

# Successful Ager: Ana Celia Zentella & The Living Lab Opens for UC San Diego Researchers

UC San Diego

Center for Healthy Aging  
Stein Institute for  
Research on Aging

Welcome to the UC San Diego Center for Healthy Aging and the Sam and Rose Stein Institute for Research on Aging e-newsletter!



Our amazing team at the Sam and Rose Stein Institute for Research on Aging and the Center for Healthy Aging! Together we are dedicated to advancing the science of healthy aging by pushing the boundaries of research to create a world where older adults can enjoy optimal well-being and thrive as they age.

## Successful Ager: Ana Celia Zentella

written by Isabel Mancilla



Ana Celia Zentella radiates the spirit of successful aging. For her, it means “focusing on what I can still do and making as much of a contribution as possible.” This mindset is especially meaningful to Ana after losing both her husband and her beloved sister, Nolda Vivo. Nolda was a strong influence in Ana’s life and continues to inspire Ana every day.

With a Mexican father and Puerto Rican mother, Ana grew up surrounded by rich languages and cultures, shaping her lifelong passion for bilingualism and

cultural advocacy. Her academic path led her to write two influential books, *Growing Up Bilingual* and *Building on Strength*, which highlight the challenges and beauty of bilingual communities.

Ana's free English classes at St. Leo's Mission Church At Solana Beach has made a profound impact, especially on one woman who attended as a student for the first time in her life. "Moments like these", Ana says, "are more fulfilling than any university class she's ever taught".

Ana's commitment to teaching Spanish is deeply personal, seeing language as a bridge between generations, especially in immigrant families. For her, it's about passing down pride, identity, and connection to one's roots, which keeps her deeply engaged with her community and gives her life meaning as she ages.

Ana also stays physically and mentally active with yoga, swimming, writing, and hosting UCSD's annual International Mother Language Day on February 21st. Now going into its fifth year, this event celebrates multilingualism and allows her to share her passion for diverse languages. Based on research about how bilingualism benefits the aging brain, Ana hopes to develop more programs to help older adults reconnect with their heritage languages, bringing a sense of belonging that keeps her mind sharp and purposeful.



Ana and her sister, Nolda

Successful aging, for her, means staying engaged, standing up for every voice, and finding purpose in advocating for diversity and inclusion. Through this work, Ana feels fulfilled and connected, proving that aging well is about being part of something bigger than yourself.

Looking back on her life, Ana advises others to "reach out to neighbors, let go of old resentments, and seek something spiritual—whether through church, meditation, or yoga". For her, successful aging is about finding peace, staying active, and contributing in meaningful ways.

Ana Celia Zentella is an inspiration, showing that aging can be filled with purpose, gratitude, and joy. Her work in language and advocacy reminds us all to "live each day with purpose" and embrace the beauty of diversity, one word at a time.



Ana shared insights on \*La Nueva Mujer\*, her 1970s guerrilla theater group in NYC, during a theater class at UCSD with Jade Power

### Know a Successful Ager?



At the Stein Institute for Research on Aging we like to highlight the stories and lives of successful agers in our community. Successful agers are those that continue to engage in activities that are meaningful and have found ways to adapt to challenges as they age. If you know of someone that you think we should spotlight please email Sasha Weiss at [saweiss@health.ucsd.edu](mailto:saweiss@health.ucsd.edu) to nominate them!

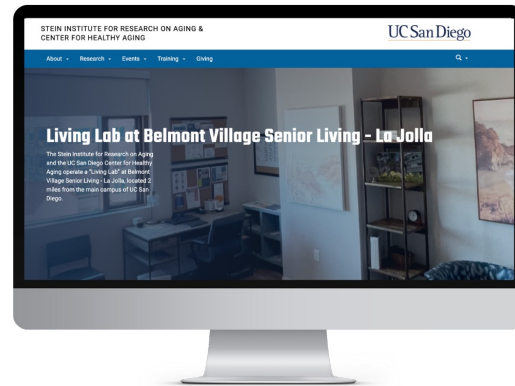
## Our Living Lab Opens for UC San Diego Researchers

We are very pleased to announce that as a result of a full year's work on logistics and piloting projects in our Living Lab, we



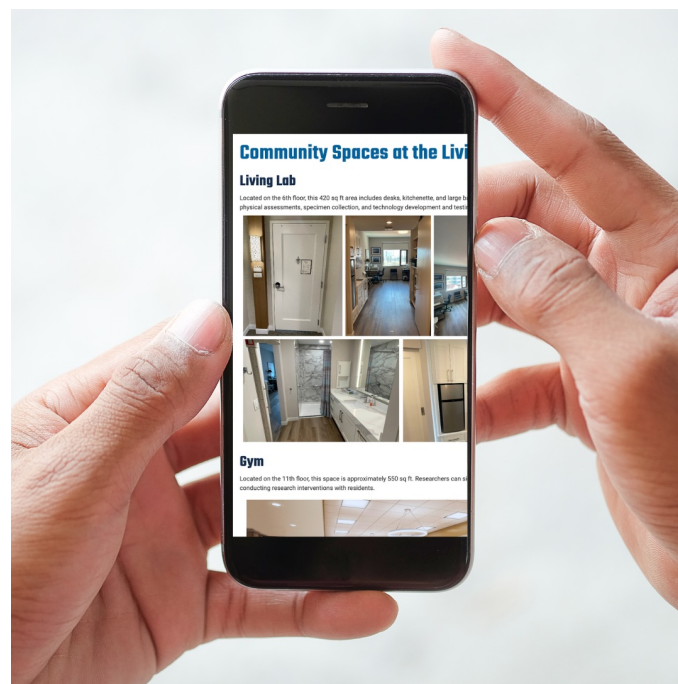
are now ready to open up the lab to UC San Diego researchers for projects related to aging, healthy aging, and geroscience.

The Living Lab is a unique partnership between researchers and older adults, designed to foster collaboration in a real-world setting where older adults live. The goal is to co-create and design research projects, programs, and innovative solutions directly with the people who will benefit most.



### Features of the Living Lab:

- **Studio Apartment:** A fully equipped space for conducting research visits, meetings with participants, and testing technology.
- **Additional Spaces:** Access to a range of communal areas including a gym, group room, conference room, and more, all within the Belmont Village Senior Living community.



Applications are now being accepted from UC San Diego researchers to use this space for their projects. For more details on the available facilities and how to apply, please visit our website.

[Visit the Living Lab website](#)

**For more information, please contact:**

Danielle K. Glorioso, LCSW  
Executive Director, Stein Institute for Research on Aging and Center for Healthy Aging  
Email: [dglorioso@health.ucsd.edu](mailto:dglorioso@health.ucsd.edu)

We look forward to hearing from you and supporting your research efforts in the

# Announcement: Our "Aging is Beautiful" t-shirts are back!

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## We Need Your Support!

When you give to the UC San Diego Center for Healthy Aging and the Stein Institute for Research on Aging, you're making the decision to support **the pursuit of a healthier, longer life for you and your loved ones**. Please **make a gift** to help sustain and expand our successful aging programs.

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