



## NEWS RELEASE

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### Recipients of WISE & Healthy Aging Awards Bring the Concept of Caring to Everyday Life

*The "Celebration of Caring" Event Will be on Saturday, May 20*

**SANTA MONICA (May 2, 2017)** – Six local residents will be honored for their efforts to improve the lives of others at WISE & Healthy Aging's annual "Celebration of Caring" event May 20. Two doctors, two business owners, a film maker and a peer counseling clinician will be presented with "Celebration of Caring" awards.

- Rotarian and owner of Fox Laundry, **Stan Fox** will be honored along with documentarian **Yaniv Rokah** for helping a homeless elderly woman off the streets.
- Local restaurants owner **Fred Deni**, of "Back on Broadway" and "Back on the Beach," will be honored for his more than four decades of providing complimentary Thanksgiving meals to seniors.
- Founders of Yo San University in Culver City, **Drs. Daoshing Ni and Mao Shing Ni**, will be honored for the community acupuncture clinics they offer as a public benefit to communities across Los Angeles.
- Clinician **Sheila Segal**, co-director of the Peer Counseling Program at WISE & Healthy Aging will be honored for excellence in service.

#### **Stan Fox and Yaniv Rokah – Compassion in Caring Award**

The "Compassion in Caring" award will be presented to laundromat owner Stan Fox, with special recognition of filmmaker Yaniv Rokah, for the supporting roles they played in the real-life journey of Marie Elizabeth Haist, a former housewife who became homeless in her 50s. Rokah created last year's acclaimed documentary, "Queen Mimi," that followed Haist over a five-year period.

On a rainy night in the early 1990s, Fox received a call from the janitor at his laundromat on Santa Monica's Montana Avenue who asked if the homeless woman who had been wandering the area could sleep inside his business. Fox realized this would be a huge liability risk, but it didn't take long for the longtime Rotarian to say yes, prompted in part by the weather conditions and in part by the Rotary's philosophy of service above self.

For the better part of the next 20 years, the laundromat provided a dry, warm, safe place for her to stay.

The woman pushing the laundry cart full of belongings caught the attention five years ago of Yaniv Rokah, an aspiring actor working as a barista at Caffe Luxxe across the

(more)

street. Curiosity led him to establish a friendship and start piecing together Haist's story. The result was released last year as the documentary "Queen Mimi," which tells how the woman who once lived the comfortable life of a housewife ended up homeless, slept on the streets of Los Angeles and Santa Monica, ate discarded leftovers and eventually became friends with comedian and actor Zach Galifianakis, actress Renee Zellweger and Rokah.

"Mimi is special in many ways for me and our community," Yaniv says. "I felt obliged to tell her story."

### **Fred Deni – Caring for Our Community Award**

The "Caring for Our Community" award will be presented to Fred Deni, the owner of two restaurants – "Back on the Beach" and "Back on Broadway" – who for more than 40 years has donated, prepared and served Thanksgiving dinner with all the trimmings to homeless families and seniors in Santa Monica. That's more than 15,000 meals so far.

Not long after Deni opened his first restaurant in 1978, he saw a homeless man rummaging through the trash bin looking for food. He decided that instead of serving his usual Thanksgiving dinner to a houseful of guests, he would prepare meals for Santa Monica's homeless population. But as more and more organizations focused on the homeless during the holidays, Deni and his spouse and business partner of 36 years, Jim Christel, turned their attention to seniors.

With help from the city, along with logistical support from WISE & Healthy Aging and entertainment provided by volunteers, Thanksgiving dinner at "Back on Broadway" has become a tradition of more than 20 years.

### **Drs. Daoshing Ni and Mao Shing Ni – Leadership in Caring Award**

The "Leadership in Caring" award will be presented to Dr. Daoshing Ni and Dr. Mao Shing Ni, founders of the nonprofit Yo San University of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) in Culver City.

Through the university, the brothers – who have an unbroken lineage of 38 generations of TCM practitioners – created a way to share their expertise with future generations, but they also integrated a component that encourages community service while providing free or low-cost care for people with limited resources.

Founded in 1989, the university provides services at several externship sites, including WISE & Healthy Aging, where a geriatric acupuncture clinic is available free to seniors. Other integrative clinical partnerships include Venice Family Clinic, Being Alive in West Hollywood and The Wellness Center. The school's Blount Community Clinic, which houses the private practices of several licensed practitioners and is a training center for students in the final year of their studies, offers affordable acupuncture and Traditional Chinese Medicine care to Los Angeles area residents.

The school is named for the brothers' grandfather, Master Yo San Ni, a healer and teacher in the Taoist tradition.

### **Sheila Segal - Excellence in Service Award**

The “Excellence in Service” award will be presented to Sheila Segal, who for more than a decade has been a clinical leader of the Peer Counseling Program at WISE & Healthy Aging. She now co-directs the program, providing training and supervision of the paraprofessional peer counselors.

Segal is a licensed marriage and family therapist with a master’s degree in clinical psychology. She has previous experience as a physical therapist, and she and her husband developed and operated a musical restaurant in Santa Monica during the 1980s and 1990s. She says her current career offers her an opportunity to apply the education and life experience gained in her earlier years to the challenges that occur in life’s later stages.

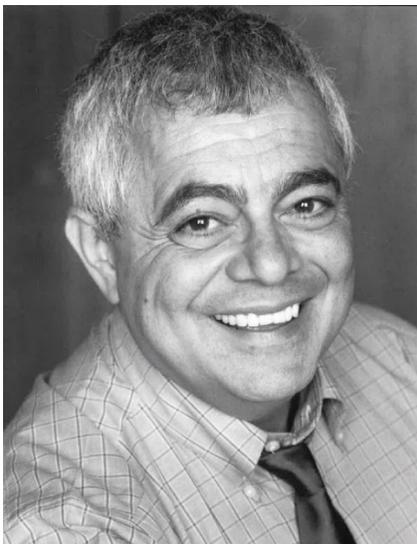
The luncheon will be on Saturday, May 20, at the Ritz Carlton Marina del Rey, with proceeds supporting services and programs offered by the nonprofit organization.

(PHOTOS AND CAPTIONS BELOW)

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### **ABOUT WISE & Healthy Aging**

WISE & Healthy Aging is a multiservice, nonprofit organization serving older adults and their families and caregivers throughout Los Angeles County. Headquartered in Santa Monica, the team at WISE & Healthy Aging works to promote and improve the well-being, independence and self-esteem of seniors, and to prevent premature institutionalization whenever possible.



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