Playa del Rey resident Steve Rhodes was selected as the Neighborhood Council’s 2011 Star of the Neighborhood from among 10 nominees submitted by members of the community. As the ambassador for the Westchester Town Center BID, Rhodes spends most days patrolling Westchester Town Center on his bicycle, providing a comforting environment, assisting shoppers and giving directions to those who are lost. But on March 9, Rhodes took on a new role as the guardian angel to Peggy Bierke. On her way to a dental appointment, the elderly Playa del Rey resident apparently passed out, slumped over the steering wheel of her Buick Skylark in the Bank of America parking lot. By the time Rhodes rode up to investigate, the noonday sun had made the car a sweltering box, and Bierke was having trouble breathing. Rhodes scrambled to call 9-1-1 and open the doors and windows to ventilate the car. Following instructions from the 9-1-1 operator, he moved her into a reclining position and tried to cool her off as paramedics arrived. Bierke, still unconscious, was taken to the hospital, where she spent four days in the Intensive Care Unit until being released. She continues to recover at home.

“He was my guardian angel,” Bierke said. “I’m so appreciative of Steve coming along and helping me.” Paramedics said Bierke certainly could have died had she remained in the steaming car much longer, but after a long battery of tests, doctors are still not quite sure what caused her to black out in the first place.

Rhodes and his family will be featured in the Westchester Fourth of July Parade, which will begin at 11 a.m. on July 4 on Loyola Boulevard. In addition, Rhodes and all of the Star of Neighborhood honorees will be recognized at an upcoming Neighborhood Council meeting. Congratulations to all of the nominees for helping to make a difference in our community:

Linda Berri  
Joan Conca  
Shawn Crum

Jeff Geremia  
Joanne Poyourow  
Steve Rhodes  
David “Duke” Whale

Lourdes Russell  
Lisa Schwab  
Carol Tanner