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Area woman connects officials with cities

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State officials have a special line to the Department of Motor Vehicles that never gets put on hold.

This kind of supernatural power that cuts through red tape as thick as the DMV's was highlighted at "Compassion In Action," a program that connects government officials to their communities.

The program's first meeting was held March 25 at Lonehill Manor Clubhouse, a mobile home park in San Dimas, where officials from every level of local government spoke to the crowd.

"It's frustrating for those of us who know how to use the system," said Jay Gomez of Los Angeles County Supervisor Mike Antonovich's office. "And it's even worse for everyone else."

The program was started by Barbara Case of San Dimas

after she helped a single woman, who was dying of breast cancer at home, get some hospice care before she died.

Case said she decided people should know what services are available through government agencies.

From the succinct, deadpan delivery of San Dimas City Manager Blaine Michaelis to the anecdote-filled speech of Gomez, speakers told citizens what they could do for them.

Terri Harris, one of some 40 people who attended the event, said the seminar was a big help.

"We have a practitioner program with counselors," she said of a program at an Azusa-area church. "We try to refer people out to different agencies, but we don't speak their language. It's a very big issue."

Donna Jimenez, who works for Rep. David Dreier, R-

Covina, said her office was capable of contacting people who speak almost any language if church members were to call the office.

Logistics was the dialect du jour at the event, with officials covering topics such as tax problems, veterans' benefits, HMO fighting, animal control, citizenship hang-ups and immigration problems, among other things.

A pair of women in the audience had immigration questions for Jimenez. Jimenez had bad news for one woman, but she stayed after the meeting to try to help her and the other woman out.

For more information, or to schedule a meeting in your neighborhood, call Case at (909) 305-0871, or reach her by e-mail at compassion@wwdb.org.

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