long Beach Senior Citizen Advisory Commission and the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at Cal State Long Beach.

Last year, the Long Beach Gray Panthers were awarded the Los Angeles Alliance for Community Health and Aging Innovation Award for its work with interns from Cal State Long Beach.

Students in the program learned about the needs of older adults and what people from different generations have in common, Reside said in a previous interview. "One of the reasons why we have

the internship program is because a lot of things that impact seniors are also relevant to younger people. One thing that's a big issue is younger people want to see Social Security and Medicare there for them when they need it."

Reside has been awarded other recognitions, including a National Points of Light Award, the Martin Luther King Peacemaker Award from Long Beach City Councilmember Suely Saro, and a Press-Telegram Amazing Woman Award for her work in the arts at her Cultural Alliance Art Gallery on Pine Avenue, which has since closed.

Reside urged others to stay active and join the Gray Panthers. She said volunteering keeps you healthy. She also said people can come to a Gray Panthers meeting and learn how to make change to improve the lives of others.

"There is no greater satisfaction in life than helping others," she said. "I hope I die while marching and holding a protest sign helping someone."

For more information, call Reside at 562-617-7050 or email her at longbeachgraypanthers@gmail.com. To donate, go to longbeachgives.org/organization/Longbeachgraypanthers.

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CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES

1 FUR 1 FOUNDATION

1 FUR 1 Foundation supports mutually beneficial endeavors that enhance the lives of animals and humans in need.

100 BLACK MEN OF LONG BEACH, INC.

Improving the quality of life through education, health & wellness, economic opportunities, leadership & mentoring.

1736 FAMILY CRISIS CENTER

Helping children, women, men, & families through crises to improve their prospects for safety, survival, & success.

ACADEMY OF IDEAS

Empowering youth and families with education, life skills, & opportunities, breaking the cycle of poverty and division.

AQUATIC CAPITAL OF AMERICA

Promoting water safety education, clean water, increased aquatic facilities & aquatic activities in Long Beach.

ASSISTANCE LEAGUE OF LONG BEACH

Volunteers transforming the lives of children and adults through community programs.

BAYFRONT YOUTH & FAMILY SERVICES

Providing behavioral and mental health treatment services for children, adolescents, and their caregivers.

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES, INC.

Transforming lives by offering hope and opportunities for recovery, wellness, and independence.

BELMONT SHORE RFC

A transformational organization using its tradition, diverse culture, and rugby values to improve people's lives.

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Global strategy to empower vulnerable youth in order to stop exploitation and trafficking.

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A safe and engaging environment where every child has the opportunity to experience the joy and benefits of tennis.

CALIFORNIA FAMILIES IN FOCUS

Providing positive and innovative programs for youth and their families to achieve empowerment and purpose.

CASA YOUTH SHELTER

Serving and nurturing youth in crisis with shelter, counseling, and support services.

CHILDREN'S DENTAL HEALTH CLINIC

Oral health education and treatment for economically disadvantaged children and training in multi-specialty dentistry.

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Believing all children and families have boundless potential to achieve emotional well-being and educational success.

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Helping improve the physical, mental and emotional development of children and youth in the Long Beach area.

DIVINE VICTORY MINISTRIES

Bringing education, awareness, & empowerment to eliminating social issues impeding urban communities.

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Serving seniors and families with children to foster belonging, support, stability, and connection to their purpose.

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Building healthy lives for children and families, free from abuse, neglect and violence.

FRESH EDUCATION

Choices for K-8 education and options for support and needs for the families of unique learners and their children.

GLOBAL REFUGEE AWARENESS HEALING CENTER

Increasing the well-being of the Cambodian community by investing resources to address health and economic disparities.

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1 Carepackage or 1 Blanket at a time, showing people that they're loved and not forgotten. We're all Gods People.

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Sharing God's love, uplifting underprivileged youth with new shoes and socks, and other resources year round.

www.longbeachgives.org

LONG BEACH
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SEPTEMBER 19, 2024