

AGENDA REPORT

TO: Dave Adams, City Manager *GA*

FROM: William Huber, Assistant City Manager

SUBJECT: Presentation of Certificate of Achievement to Sister Mary Elizabeth Clark

RECOMMENDATION:

Present Certificate of Achievement to Sister Mary Elizabeth Clark for providing the largest free online information bank on HIV and AIDS in the world.

BACKGROUND:

Sister Mary Elizabeth Clark of San Juan Capistrano never dreamt that a computer bulletin board that she built in her small bedroom more than a decade ago would evolve into the largest free online information on HIV and AIDS in the world. The site averages 800,000 to more than a million users a month from every corner of the planet. The only resource larger is the U.S. National Library of Medicine – which offers some of its information on a Web site.

Clark launched the “HIV/AIDS Info BBS,” driven by a stay in a small Midwest farm community where she met a young HIV-infected man who, like others, was isolated by illness, small-town fears and geography. Through her encounter, she saw a way to put her technical skills to use by providing online information and readily accessible telecommunication resources to people affected by the epidemic.

For more than a decade, Clark has worked from dawn to dusk on the AIDS Educational Global Information Service, or AEGiS, from the living room of the mobile home off Alipaz Street she shared with her aging parents – both of whom have since passed. Last June, Clark and a growing staff of six moved across the creek to the Sycamore Business Plaza where the worldwide outreach continues to flourish. The Web site is now edited in five languages and updated hourly. AEGiS has a \$250,000 operating budget, which is the biggest challenge, Clark said. But the work is rewarding.

“I don’t think there is anything that I have done in my life that is more fulfilling,” she said. “And when you get a letter from someone around the world that you have never met saying thank you, it is really amazing.”

But after many accolades, awards and worldwide recognition for her work, Clark is slowing down a bit and passing her title as director to a successor at AEGiS. At 66, she is doing so after suffering a heart attack two years ago and losing sight in her right eye to a degenerative disease. Even though Clark says she has no plans to retire – as she works some days from home – the inevitable is near. The disease is spreading to her left eye.

Regardless, Clark says that AEGiS' work is far from over. "Until there's a cure there's AEGiS," the Web site states.

"The bottom line is that someday the pandemic will be over and we will find a cure," Clark said. "And our hope is that we will have a database that can be used by future generations that can see what we did right and wrong and hopefully that will help battle the next pandemic that comes along."

NOTIFICATION:

* Sister Mary Elizabeth Clark

RECOMMENDATION:

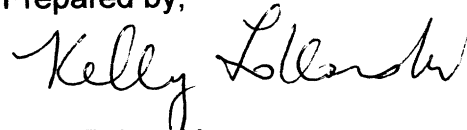
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Respectfully submitted,



William Huber
Assistant City Manager

Prepared by,



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