

Former educator organizes classes for visually impaired

FRAN JOHNSON WAS “born and raised in Southern California.” She grew up in Whittier and education has always been an important part of her life. “I never doubted that I would go to college,” Johnson said.

Johnson’s scholarly pursuits started with classes at Fullerton College, culminating

School District and also taught part time, judging career with raising three children. When an opportunity to work at the newly-formed government funded Head Start program surfaced, Johnson proposed temporary consulting. “I said I could do three to four weeks at the most,” Johnson

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- **FRAN JOHNSON**, EMERALD COURT RESIDENT

with a bachelor’s degree from California State University Fullerton in 1968 and a master’s degree in Early Childhood Education – a relatively new field of study at the time – from Pacific Oaks College in 1972. She worked for El Rancho Unified

recalled.

Three weeks turned into a prestigious, 30-year career with Johnson directing Head Start’s operations in Southern California. Head Start was founded to provide children of low-income families with a program to



FRAN JOHNSON DISCUSSES THE LOW VISION SUPPORT GROUP WITH A FELLOW RESIDENT IN THE DINING ROOM AT EMERALD COURT.



FRAN JOHNSON HOLDS A DOLL FROM HER EXTENSIVE COLLECTION. THE DOLLS ARE MAINLY GIFTS FROM HER YEARS IN EDUCATION AND AS THE DIRECTOR OF HEAD START. THIS DOLL IS A “SHINDANA DOLL,” MANUFACTURED BY SHINDANA TOYS, A COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMPANY LAUNCHED IN LOS ANGELES AFTER THE 1965 WATTS RIOTS. THE SHINDANA DOLL, WHICH EMBLEMIZES SELF-HELP AND RELIANCE, IS PARTICULARLY DEAR TO JOHNSON.

support their emotional, nutritional and educational needs. “Parent education is an important part,” Johnson explained, noting how Head Start works to assist both children and their parents. “I still talk like I’m invested in it,” Johnson said, smiling.

Johnson is legally blind. She suffers from optic nerve damage. “It’s the worst feeling,” Johnson begrudgingly admitted. But as her eyesight failed, Johnson’s training in education kicked in. “I tried to attack it,” Johnson said.

She went to the local Braille Institute. “They have a multitude of classes,” Johnson enthused. Computer literate and tenacious with new technology, Johnson dove in, learning skills and downloading apps to maintain self-sufficiency.

Johnson’s independence is complimented by a deep commitment to community. As a five-year resident of Emerald Court, she recognized that other residents at Emerald Court were also struggling with low vision or blindness. She wanted to help herself and help others.

“I went to the (Emerald Court) director and asked if they would be interested in starting a low vision support group here,” Johnson said. The Emerald Court management embraced Johnson’s request. The low vision support group was founded and

continues to remain active today.

Emerald Court’s commitment to making a difference in the lives of visually impaired residents extended to staff education. In June, trainers from the Dayle McIntosh Center spent two days with Emerald Court staff, providing tips for maximizing safety and keeping life engaging for residents adapting to vision loss. Johnson was impressed with the commitment. “Emerald Court has done something here I don’t think any other assisted living place has done,” she said.

Simple, but important, touches, add to the quality of life for low vision residents at Emerald Court. Cleaning staff knows to place items where they found them inside apartments to avoid stumbles. Staff calls out their own names when addressing visually-impaired residents in the hallways or dining room so the residents know who is greeting them. There is a magnifier in the computer room to assist with reading.

It’s all about creating community and pulling together to make everyone feel welcomed. “The staff is like a family,” Johnson summarized.

Emerald Court is available for personal tours by calling 714-450-7445 or connecting online at lifeatemeraldcourt.com.



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Emerald Court is a comfortable and welcoming senior living community offering Independent and Assisted Living in North Orange County. Our community boasts a vibrant setting which caters to active living and socialization in a warm, secure and friendly atmosphere. Residents enjoy a multitude of amenities, all-day dining, educational events, social gatherings, and experiences that make Emerald Court home. We’ve been dedicated to serving seniors and their families for 30 years, and with our recent expansion, we will continue for many years to come.

Lifestyle

- Variety of floor plans including studios, one and two-bedroom apartments
- Month-to-month rental
- Maintenance free-lifestyle
- Full service dining in multiple dining venues
- Weekly housekeeping, linen service and valet trash removal
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- State-of-the-art Wellness Center, including personalized fitness training and variety of classes
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