

The San Diego Union-Tribune Article

“Cathy Hopper, executive director of senior programs, 75”

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The former executive director of the Clairemont Friendship Senior Center, which went on to operate as LiveWell San Diego from 2006 until this past September, was memorialized by a San Diego City Councilman last week as a champion for senior citizens throughout the city.

Cathy Hopper was not only key in the center’s founding and expansion but also served as its chief administrator for 31 years. She was one of three people honored Nov. 3 during a ceremony to adjourn the City Council meeting in memory of noteworthy San Diegans. Diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease three years ago, Mrs. Hopper died Sept. 27 after suffering a heart attack at a memory care facility in Escondido. She was 75.

“Our entire community will be forever grateful for her selfless dedication and work for seniors,” Councilman Chris Cate said.

In 1975, Mrs. Hopper joined a group of community leaders to establish the Clairemont Friendship Senior Center, which opened the following year in a Clairemont Drive shopping center. Under her guidance, services for seniors were expanded to include an emergency alert system to bolster independent living at home, an adult day care, and a burgeoning lunch program that grew to offer home-delivered meals. Within a few years, it needed more room to serve more seniors. After raising funds for a new building, the operation moved to its home in the North Clairemont Community Park in 1988. In 2006, the center changed its name to LiveWell San Diego and continued to

serve seniors until it closed two months ago. In the last year, Mrs. Hopper herself was served by the day care program she gave life to.

As the center's programs expanded, so did Mrs. Hopper's responsibilities. By 2004, the center was also administering the OASIS program in Mission Valley and the Florence Riford Senior Center in La Jolla under Mrs. Hopper's leadership. She was the recipient of a Director's Award of Excellence and a Project CARE award from the county's Area Agency on Aging, was named a Woman of Accomplishment in 1989 by Soroptimist International of San Diego. In 1997, state Sen. [Dede Alpert](#) named her a District 39 woman of the Year. The city designated April 28, 2006, as "Clairemont Friendship Senior Center Day" in the Sixth District. Two years later, March 4, 2008, was proclaimed "Cathy Hopper Day" by the City Council in recognition of "significant contributions to laying a strong foundation that will allow LiveWell San Diego to succeed in its mission for years to come."

Catherine Christine Hopper was born Nov. 21, 1939, in Milwaukee, the second of three daughters to Joseph Vaccarella and Josephine Orlando Vaccarella. She graduated from the San Diego State University in 1976 with a degree in social welfare. A resident of the county for 42 years, she lived in Tierrasanta for 27 years before moving into memory care in August. She was married to Robert Wolf for 20 years, and in 1977 was wed to John Hopper.

A private memorial celebration will take place Nov. 21 at the Natural History Museum. Her ashes were interred at Miramar National Cemetery. The family suggests that those who are able could volunteer time at a senior center, or donate to Alzheimer's research.

Survivors include her husband of 38 years, John; a daughter, Janet Jones of Tierrasanta; a son, Jeffrey Wolf of New York City; two stepsons, Greg Hopper of Sacramento and Jeff Hopper of Escondido; a stepdaughter, Denise Burnette of El Cajon; nine grandchildren; and a great-grandson.