

CAREGIVER GETS HELP FROM A VISITOR

THROUGH CARES SFV

By Sandra Trinidad

It was a hot and sunny day in San Fernando. Herminia, a Community Health Worker on the Community Public Health Team known as CARES SFV was visiting a multi-unit building to conduct home visits. Home visitation is a core strategy for Community Public Health Teams across LA County to build trust and connection in the community. Herminia reached a dusty doorway surrounded by evergreen houseplants. The twittering of birds could be heard inside the apartment when Herminia knocked on the brown door.

A woman wearing an apron answered the door. Herminia introduced herself as a Community Health Worker working on the Providence Health Services team. Herminia invited her to learn about Community Public Health Teams and complete a household assessment if she was interested.

The woman's eyes lit up and though she declined to complete a household assessment, she cautiously shared a current concern she had. Her husband is an elderly man in the early stages of dementia. The couple lives alone, the woman explained, and she added how caring for him had become increasingly challenging due to her own condition--pancreatic cancer. The woman explained that sometimes when she would run errands or attend her chemotherapy appointments, her husband would leave the apartment without any indication of his whereabouts. With his dementia worsening, it was increasingly difficult for the husband to be left alone.



After listening to her concerns, Herminia sprang into action. She called the 211 LA County Infoline to see what resources were available to assist them. The agent connected Herminia to LA Found, an LA County Aging and Disabilities Department program aimed at helping families remain connected with loved ones that have dementia and other cognitive impairments using a trackable bracelet. Herminia submitted a request on behalf of the household. Though the process took multiple attempts and persistence, Herminia finally received the medical bracelet and delivered it to the couple, who were very grateful to have it. Herminia also helped the couple by signing them up for weekly fresh produce deliveries. Through community partnerships with organizations like the YMCA, CARES SFV delivers produce boxes to households who are home-bound for a variety of reasons.

When asked about what keeps her motivated, Herminia responded, "To be able to help community members. Sometimes they don't have help or are afraid to ask for help. I know we can do so much more with supporting our community members especially the disadvantaged due to language access or lack of information. It makes me happy to see the fruits of my efforts."

It takes time to build trust among community members. Oftentimes it takes 3-4 attempted visits for people to finally open the door. Even though they may need help, people will decline the support until you create that trust.