

# Back on Track

TO HEALTH & WELLNESS:

WE ARE  
CHAMPIONS!



**LACERS**

LA CITY EMPLOYEES'  
RETIREMENT SYSTEM

—  
LACERS WELL NEWSLETTER  
SUMMER 2022

***Our Wellness Champions are  
the backbone of the program,***

the “boots on the ground,” and the true agents of change in the community. Over the years, the program has grown through the leadership of Champions: retired Members who volunteer their time facilitating in-person and virtual activities.

**Learn more about these activities by visiting  
[lacers.org/calendar](https://lacers.org/calendar).**



**A Message from  
Stephanie  
Smith**

**Wellness Program  
Manager**

## **This Summer Wellness Newsletter is dedicated to *our wonderful Champions***

who provide LACERS Members with an array of activities from their personality, expertise, and professional or personal goals. In this issue, you will learn a bit more about the Champions who lead outdoor and in-person activities.

LACERS Well Champions are unique, talented, and committed to your health and wellness.

**Thank you to all our fabulous Champions for your leadership and support of the LACERS Well Program!**



**LACERS Well  
Champion Program  
Karen Freire  
Chief Benefits Analyst**

**As the new Director of the Retiree Health, Wellness, and Buyback Division at LACERS, it is my goal to continue finding innovative ways to ensure that costs are manageable through rigorous negotiations of our health benefits while supporting LACERS Well and encouraging Members to interactively participate by leading program activities themselves.**

Although the worldwide pandemic is still a concern, LACERS Well provides various social and physical activities for Members in the safety of their home along with Champion-led activities in various neighborhoods. LACERS Well virtual events have also allowed Members living outside of Southern California to participate.

Recently, LACERS Well was very excited to have a very special member, Selma Benjamin, join us for our virtual Fitness Made Simple exercise class. Selma is 103 years young! She retired as a librarian from the City of Los Angeles with 26 years of service. Selma credits her longevity to her mother, who lived to be 100 and ½ years old, as well as following a healthy diet and many years of practicing yoga. Selma is a great model for taking advantage of the wonderful LACERS Well virtual classes to stay active in mind, body, and soul.

In 2021, COVID-19 still impacted our Members' lives throughout the year. Although there was a decrease in medical and dental usage in 2020 due to the lockdown, usage increased in 2021 when the lockdown was lifted. By the time this article is published, you may have already seen premium rates rise. As healthcare costs continue to rise, LACERS' goal is to maintain reasonable premium costs while providing comprehensive benefits that serve the Members well through strategic and innovative approaches in managing its health and wellness program.

During the upcoming Open Enrollment season, we are looking forward to incorporating information regarding our current Medical, Vision, and Dental benefits within our LACERS Well webinars. Although there are no changes to current benefit offerings, we are planning on conducting a Request for Proposal in the following calendar year to explore the Medical and Dental marketplace.

## **We look forward to your participation in the upcoming virtual Open Enrollment meetings.**





**LACERS Well  
Champion Program**  
**Kristal  
Baldwin**

The LACERS Well Champion Program gives Retired Members, Spouses, and Survivors the opportunity to share a hobby or skill with others and facilitate events and activities, and keeps our Members healthy through exercise and social connections. The Passport to Health Incentive Program was created to increase participation in Champion-led activities or events and was designed to reward Members for participating in activities or events in person or online. Upon retiring, Retired Members automatically have access to our Wellness Program. **If Retired Members want to facilitate an activity, they can contact the LACERS Well Team directly via email at [lacerswell@lacers.org](mailto:lacerswell@lacers.org) or by completing the online Champion form at [LACERS.org](https://lacers.org) in order to become a Champion.**

Champion Nancy S. Castles retired from the Los Angeles World Airports (LAWA) as a Public Relations Director II with 21 years of service. She currently coordinates the monthly South Coast Botanical Garden walks.

*When asked to describe her experience as a Champion, Nancy said,*

“I’ve gotten the opportunity to meet several retirees and greatly appreciate getting to know some of their background—from where they grew up to where they worked and what they do during retirement. I’ve also learned a lot from the tips and advice they have about retirement and keeping active.”



**LACERS Well  
Champion Highlight**  
**Nancy S.  
Castles**



Join Champion Nancy for monthly walks/tours at Botanical Gardens Walk and Cabrillo Beach/Aquarium Tours in San Pedro. Please wear comfortable attire and proper shoes for walking, and bring a bottle of water and your mask!

*RSVP with Nancy directly at [nscastles@gmail.com](mailto:nscastles@gmail.com).*



LACERS Well  
Champion Highlight  
**Richard  
Chavarria**

Champion Richard Chavarria retired from the Bureau of Street Lighting with 38 years of service. Richard coordinates the monthly golfing activity at the Alondra Golf Course.

Champion Everardo “Jimmy” Gonzalez started this activity in 2021, as he enjoyed teaching golf and wanted to share his love of it with his community. Jimmy is currently on a leave of absence from the golf course, and Richard has stepped in to assist.

Golf is an ideal comprehensive exercise activity for older adults. It encourages socialization, and research studies have suggested that golf improves balance, strength, and cognitive processing.

Join Champion Richard for the monthly golfing activity at the Alondra Golf Course in Lawndale. Please wear comfortable attire and proper golf shoes. Bring a bottle of water, and please don't forget your mask.

**RSVP with Richard directly at [ricochavi@gmail.com](mailto:ricochavi@gmail.com).**



LACERS Well  
Champion Highlight  
**Terry  
Nunez**

Champion Mary “Terry” Nunez retired as a Police Service Rep, Newton Division, with 31 years of service. She now coordinates a weekly walking group on the Whittier Greenway Trail every Thursday at 10 a.m. Her group enjoys a brisk morning walk and often stops at a local cafe for an optional light meal.

*When asked to describe her experience as a Champion, Terry said, “I have come to enjoy these weekly meet-ups because of the opportunity to engage and bounce ideas off each other.*

We get to talk about all the fun activities we enjoy and places we travel to as lucky retired members of society! It really is fun hearing other people talk about their busy lives and knowing how others choose to enjoy this beautiful phase of life.”

Join Champion Terry for monthly walks at Palm Park’s Greenway Trail in Whittier. Please wear comfortable attire and proper shoes for walking, and bring a bottle of water and your mask!

**RSVP with Terry directly at [terriscoramsey@msn.com](mailto:terriscoramsey@msn.com).**





LACERS Well  
Champion Highlight  
**Debby  
Rolland**

Champion Debby Rolland retired as a Superintendent of Regional Operations for the Department of Recreation and Parks with 33 years of full-time and 6 years of part-time service. She coordinates a bi-monthly walk at Van Nuys/Sherman Oaks Park.

*When asked to describe her experience as a Champion, Debby said, "LACERS Well Champion Program continues what I have always participated in since the age of nine years old: volunteer leading activities. Starting as a park office volunteer checking out ballgames, camp counselor, camp director coaching, officiating, teaching classes to kids and adults to training staff—and now leading a walk/social activity. This keeps me healthier and mentally engaged—meeting people from all walks of life and engaging in shared interests."*



Join Champion Debby for bi-monthly walks at Sherman Oaks Park in Van Nuys.

Please wear comfortable attire and proper shoes for walking, and bring a bottle of water and your mask!

**RSVP with Debby directly at [debbylr22@gmail.com](mailto:debbylr22@gmail.com).**



LACERS Well  
Champion Highlight  
**Ben  
Gaetos**

Champion Ben Gaetos retired as an Architect with the Department of Recreation and Parks – Planning, Maintenance, and Construction with 29 years of service. He coordinates a monthly hiking activity at the Griffith Park/Rose Bowl area.

*When asked to describe his experience as a Champion, Ben said, "As a LACERS Well Champion, I try to encourage retirees to remain physically active. Being physically active is beneficial to our health. This is the time to dedicate time to ourselves, different from our stressful work schedules in the past. We need to breathe more fresh air and feel the outdoors more. I do not consider myself fully retired."*

I remain busy with my private architectural practice if anything comes around. I still run, hike, walk, bike, and go to the gym every day. Someday, I may not be able to do these things, but not today. I continue to mentor or train runners to achieve their personal goals whether for their first 5k run or the dreadful 100-mile and above races."



Join Champion Ben for monthly hikes at Griffith Park/Rose Bowl in the Los Angeles/Pasadena area. Please wear comfortable attire and proper shoes for hiking, and bring a bottle of water and your mask!

**RSVP with Ben directly at [ben.gaetos@gmail.com](mailto:ben.gaetos@gmail.com).**

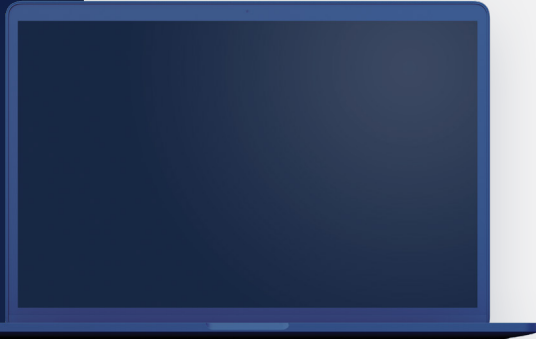




## 2023 Open Enrollment - Reminders and Updates

Open Enrollment will be held from **October 17 – November 17**. Packets will be mailed in early October. For Members aged 65 and older, your packet will be the same as in previous years and include a Health Plan Statement, Open Enrollment Overview, and 2023 Health Benefits Guide.

**For Members under age 65**, your packet will be lighter again this year. To reduce costs, your packet will include a Health Plan Statement, Open Enrollment Overview, and instructions on how to access the 2023 Health Benefits Guide online. If you'd like a physical copy, please contact LACERS after receiving your packet, and one will be mailed to you.



Be sure to check out all of these in-person/outdoor events and our virtual calendar of Champion-led activities. They are included every quarter with your monthly paycheck flyer.

### LACERS Well Contact Information

LACERS Well Events Webpage – [lacers.org/lacers-well-events](https://lacers.org/lacers-well-events)

LACERS Well Email – [lacerswell@lacers.org](mailto:lacerswell@lacers.org)

LACERS Well Program Manager Mobile – (213) 855-8397



### Did you miss a LACERS Well virtual event?

Visit the **LACERS YouTube Channel** at [youtube.com/lacersyoutube](https://youtube.com/lacersyoutube) by hovering your mobile device camera over the QR code image provided below to view video content. Make sure to click the subscribe button to be notified about the latest content.



### Connect with your LACERS Well community via Facebook.

Visit Facebook and search for the **LACERS Well Private Group** and request to join the group. Be sure to visit the page periodically for content available exclusively to **LACERS Well Facebook** members.

