

LOCAL NEWS

Why the workers' comp system has failed survivors of San Bernardino terror attack



Geraldine Ly, workers' comp attorney, with files of the nine Dec. 2 survivors clients she represents. She notes that sometimes she cries with them, but her tears dry when she gets mad. Photographed in her Santa Ana office on Thurs., Nov. 9. (Photo by Cindy Yamanaka, Orange County Register/SCNG)

By **SUZANNE HURT** | shurt@scng.com | The Press-Enterprise

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Struggles endured by survivors of the Dec. 2, 2015, San Bernardino terrorist attack throw an unflattering spotlight on California's workers' compensation system and San Bernardino County.

Changes in workers' comp laws have led to big savings for insurance companies, but made it increasingly difficult for injured workers to get the help they need.

And the county "put dollars ahead of people" and showed "ignorance and a complete lack of empathy" by [denying or delaying some treatment](#), said state Sens. Jeff Stone, R-Temecula, and Hannah-Beth Jackson, D-Santa Barbara.

The worker's comp system just wasn't designed to treat people injured in such attacks or other workplace violence.

The [survivors' plight, which came to light a year ago](#), inspired newly elected Assemblywoman [Eloise Reyes to introduce a bill to help them](#) when she was sworn in Dec. 5, 2016.



"If we fail those employees and we can't fix it, then we really have something wrong with the system," said Reyes, D-Grand Terrace, who represents the 47th Assembly District.

San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors Chairman Robert Lovingood declined to respond to those and other statements involving the [handling of survivors' workers' comp claims](#).

"The supervisor doesn't have any comment at this time," said county Policy Advisor Don Holland.

System changes

Under state workers' compensation laws, when an employee is injured, the employer is required to immediately open a workers' comp claim and send the employee for medical treatment.

All California workers hurt on the job have a legal right to benefits including medical care, wage-loss compensation or temporary disability payments during recovery, vocational rehabilitation, death benefits and lost future earnings compensation or permanent disability payments, according to a state Legislative Analyst's Office report.

RELATED: [How San Bernardino terror attack survivors are struggling with PTSD's 'invisible wounds' 2 years later](#)

A crisis has evolved following legislative changes made in the past 10 to 15 years after the state's insurance market deregulation in the 1990s led to insurance rate spikes. Employers pushed for legislative help, which included Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger introducing SB899 in 2004. Since that era, it's been harder for employees to prove claims, medical treatments have been denied or delayed, and permanent disability compensation has dwindled.

But it wasn't until [Dec. 2 survivors were shortchanged](#) that the public and legislators took notice, said Santa Ana attorney Geraldine Ly, a workers' comp law specialist for nearly 20 years who represents nine [San Bernardino terror attack survivors](#).

"It has gotten the legislators' attention. Nothing like that has ever happened," she said.

Workers' comp basics

Most employers buy workers' comp insurance. San Bernardino County and others self-insure, setting aside reserves to cover costs.

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Doctors treating workers must fill out forms to make written treatment requests for everything from surgery to physical therapy, medication or a special bed. The request for treatment is sent to a claims adjustor or "handler" — working for the insurer or employer's risk management department — for approval.

The adjuster can OK treatment or send the request to an outside company for utilization review when another physician weighs in. If the request is denied or modified, a worker can appeal to independent medical review.

Survivors' experience

Many Dec. 2 survivors who weren't shot in the attack by a Muslim co-worker and [his wife](#) didn't learn they were entitled to trauma counseling, medication and other care under workers' comp until Ly held an informational meeting in late January 2016. Some returned to work that month without counseling.

That April, survivors began experiencing denials, delays and "modifications" or limits for surgeries, physical therapy, counseling, equipment and prescriptions, including painkillers, antidepressants and anti-anxiety medication.



Sally Cardinale, a Dec. 2 shooting victim, right, is consoled by her sister, Angela Cardinale, of Redlands, at the end of a San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors' special meeting regarding the workers' compensation issues on Monday, Nov. 28, 2016. (Stan Lim, The Press-Enterprise/SCNG)

The state Workers' Compensation division reported the county routinely approved nearly all requests until mid-April 2016.

Survivors asked for assistance in private meetings with the county and from elected officials when that failed. As the attack's one-year anniversary neared, survivors sought help publicly at San Bernardino County board of supervisors' meetings.

The county accepted workers' comp claims from 59 people, including 57 survivors who were at the Inland Regional Center during the attack and a probation department employee who later helped survivors at the IRC.

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The county reports 2,484 of 2,763 treatment requests, or 90 percent, were approved, which includes 137 modified, usually to reduce treatment. Two hundred were denied, 94 denials were appealed and 22 denials were overturned. The county also denied psychological injury claims from 24 employees, who weren't there for the attack. Ly said her clients' approvals were far less than 90 percent.

The county initially denied then later accepted the claim from the probation department employee.

Delays and denials were still happening in July, when survivors [Julie Swann-Paez](#) and [Sally Cardinale](#) testified about their struggle to the state Senate Labor and Industrial Relations Committee during a hearing on Reyes' bill, AB44, and shared that one survivor waited nine months for a bone graft. Another waited 19 months for trauma counseling.

Some denials continue. Physical therapy to desensitize scars on a young male survivor shot in the abdomen, flank and knee, plus referrals to an orthopedist to evaluate the knee, were recently denied, said the worker's Ontario attorney, Christel Schoenfelder.





Behind the struggle

Legislators and survivors' attorneys say county officials didn't recognize the need to quickly get their workers treatment for trauma and other wounds that Reyes and Stone said were akin to battlefield injuries.

Jackson, who sits with Stone on the state Senate Labor and Industrial Relations Committee overseeing industrial safety and workers' comp, was astonished the county didn't do everything in its power to help.

"Why in the world would the county of San Bernardino resist caring for its workers, who are the victims of [an attack by a co-worker?](#)" Jackson said by phone recently. "I'm still dumbfounded that that would be the attitude taken by any employer, let alone a government employer."

After [14 people \(13 county workers\) were killed, 22 wounded](#) and at least 57 left with [post-traumatic stress](#), county officials were legally required to inform survivors this was now a workers' comp case but didn't — the first time the county denied or delayed treatment, Ly said.

RELATED: ['We will never forget' San Bernardino terror attack victims, mourners say on second anniversary](#)

County spokesman David Wert said the county provided information about workers' comp benefits by Dec. 7 and 8, 2015. Survivor Ray Britain, the county Environmental Health Services division's interim chief on Dec. 2, said that's not true.

At a Dec. 10, 2015, meeting the FBI set up to help survivors, county Risk Management staff who were asked about services neglected to tell survivors or relatives of those who were then "walking zombies" that they were entitled to workers' comp benefits, Ly said.

Risk management told survivors who knew to ask for claim forms they didn't appear to need them and didn't need to fill them out then because the county would send information packets with forms later — but no packets ever came, Britain said.

When survivors' doctors submitted requests for treatment authorization — basically, medical recommendations — to county risk management for approval, claims adjuster Christina Hurtado sent the requests to outside utilization review doctors who denied, delayed or modified requests.

County officials later said they were required to send all treatment requests to outside utilization review.

That's not true, according to the state industrial relations department and Reyes, the assemblywoman. She's an attorney who's handled workers' comp cases for 35 years.

Irvine attorney Keith More, a three-time Workers' Compensation Trial Lawyer of the Year who represents a survivor, said the county used utilization review to deny survivors "well-deserved" medical treatment when it could have approved "every ounce of treatment."





The California Supreme Court ruled employers and insurers can approve treatment under internal utilization review. They can even OK treatment denied by outside review, said Jason Marcus, president of Sacramento-based California Applicants' Attorneys Association, a group of injured workers' lawyers.

Utilization review was set up as a process for an employer or insurer who wants to deny or modify a doctor's treatment request. While employers and insurers can OK treatment, only another physician can deny or change the primary doctor's recommendation, Marcus said.

County officials said many problems came from survivors' doctors not submitting the right paperwork. Schoenfelder agrees.

But More and Ly said the county adjuster often didn't send utilization review all medical reports needed to support treatment, which led to denials, delays or modifications.

Utilization review doctors can ask for more records but usually just deny, Schoenfelder said.

In December 2016, county supervisors expanded the use of outside case managers to expedite claims. Survivors' attorneys say some helped and some didn't.

Britain disagrees with [former county CEO Greg Devereaux's](#) May 2016 statement the [terrorists](#) "win" unless the county comes out "stronger economically" afterward. Britain said county officials had a misguided focus on economics and disregarded their injured employees' well-being to save money.

"I think the terrorists win when you lose track of humanity," Britain said.

Why does it work that way?

Legislators and Marcus say [Dec. 2](#) survivors were treated like any other employees hurt on the job – highlighting a larger problem that injured workers statewide are having in obtaining medical treatment.

Insurers and employers concentrate on disproving the need for care, yet 95 percent of claims are legitimate, Jackson said.

"The system we have sadly assumes the worker did not get injured on the job," she said. "Therefore, the whole focus is on denying care and claims, rather than addressing them immediately and trying to get them treatment."

Utilization review and other changes were designed to reduce treatment, she added.

Survivors' attorneys say utilization review doctors deny or modify 65 to 95 percent of treatment requests, and denials are usually upheld by independent medical review, then kept in place for a year. Many employers never send workers for treatment, Ly said.

RELATED: [Survivors of Sept. 11, Oklahoma City terror attacks share their stories, recovery](#)

Treatment requests are often handled mechanically without determining what's needed to cure workers or considering the judgment of treating doctors who actually see patients, said Marcus.

Adjustors also send treatment requests to out-of-state outside review physicians with the wrong specialty for a particular injury — a practice the insurance industry has fought to continue, More said.

"It's the abuse of the utilization review process," he added.

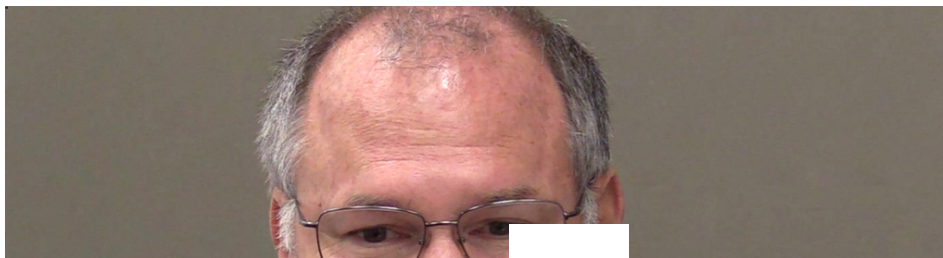
Survivors believe this happened because the county doesn't want to "deal with a lifetime of having to accommodate them," Ly said.

As of Nov. 30, 29 out of 57 survivors had returned to work for the county at some point. Twelve now work full-time and 10 with doctor-required work restrictions work part-time, while five are out on medical leaves and two left the county, said Wert.

Britain said when someone returns full-time without restrictions, they may relapse and be put on leave after a few months.

Wert wouldn't give details on how long the county would accommodate restrictions or allow survivors to work part-time.

But Ly said state law allows employers to fire employees after accommodating their restrictions for one year – even Dec. 2 terrorist attack survivors.





Can the system be reformed?

The system was set up to get injured workers back to work, not for profit.

Yet a Workers' Compensation Insurance Rating Bureau analysis shows SB863 saved insurance companies \$1.3 billion from 2012 through 2016 – mostly from decreased medical treatment through independent medical review's introduction, said Diane Worley, California Applicants' Attorneys Association's policy director.

Reyes introduced AB44 to allow attack survivors' workers' comp claims to skip utilization review and extend their benefits from two years to four and a half. [The bill was gutted](#) by the Assembly Insurance Committee.

On July 12, an amended AB44 requiring employers to immediately provide attack survivors with case managers and treatment options passed out of the Senate Labor and Industrial Relations Committee and later passed both houses and became law.

Jackson and Stone, the committee vice chairman, are now fired up to look closely at workers' comp. Costs largely arise from workers not getting treatment soon enough, said Jackson.

Employers and insurers should once again face stiff fines for delaying benefits, Marcus said.

Another key reform would require all necessary medical records be sent to outside utilization review and for utilization review doctors to be qualified in the specialty they review, More said by phone.

At the AB44 hearing, Stone, a former Riverside County supervisor who lost friend [Damian Meins](#) in the Dec. 2 massacre, vowed to make "retooling" the worker's comp system a "high priority" in 2018 after hearing survivors' testimony, including that survivors were treated like they were suspected of fraud and a utilization review nurse denied survivors' medication when only a doctor can.

In a recent interview, Stone committed to ensuring there are no gaps in service for injured workers, especially survivors of workplace violence, and said problems are likely happening in other counties, too.

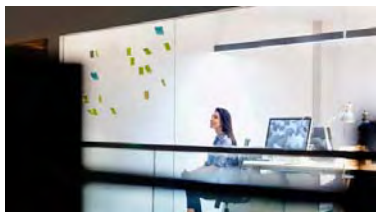
"We pay the highest rates in the country. The least we deserve is for employees to get the care they need," he said.

Trauma experts and lawyers say [Dec. 2 survivors were further harmed by secondary trauma](#) from their struggles to get help. Acknowledging that, Stone described the delays and denials as "completely inappropriate."

"I don't want to see a recurrence of the debacle that we witnessed in San Bernardino happen again," he said.

This story is part of a four-part series on [Dec. 2, 2015, terrorist attack survivors' recovery and California's workers' compensation system undertaken for a USC \[Center for Health Journalism's California Fellowship\]\(#\).](#)

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‘We will never forget’ San Bernardino terror attack victims, mourners say on second anniversary



William Youngblood, right, sobs in the arms of Sugar Yaw on Saturday, Dec. 2, after leaving the makeshift memorial for the 14 killed in the Dec. 2, 2015, terrorist attack at the Inland Regional Center in San Bernardino. (Photo by Brian Whitehead, San Bernardino Sun/SCNG)

By **BRIAN WHITEHEAD** | bwhitehead@scng.com | San Bernardino Sun

PUBLISHED: December 2, 2017 at 2:18 pm | UPDATED: December 2, 2017 at 2:42 pm

SAN BERNARDINO – William Youngblood and Sugar Yaw crouched at the southeast corner of Waterman Avenue and Orange Show Road on Saturday and planted a miniature Christmas tree in the dirt.

Around it, they placed 14 stuffed bears.

On the second anniversary of the **Dec. 2, 2015, terrorist attack** at the Inland Regional Center, several members of the community stopped by the makeshift memorial to remember the 14 who lost their lives.

And while neither Youngblood nor Yaw knew the victims, “This is home,” Youngblood said. “I was born here, raised here. These people are like part of my family.”

Youngblood, 55, choked back tears discussing how the tragedy affected him then and still affects him now. Before leaving, he sobbed in Yaw’s arms.

“The hatred in the world needs to stop,” he said. “It pains my heart to see all this cruelty in the world. It’s wrong. It’s ridiculous.”

Those who stopped at the memorial Saturday were commemorating the victims shot and killed two years ago during a training session at holiday gathering for San Bernardino County’s Environmental Health Services Division at the **Inland Regional Center in San Bernardino**. The attackers, **Syed Rizwan Farook, 28, and his wife, Tashfeen Malik, 27,** were **killed hours later during a shootout** 3 miles away.

Rosa Ortiz did not know the victims either, but a nephew was among the survivors.



Ortiz stopped by the memorial Saturday after leaving a private gathering at the Inland Regional Center for family members of the killed and wounded. Ortiz, of the San Gabriel Valley, left an arrangement of flowers and 14 American flags at the corner.

“We haven’t been the same” since the tragedy, Ortiz said. “This whole week has been tough. But we’re here to offer support to my nephew, and to all those who lost loved ones that day. We will not forget them.”

Councilwoman Virginia Marquez stopped by the memorial to observe San Bernardino County’s **10:55 a.m. moment of silence**. The first 911 call was received at 10:58 a.m. the day of the shooting.

She recalled the events of Dec. 2, 2015, with astounding clarity.

“Within minutes” of the attack, she said, “San Bernardino would be on the world stage.”

Marquez said she is discouraged that mass shootings – such as those in Orlando, Las Vegas, Sutherland Springs, Texas – have become commonplace.

“Has the violence in our world increased since Dec. 2?” she asked. “I say it has.”

She remains proud, however, of San Bernardino’s resiliency, of a city united. The councilwoman said for as long as she lives, she will take time on Dec. 2, to remember those killed and pray that tragedy never returns.

“It still hurts,” she said. “But the cohesiveness, the camaraderie we displayed that day is something I will always remember.”

LOCAL NEWS

After two years, San Bernardino County selects consultant for memorial to honor victims of terrorist attack



Two years after the Dec. 2, tragedy, small remnants remain of the memorial at the corner of Waterman Ave. & Orange Show Rd, for the victims of the Inland Regional Center mass shooting in San Bernardino, Ca., Thursday, November 30, 2017. (John Valenzuela/The Sun/SCNG)

By **JOE NELSON** | jnelson@scng.com | San Bernardino Sun

PUBLISHED: December 1, 2017 at 4:14 pm | UPDATED: December 2, 2017 at 1:07 am

The San Bernardino County Administrative Office has finally selected a consultant to assist with design proposals for a memorial to honor victims of the [Dec. 2, 2015, terrorist attack](#) at the Inland Regional Center.

A [special committee headed by county Supervisor Josie Gonzales](#) has already established that the [memorial will be located somewhere on the grounds of the San Bernardino County Government Center](#), in downtown San Bernardino.

But that is all that has been determined in the two years since the [deadly attack at the IRC that killed 14 people](#), of which 13 were employees of the county's Environmental Health Services Division. The exact location at the Government Center has yet to be chosen for the memorial. Additionally, a design has yet to be proposed or an artist selected.

"The best answer is simply that these things take time — usually five to 10 years in other communities," county spokesman David Wert said in an email. "The memorial will be with us forever, and it's going to mean a lot to a lot of people. It's best to take your time and get it right."

One example of how long it can take, although considerably larger in scale, is the 9/11 Memorial in New York City. The memorial opened to the public on the 10-year anniversary of the terrorist attack. A museum opened at the location in 2014.

Additionally, the Columbine High School Memorial took eight years to complete. Five years after the mass shooting at the Century 16 movie theater in Aurora, Colorado that killed 12 people and wounded 70, a design has been proposed but no memorial built; and five years after the attack at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newton, Connecticut, where 20 children and six adults were killed, a design has yet to be proposed.

An [existing memorial](#) for the San Bernardino victims has been in place on the southeast corner of Waterman Avenue and Orange Show Road, north of the IRC, since the deadly shooting.

Memorial Committee Chairwoman and [county Supervisor Josie Gonzales](#), on Nov. 16, sent a notice to committee members informing them of the latest developments since the last committee meeting on Aug. 10:

“The County Administrative Office has successfully completed the solicitation process and selected a consultant to facilitate the request for design proposals. The recommended consultant has extensive experience with public art projects and we are confident in their ability to guide the committee through the next steps in the process,” Gonzales said in her notice to the committee.

The Board of Supervisors was initially scheduled to consider approving a contract with the selected consultant at its meeting on Tuesday, Dec. 5, but that date has now been pushed back to Jan. 9 because staff from the County Administrative Office were still in talks with the consultant, Wert said in an email Friday.

Gonzales said in a telephone interview that committee members have made it clear what they would like to see in a memorial – something reflecting cultural diversity and in a quiet setting, whether it be a fountain, sculpture, or any other work of art.

Shortly before 11 a.m. on Dec. 2, 2015, county health inspector [Syed Rizwan Farook, 28, and his wife, Tashfeen Malik, 29](#), opened fire on a group of mostly county environmental health services employees attending an all-day training event and holiday luncheon in a leased conference room at the IRC. The Redlands couple, who [authorities said were radicalized Muslims](#), also planned to bomb the IRC but failed. The FBI declared at the time it was the deadliest terrorist strike on U.S. soil since 9/11.

Farook, 28, and Malik, 29, were [killed hours after the attack in a shootout with police](#) on San Bernardino Avenue near Richardson Street.



Victims of the December 2, 2015, mass shooting at the Inland Regional Center in San Bernardino. Top row, left to right, Robert Adams, 40, of Yucaipa; Isaac Amanios, 60, of Fontana; Bennetta Bet-Badal, 46, of Rialto; Harry Bowman, 46, of Upland; Sierra Clayborn, 27, of Moreno Valley; Juan Espinoza, 50, of Highland, and Aurora Godoy, 26, of San Jacinto. Bottom row, left to right; Shannon Johnson, 45, of Los Angeles; Larry Daniel Kaufman, 42, of Rialto; Damian Meins, 58, of Riverside; Tin Nguyen, 31, of Santa Ana; Nicholas Thalasinis, 52, of Colton; Yvette Velasco, 27, of Fontana; and Michael Raymond Wetzel, 37, of Lake Arrowhead. (Courtesy photos)

The memorial committee is composed of roughly a dozen survivors of the shooting or family members of those who died in the attack, said Gonzales, who was [appointed in February 2016](#) by then Board of Supervisors Chairman James Ramos to serve as the committee chairwoman.

[Julie Swann-Paez, a survivor of the attack](#) and committee member, said she understands memorials can take years to plan, design and build, but can't help feeling disconnected from it all now, as committee meetings have dwindled, from several in 2016 to only one this year, in August, which she said she couldn't attend.

“I'm really not sure what's going on because we only met once this year,” said Swann-Paez, 52. She did say she received Gonzales' email from Nov. 16 informing committee members of the selected consultant.

In the meantime, while the memorial committee continues working on a permanent memorial, Swann-Paez said she would like to see a temporary memorial, such as photos of the 13 environmental health services employees who were killed or a plaque with all their names on it, in a common area of the Government Center, such as the foyer or next to Board of Supervisors' chambers.

“I think there must be some recognition of them before the memorial is done. There should be something that recognizes that these employees of theirs lost their lives,” she said.

Wert said there is a memorial painting and plaque outside the Environmental Health Services Department on the second floor of the Government Center, and that none of the survivors have expressed a desire for anything more than that until the memorial is complete.

“In fact, the consensus among survivors has been that displaying photos of the deceased where EHS employees would have to see them every day would be traumatic,” Wert said, adding that the county doesn’t do anything related to the Dec. 2., 2015 terrorist attack without seeking consensus from the survivors.

The plaque, mounted on the wall outside the EHS department reads, “In honor of those taken from us, those who were wounded, and the countless others affected by the tragedy of December 2, 2015.” To the left of the plaque is a framed oil painting of a snowcapped mountain nestled among clouds and forest in the foreground.

“The wording on the plaque was approved by a consensus of the survivors,” Wert said. “The survivors have consistently wanted to honor the wounded and traumatized along with the deceased.”

Swann-Paez said the existing memorial at the Government Center isn’t enough to acknowledge that 14 people, 13 of whom were county employees, died in the attack. The plaque, she said, does not include the names of the victims, and a painting of a mountain and forest hardly illustrates the tragedy and the lives lost.

When asked if the county would consider something more along the lines of what Swann-Paez prefers, Wert said the memorial committee has not made any mention of anything like that.

“No one has ever expressed an interest in anything like that,” Wert said in an email.

Other Memorials



In this file photo, a woman grieves at her husband’s memorial at the South Tower Memorial Pool during memorial observances on the anniversary of the Sept. 11, 2001 terror attacks on the World Trade Center in New York, Thursday, Sept. 11, 2014. (AP Photo/The New York Times, Chang W. Lee, Pool)

9/11 Memorial

- A pair of hijacked airliners slammed into the World Trade Center’s north and south towers in New York City on Sept. 11, 2001, killing more than 2,700 people.
- Memorial took 10 years to complete. A museum opened at the location in 2014.

Columbine Memorial

- Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris killed 13 people in a shooting on April 20, 1999, at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado.
- Memorial took eight years to complete.

Aurora Memorial

- James Holmes opened fire on a movie theater in Aurora, Colorado on July 20, 2012, killing 12 people and wounding 70 others.
- Five years later, a memorial design has been proposed but no memorial built.

Sandy Hook Memorial

- Adam Lanza killed his mother inside their Newtown, Connecticut home on Dec. 14, 2012, before he drove to Sandy Hook Elementary School and opened fire, killing 20 children and six adults.
- Five years later, a memorial design has not been proposed.

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NELSON_JOE **Joe Nelson**

Joe Nelson is an award-winning investigative reporter who has worked for The Sun since November 1999. He started as a crime reporter and went on to cover a variety of beats including courts and the cities of Colton, Highland and Grand Terrace. He has covered San Bernardino County since 2009. Nelson is a graduate of California State University Fullerton. In 2014, he completed a fellowship at Loyola Law School's Journalist Law School program.

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LOCAL NEWS

San Bernardino terror attack: 'This is not going to stop us,' vows cyclist during second memorial ride



The second Ride Yourself Fit Memorial Ride was held on Saturday, Dec. 2, 2017, to honor the victims of the San Bernardino terrorist attack at the Inland Regional Center on Dec. 2, 2015. Approximately 150 cyclists participated. (Sarah Alvarado, Contributing Photographer)

By **BRIAN WHITEHEAD** | bwhitehead@scng.com | San Bernardino Sun

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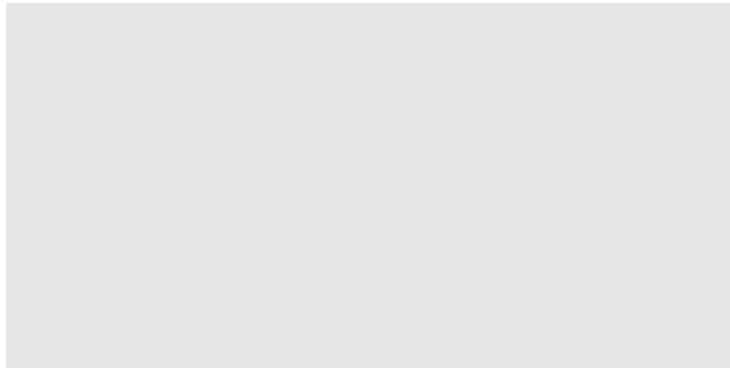
REDLANDS – They rode 14 miles Saturday for the 14 who lost their lives in the [Dec. 2, 2015, terrorist attack](#) in San Bernardino.

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Keith Moreland rode because he knew shooting victim [Nicholas Thalasinis](#). Aileen Munoz rode because she knew victim [Yvette Velasco](#). Mark Weidhase rode because when two terrorists opened fired inside the [Inland Regional Center in San Bernardino](#), he was among the first responders.

For the second year, more than 150 cyclists on Saturday paid tribute to the victims of the Dec. 2, 2015, mass shooting by riding the streets of Redlands and San Bernardino.

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Weidhase called the outpouring of support Saturday “amazing.”

“Something like this ride brings all of us together,” he added. “Everyone has their way of commemorating the day, but seeing how the cycling community can come together to remember those who died is heart-warming, it really is.”

The attack that left 14 dead and 22 wounded took place during a training session and holiday gathering for San Bernardino County’s Environmental Health Services Division at the Inland Regional Center in San Bernardino.

- **Related:** [Learn more about the San Bernardino terror attack victims, what’s being done to help them](#)

The attackers, [Syed Rizwan Farook, 28, and his wife, Tashfeen Malik, 27](#), were [killed hours later during a shootout](#) 3 miles away.

The 14-mile memorial ride was a way of showing the survivors and the victims’ families “that we’re not going to forget that day and we’re going to be strong and come together as a community,” said Alesandra Wilson, of Ride Yourself Fit, the Redlands cycling crew that helped organize the event.

“This is not going to stop us.”



Moreland, a member of Ride Yourself Fit, had known Thalasinis for nine-plus years before Dec. 2, 2015.

The 59-year-old said he speaks with Thalasinis’ widow, Jennifer, on a regular basis. The two talk about [grief, about sleepless nights](#), about memories.

“And to think there are 14 families going through the same thing,” Moreland said. “It’s amazing the ripple effect something like that has on the community, on people personally.”

Munoz, a 9-1-1 dispatcher for the California Highway Patrol, answered the emergency phone call of a Dec. 2, 2015, survivor. Last year, Munoz participated in a [memorial bike ride](#) held by the San Bernardino Police Department. She said she shed tears that morning.

- **Related:** [What’s the status on a memorial for the San Bernardino terrorist attack victims?](#)

Saturday, her 14-year-old son Jonathan tagged along.

"Sometimes with these tragedies, it's out of sight, out of mind," Munoz said. "To me, this is an opportunity to remember what happened, what those people went through. The pain is always there."

Weidhase on Saturday retrieved a photo from his Facebook page of him standing shoulder to shoulder with other first responders on Dec. 2, 2015. A special agent at the time, Weidhase was involved in the fatal shootout.

"I fought wars overseas," the 49-year-old veteran said. "That day, the war came to us."

Weidhase now works with Project Hero, a community-based rehabilitation and recovery cycling program for injured veterans. Several riders from his Inland Empire hub joined the memorial ride.

Early in the 14-mile route, members of Walk Yourself Fit, a sister program to Ride Yourself Fit, stood at Barton Road and Alabama Street holding American flags and signs adorned with the names and ages of those lost on Dec. 2, 2015.

[Cyclists passed the Inland Regional Center](#) and the makeshift memorial at Waterman Avenue and Orange Show Road.

After finishing the 14-mile course, some rode another 22 miles to remember the 22 wounded in the mass shooting, as well as those lost in other terrorist attacks around the country.

"By remembering and honoring those who died two years ago, I hope it softens people's hearts on issues our country and other countries are facing," Moreland said. "I hope people are more mindful of the things people go through on a daily basis: hardships, sicknesses, personal tragedy.

"I hope we can get back to looking out for each other as individuals."

Tags: [San Bernardino terror attack](#), [Top Stories Breeze](#), [Top Stories IVDB](#), [Top Stories LADN](#), [Top Stories LBPT](#), [Top Stories OCR](#), [Top Stories PE](#), [Top Stories PSN](#), [Top Stories RDF](#), [Top Stories SGVT](#), [Top Stories Sun](#), [Top Stories WDN](#)



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Brian Whitehead

Brian Whitehead covers San Bernardino for The Sun. Bred in Grand Terrace, he graduated from Riverside Notre Dame High and Cal State Fullerton. For seven years, he covered high school and college sports for The Orange County Register. Before landing at The Sun, he was the city beat reporter for Buena Park, Fullerton and La Palma.

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LOCAL NEWS

Community members give blood to pay tribute to San Bernardino terror attack victims



Here's this holiday season's most dangerous toys, according to CalPIRG Donor Specialist Cecilia Cruz preps San Bernardino County Facilities Management employee Michael Shuey, 33, of Redlands, to begin his blood platelets donation at LifeStream in San Bernardino, Calif. on Friday, Dec. 1, 2017. LifeStream blood bank invited the community to pay tribute to the victims of the Dec. 2 tragedy by making a blood donation. (Photo by Rachel Luna, The Sun/SCNG)

By **BRIAN WHITEHEAD** | bwhitehead@scng.com | San Bernardino Sun

December 1, 2017 at 4:42 pm

Five LifeStream blood banks in the Inland Empire are offering donors free shirts through the weekend in honor of the [14 who lost their lives](#) during the [Dec. 2, 2015 terrorist attack](#) at the Inland Regional Center.

Friday, on the eve of the tragedy's two-year anniversary, donors in San Bernardino explained why they give.

Jasmine Mota, who lives in town, has worked at the LifeStream blood bank off Orange Show Drive for 14 years. She remembers how generous community members were with their blood in the wake of Dec. 2, 2015.

"Heart-warming," she called the response.

Mota said she gives blood three times a year. Family members of hers have needed transfusions to overcome personal tragedy, so "I know exactly what (blood) can do, how much it can help," she said.

Don Escalante, a LifeStream spokesman, emphasized how imperative it is to donate before being prompted to by tragedy. [People rush in in those situations](#), but the blood used to help stabilize victims is donated well ahead of time, he said.

“When people come in the day of or the day after (a tragedy), it’s to replenish what’s been given,” he added. “That’s a great service, but we wish we could harness that motivation year-round, because there’s always a possibility of an emergency.”

Robert Brooks of Cherry Valley was donating blood Friday, as he does every two weeks. The 56-year-old has blood anybody in need – kids battling cancer, burn victims, survivors of tragedy – can use.

Brooks’ stepdaughter was a case worker at Inland Regional Center on Dec. 2, 2015, but left the building early that day to tend to her daughter.

“When something like that hits close to home, it gives you another reason” to donate, Brooks said.

LifeStream has locations in San Bernardino, Riverside, La Quinta, Ontario and Victorville.

First-time donors must go through a one-time registration process. Shirts will be given to all.

“The shirts are a lure, a little extra ‘Thank you’ to the community for helping us bounce back from tragedy,” Escalante said. “But we hope the greater lure is to help people in need right now while commemorating those lost two years ago.”

More information can be found at lstream.org or by calling 800-879-4484.

Tags: [San Bernardino terror attack](#), [Top Stories IVDB](#), [Top Stories PE](#), [Top Stories RDF](#), [Top Stories Sun](#)



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Brian Whitehead

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LOCAL NEWS

'Hundreds of rounds were being fired,' Redlands police reflect on shootout following San Bernardino terror attack



(left to right) Sgt Andy Capps (retired), Officer Joseph Aguilar, Officer Matt Knudsen, and Officer Nicolas Koahou, of the Redlands Police Department. Friday, November 17, 2017. (Photos by Frank Perez)

By [SANDRA EMERSON](#) | semerson@scng.com | Redlands Daily Facts

December 1, 2017 at 4:06 pm

For four [Redlands police officers](#), events here and in San Bernardino on [Dec. 2, 2015](#), remain an example of the importance of cooperation between law enforcement agencies.

The past two years have brought some changes for the officers, [some of whom have been recognized for their heroic response to the terrorist attack at the Inland Regional Center in San Bernardino](#), but the teamwork exhibited among the multiple agencies that [responded](#) that day remains clear.

"More of those stories are getting out there as guys are being [awarded and decorated for their heroic actions](#) that day," said now-retired Redlands police Sgt. Andy Capps. "It's about everybody, the team effort, in getting some justice and closure for [the victims, the survivors](#) and their families."

Capps, along with officers Joe Aguilar, Matt Knudsen and Nicholas Koahou, who was a San Bernardino police narcotics officer on [Dec. 2, 2015](#), were among law enforcement personnel engaged in a [gun battle that ended in the deaths of Syed Rizwan Farook and Tashfeen Malik](#).

Earlier that day, [Farook](#) and [Malik](#), who [lived in Redlands](#), killed 14 people and wounded 22 others at the Inland Regional Center in San Bernardino.

More than 175 law enforcement officers from various local, county, state and federal agencies responded to the [shootout in a San Bernardino residential neighborhood](#) less than a mile from the IRC.

"There were dozens of cops that were going there to do the same exact thing," Knudsen said. "We just happened to be at the front."

Soon after the shooting at the IRC, police were on the alert for a black sport utility vehicle being driven by Farook and Malik.

Koahou, who was working undercover, waved down Redlands police to assist in pursuing the vehicle.

Capps joined the pursuit.

The vehicle turned eastbound on [San Bernardino Avenue](#), when the back window shattered from within and gunfire erupted on the pursuing officers.

During the shootout, Koahou was shot in the leg while trying to rescue a San Bernardino County sheriff's deputy who was also wounded.

Aguilar, a former San Bernardino officer, pulled Koahou to safety.

"Hundreds of rounds were being fired," Knudsen said. "In that, I can see Joe doing his thing organizing a rescue for that deputy and Nick. I can see Nick doing his thing, even though bandages were all over the place. I remember thinking that dude's a badass. I didn't know him at all at that point."



In this file photo, officials investigate the San Bernardino Avenue scene the day after Syed Farook and Tashfeen Malik were shot and killed in a gun battle with law enforcement following the mass shooting at the Inland Regional Center Dec. 2, 2015 in San Bernardino. (File photo by Will Lester/SCNG)

Koahou has since joined the Redlands Police Department and now works with the Redlands officers who were on scene during the shootout. The transition to Redlands, he said, has been smooth.

"Getting back to basics again and getting back in a police car and dealing with call to call, it's fun," Koahou said.

Officers who have joined RPD from other departments, including [Aguilar and Koahou](#), are a huge asset in Redlands, Capps said.

In Redlands, the most common calls for service are related to the homeless population, property crimes, vehicle and mail thefts and identity theft, Capps said, drawing a contrast between some neighboring cities that experience more violent crimes.

"We're very fortunate we've been able to keep a lid on that, but we still have plenty to do and then every once and awhile something does happen here," Capps said. "Luckily we have the right people that can find that balance between dealing with the homeless population, dealing with hardened criminals and everything in between."

Now approaching the two-year [anniversary of the San Bernardino terrorist attack](#), Capps said, law enforcement can celebrate its successes but officers will never forget that 14 people died and 22 were wounded. [Survivors](#) and family members of those who died will never be the same, he said.

"Whatever we did that day doesn't bring their loved ones back," he added. "We never lose sight of that."

OPINION

Supervisors should consider Colonies demand



Stan Lim, San Bernardino Sun/SCNG

Stephen Larson, the defense attorney for Colonies Partners co-managing partner Jeff Burum, speaks during public comments at the San Bernardino County Board of Supervisors meeting on Tuesday, Nov. 14, 2017.

By **THE EDITORIAL BOARD** | opinion@scng.com |

December 2, 2017 at 7:15 pm

County supervisors should sharpen their pencils when they take up a demand from attorneys for defendants in the ill-fated Colonies corruption case, which ended in the [acquittal of three defendants](#) on Aug. 28 and the [dismissal of charges against a fourth defendant](#) a month later.

Attorney Stephen Larson, who represented Colonies co-managing partner Jeff Burum, delivered a letter to the Board of Supervisors last month in which he argued the county should pay Colonies Partners LP more than \$45 million to reimburse legal costs and other expenses related to the criminal case and two civil cases arising from the county’s 2006 settlement agreement with the developer.

That landmark \$102 million settlement was intended to end a long-running dispute between the county’s Flood Control District and Colonies over who should pay and how much should be paid for flood-control improvements on the developer’s Upland property.

Unfortunately, it didn’t.

While Colonies spokesmen have claimed the county got a great deal as damages in civil court could have run to \$300 million after two trial court victories, a previously leaked memo from the county’s outside attorneys argued that even a cheaper settlement would have been a gift of public funds. The [stage was already set for the legal challenges to come](#), including the recently ended criminal case.

Larson, however, [contends the settlement indemnifies the developer](#) and that the settlement obligates the county to cover the costs of any challenges to it. County supervisors are expected to discuss Larson's demand as early as this week.

While the county is likely to take the position that the settlement was never intended to obligate the county or taxpayers to cover Burum's defense in the event he was prosecuted criminally, Larson specifically argues that it did:

"Colonies is particularly likely to prevail because the (Flood Control) District knew when it agreed to the Settlement Agreement that future civil and criminal actions were likely, but did not limit the kinds of cases it agreed to indemnify and defend."

That may seem like a pretty outrageous claim, but the entire affair has been outrageous going all the way back to the initial feud over whether the flood control basin would cost \$2.5 million or \$25 million. The subsequent legal wrangling turned into something out of Charles Dickens' "Bleak House," and when there was finally a settlement, it was tainted by months and years of bitter political feuding that left everyone involved bruised and battered.

Even after the civil case settled, it took five years for prosecutors to actually file a case in what District Attorney Mike Ramos and then-Attorney General Jerry Brown called [the biggest corruption scandal in the history of San Bernardino County](#) and possibly California. At the time, the case looked pretty solid, especially in 2011, when former Board of Supervisors Chairman [Bill Postmus pleaded guilty to conspiracy, misappropriation of public money and bribery](#) and promised to cooperate with investigators in return for a lighter sentence and for the dismissal of other charges in a separate case of corruption stemming from malfeasance in the Assessor's Office.

A few months later, a judge dismissed five of seven charges against Burum, including two counts of bribery, two counts of asking for/receiving a bribe and one count of conflict of interest. The court also dismissed one public officer crime charge against the other three defendants. Then, in 2014, [a judge dismissed the conspiracy charges, which were the heart of the Colonies case](#), finding the statute of limitations had lapsed.

It probably should have ended then, but again, it didn't.

The case limped along for another three years before finally going to trial earlier this year. Prosecutors spent nearly eight months parading witnesses in front of increasingly agitated jurors. Prosecutors' key witnesses fell apart under cross examination so much so that when the prosecution rested, [the defense didn't bother to call any witnesses of its own](#).

And then it was over. Or is it merely starting all over again?

Despite all the controversy, county supervisors should not reject Larson's demands out of hand.

Yes, some of the expenses Colonies claims – fees for public relations firms, a lunch service, a war room and a life coach, among other things – are over the top, but there's probably a deal to be made that might ultimately save taxpayer money by avoiding further protracted legal entanglement.

Public officials have been throwing taxpayer money at this fight for nearly 20 years, and they have lost nearly every round. The majority of today's Board of Supervisors was not on the board when the case was settled more than a decade ago. Hopefully, they can view the situation with some objectivity and make a cost-conscious decision.

Before getting into the ring again, they ought to seriously consider a peace offering.

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LOCAL NEWS

Colonies trial witness Adam Aleman sentenced to 6 months in jail



San Bernardino County Assistant Assessor Adam Aleman (left), who pleaded guilty in 2009 to multiple felonies in connection with corruption at the Assessor's Office, was sentenced to 180 days in jail Friday December 1, 2017 during a sentencing hearing at the San Bernardino Justice Center as his attorney Grover Porter (right) stand beside him. Aleman became a key witness the Colonies public corruption case in which all four defendants were either acquitted or had their charges dismissed. Aleman will turn himself into authorities to begin his sentence no later than January 24. (Will Lester-Inland Valley Daily Bulletin/SCNG)

By **JOE NELSON** | jnelson@scng.com | San Bernardino Sun

PUBLISHED: December 1, 2017 at 1:46 pm | UPDATED: December 2, 2017 at 1:07 am

Former San Bernardino County Assistant Assessor [Adam Aleman, a key figure in corruption scandals](#) involving the Assessor's Office and a controversial legal settlement between the county and a land developer, was sentenced Friday to six months in jail.

Aleman, 34, appeared with his attorney, Grover Porter, before Judge Michael A. Smith in San Bernardino Superior Court for his sentencing.

Smith, per the request of Porter and prosecutor Lewis Cope, reduced Aleman's felony offenses to misdemeanors, then ordered him to surrender to the West Valley Detention Center, in Rancho Cucamonga, on Jan. 24 to begin serving his sentence. Aleman must serve his jail sentence as straight time, with no possibility for work release, early release or serving his time on weekends, Smith said.

“The defendant committed some very serious offenses involving public trust and integrity of county government. Those are obviously very serious offenses that there has to be consequences for,” Smith said during Friday’s proceedings. He said he had to balance Aleman’s cooperation with authorities since the time of his plea agreement eight years ago with having to mete out justice for Aleman’s crimes.

Cope concurred with Porter that Aleman testified truthfully at trial and cooperated with prosecutors and investigators.

“The D.A.’s position is that Mr. Aleman has always complied with the terms and conditions of his plea agreement,” Cope told Smith.

Porter told Smith that Aleman has matured over the last eight years and took responsibility for his actions early on in the case.

Smith said reducing Aleman’s felonies to misdemeanors was a “pretty big benefit” to Aleman, and that his initial inclination was to sentence Aleman to a year in jail.

“My impression is that Mr. Aleman was basically being truthful to the best of his ability in most of the matters,” said Smith. “I think there may have been some areas where he exaggerated a little bit or filled in some blanks to try to perhaps put him in a stronger position with the District Attorney, but overall, I think his testimony was basically truthful and accurate.”

It countered the contention of defense attorneys and jurors who believe Aleman concocted stories and lied to investigators and prosecutors, to the grand jury and during trial in an effort to soften the blow of his own criminal culpability in the Assessor’s Office scandal.

Aleman, per a plea agreement with prosecutors, pleaded no contest on June 30, 2009, to four felonies in connection with crimes he committed at the Assessor’s Office in 2008, including destruction of a county-owned laptop computer and presenting falsified minutes from meetings at the Assessor’s Office to the grand jury. He agreed to cooperate with authorities in the Colonies corruption case, in which Rancho Cucamonga developer Jeff Burum, former county Supervisor Paul Biane, former Assistant Assessor Jim Erwin, and Mark Kirk, former chief of staff for former county Supervisor Gary Ovitt, were accused of conspiring to fix a \$102 million settlement between the county and Burum’s real estate investor group, Colonies Partners LP, in November 2006 in exchange for bribes.

The settlement ended prolonged litigation over who was responsible for paying for flood control improvements at Colonies 434-acre residential and commercial development in Upland.

The allegations were never proven true. The marathon Colonies trial that ran from January through August ended in an [acquittal](#) in August for Burum, Biane and Kirk. A month later, Smith, at the request of Cope, [dismissed](#) the case against Erwin after his jury announced it was “hopelessly deadlocked.”

Erwin had a separate jury because some of the evidence against him was inadmissible against the other defendants.

The ill-fated Colonies trial turned into a debacle, with witness testimony, including Aleman’s, proving catastrophic for prosecutors. Defense attorneys extracted testimony from Aleman showing he lied to the grand jury and during the trial, portraying him as a “mealy-mouthed little liar” to jurors, most of whom agreed with the defense.

“Adam Aleman looted the Assessor’s office, admitted to committing multiple felonies, admitted to perjuring himself before the grand jury, and was caught in multiple lies in the Colonies criminal trial, all at a cost of millions and millions of wasted county taxpayer dollars,” said Burum’s spokesman, Edward Barrera, in a statement Friday. “For all that, he gets a slap on a wrist. This furthers the outrageous injustice against Mr. Burum and cries out for reform in our justice system and the removal of Mike Ramos, our supposedly “anti-corruption” District Attorney.”

District Attorney spokesman Christopher Lee said Friday the D.A. is holding off on commenting until the entire case comes to a close.

Aleman and Porter also declined to comment Friday.

Like Aleman, former county assessor/supervisor Bill Postmus, initially a targeted defendant in the Colonies case, entered into a plea agreement with prosecutors in March 2011. He agreed to turn state’s evidence and testify against the defendants at trial, and he is scheduled for sentencing Jan. 19.

Postmus’ testimony at the Colonies trial also backfired on prosecutors. He said he never felt he was bribed by Burum when political action committees he allegedly ran in 2007 received a total of \$100,000 in contributions from Colonies Partners LP, the real estate investor group of which Burum is a co-managing partner.

Postmus maintained there was never any quid pro quo and said he felt intimidated by district attorney investigators and that they were trying to push him to provide them with information that fit their narrative of the case.

Aleman also testified at the trial of former Assessor’s Office employee Rex Gutierrez, also a former Rancho Cucamonga councilman, which resulted in Gutierrez’s conviction for grand theft, conspiracy to commit a crime, and filing a fraudulent claim. Smith said Aleman’s testimony was found to be credible by both the jury and the judge in that trial.

Gutierrez’s first trial ended in a deadlocked jury, so he was retried and convicted. He was [sentenced in December 2010 to 2 years, 8 months](#) in prison, of which he [served one year and three months](#) before he was released.

Gutierrez was accused of stealing \$147,000 in taxpayer money, in the form of fraudulent pay and expenses, while working at the office as an intergovernmental relations officer from March 19, 2007, to Jan. 3, 2009.

Staff Writer Imran Ghori contributed to this report.

Tags: [Colonies corruption trial](#), [echo code](#), [Top Stories IVDB](#), [Top Stories PE](#), [Top Stories RDF](#), [Top Stories Sun](#)



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NELSON_JOE **Joe Nelson**

Joe Nelson is an award-winning investigative reporter who has worked for The Sun since November 1999. He started as a crime reporter and went on to cover a variety of beats including courts and the cities of Colton, Highland and Grand Terrace. He has covered San Bernardino County since 2009. Nelson is a graduate of California State University Fullerton. In 2014, he completed a fellowship at Loyola Law School's Journalist Law School program.

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County threatens to sue White Rock horse ranch

By Stacy Moore Hi-Desert Star | Posted: Friday, December 1, 2017 3:38 pm

FLAMINGO HEIGHTS — San Bernardino County is ready to take White Rock Horse Rescue to court, claiming owner Isabella Megli is running the facility as a business, not a nonprofit rescue.

Megli said she intends to fight the county's claims by providing her nonprofit filings; she is registered as a charity with the IRS.

"I got a lawyer and he said I'm a 501(c)3, period," Megli said Thursday. "I'm not a riding facility and I'm for sure not an equestrian facility. I'm a rescue.

"Why they're doing this I don't know."

The county code enforcement office claims Megli is running an unpermitted equestrian facility and riding academy at White Rock. A notice of intent to file a lawsuit from county attorneys, dated Nov. 16, states she must get permits from the land use and environmental health departments.

"The county based its actions and decisions in this case on a combination of what code enforcement staff observed in the field, credible reports from the neighbors and information from Ms. Megli herself," San Bernardino County spokesman David Wert said via email.

The ranch is currently home to 32 horses along with alpacas, dogs and two donkeys. Megli runs it with the help of volunteers, including people required to do community service to get their county benefits, she said.

The notice from the county accuses Megli of going beyond "well beyond the scope" of an animal rescue, which would be allowed without permits in the rural area of Flamingo Heights where the White Rock ranch spreads across 10 acres.

The ranch opens to the public for horseback riding, shows, games, exhibitions and other special events, according to the notice.

"Now they're saying I can't hold events because they say I'm causing traffic!" Megli said with a disbelieving laugh Thursday at her ranch.

She advertises three events a year: the Giddyup for Goodies, a children's event held around Halloween; the Whoa Down Hoe Down For Hay, a fundraiser, in September; and a rodeo to show how rescued horses have been rehabilitated and trained.



County threatens to sue White Rock horse ranch

White Rock Horse Rescue founder Isabel Megli rides a mare in the parade of horses during her May Woah Down Hoe Down. Since then, she has removed several horses from her property to comply with county rules.

As further evidence against Megli, the county notice states that the ranch provides adoption services, “resulting in a high ratio of horses, people and vehicles” coming and going from the ranch.

In addition, code enforcement claims Megli is running what is defined in the county code as a riding academy, because she accepts donations and rents horses out to the public. For that, she needs a permit from the Department of Environmental Health.

Megli has offered what she called horses “for rent” on her website, offering them for riding and photo shoots.

“I stopped doing that!” she declared Thursday.

What she does now, she said, is a sponsorship program. Members of the public can pay \$100 a month to cover basic food and supplies for a horse, she said. They can visit the ranch to ride that horse and care for it.

She said she plans to rewrite the sponsorship agreement and call it a donation agreement instead. And she’s taken all mention of renting horses along with riding lessons, trail rides and other public offerings off her website.

The notice also claims she has failed to take care of the manure at her property. “The county has received multiple complaints related to the lack of maintenance and stockpiling of manure on the subject properties,” the attorneys write.

According to county records, the ranch has been cited twice. In 2014, Megli was charged \$100 and ordered to clean the manure and hay in an alley east of the ranch. She has put up wood and rocks to keep the debris from collecting in that alley.

In January of this year, Megli was cited again and ordered to remove the manure on the ranch or fully till it into the soil.

According to the letter from the county’s attorneys, if she doesn’t stop the events and public use and clean the manure immediately, they will go to court and ask for \$1,000 for each day she continues to run White Rock Ranch in violation of their demands, along with attorney fees and penalties.

They will also ask the judge to issue an injunction ordering Megli to stop operations.

County's plan to complete Lake Gregory Dam approved

Posted Dec 1, 2017 at 10:02 AM

Updated Dec 2, 2017 at 8:36 PM

San Bernardino County will move forward on construction of the Lake Gregory Dam after receiving approval of its specifications and plans from the State Division of Safety of Dams (DSOD), which will keep the project on track for completion in 18 months, county officials said Friday.

Achieving state approval means San Bernardino County Special Districts and Regional Parks can seek bids from qualified contractors interested in the project. The contractor is expected to be selected and approved early next year and construction is expected to begin in late spring or early summer. The dam is expected to be completed in late 2019.

"The county has reached a crucial milestone and we are on our way to finishing the dam," Second District Supervisor Janice Rutherford said in a written statement. "We are committed to completing the project as quickly as possible because it is essential to preserving and protecting Lake Gregory and its recreational and economic value to the mountain communities and the region."

Safety improvements to the 80-year-old dam are being made to meet current earthquake safety standards. The state DSOD considers Lake Gregory Dam to be a "high hazard dam" due to the possibility that seismic activity may result in a breach. A breach has the potential to endanger people, wildlife and may have an economic impact on mountain communities.

Every effort is being made to minimize public inconvenience during the estimated 18-month project, the county said. The lake's beaches and swimming areas will remain open during construction and continue to serve as major attractions to tourists and the local community.

For more information, visit the project website at www.abetterlakegregory.org. Interested individuals also can sign up to receive regular email updates.



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[State Approves County's Plan to Complete Lake Gregory Dam](#)

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By [Susan A. Neufeld](#)

San Bernardino, CA – The County is moving ahead on construction of the Lake Gregory Dam, after receiving approval of its specifications and plans from the State Division of Safety of Dams (DSOD), which will keep the project on track for completion in 18 months.

Approval means San Bernardino County Special Districts and Regional Parks can seek bids from qualified contractors interested in the project. The contractor is expected to be selected and approved in the first quarter of 2018, and construction is expected to begin in late spring or early summer 2019.



“The County has reached a crucial milestone and we are on our way to finishing the dam”, said Second District Supervisor Janice Rutherford, “We are committed to completing the project as quickly as possible, because it is essential to preserving and protecting Lake Gregory, and its recreational and economic value to the mountain communities and the region.”

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For more information on the project, visit the project website at: <http://web.abetterlakegregory.org/index.aspx?page=656>. Interested individuals can also sign up to receive regular email updates on construction progress.

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Community

State approves San Bernardino County's plan to complete Lake Gregory Dam

By **Staff** - December 1, 2017 TAGS: COUNTY OF SAN BERNARDINO LAKE GREGORY PARKS

[San Bernardino County, CA](#) – The County is moving forward on construction of the Lake Gregory Dam after receiving approval of its specifications and plans from the State Division of Safety of Dams (DSOD), which will keep the project on track for completion in 18 months.

Achieving state approval means San Bernardino County Special Districts and Regional Parks can seek bids from qualified contractors interested in the project. The contractor is expected to be selected and approved in the first quarter of 2018 and construction is expected to begin in late spring or early summer 2018 with an estimated completion date in late 2019.

“The County has reached a crucial milestone and we are on our way to finishing the dam,” said Second District Supervisor Janice Rutherford. “We are committed to completing the project as

quickly as possible because it is essential to preserving and protecting Lake Gregory and its recreational and economic value to the mountain communities and the region.”

Safety improvements to the 80-year-old dam are being made to meet current earthquake safety standards. The state DSOD considers Lake Gregory Dam to be a “high hazard dam” due to the possibility that seismic activity may result in a breach. A breach has the potential to endanger people, wildlife and may have an economic impact on mountain communities.

Every effort is being made to minimize public inconvenience during the estimated 18-month project. The lake’s beaches and swimming areas will remain open during construction and continue to serve as major attractions to tourists and the local community.

For more information on the project, visit the project website at www.abetterlakegregory.org. Interested individuals can also sign up to receive regular email updates on construction progress.

COUNTY OF SAN BERNARDINO



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November 30, 2017



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November 13, 2017

OPINION

Nicole Robinson dances toward a Vision2BActive



Courtesy photo

Nicole Robinson and her class.

By **JANICE RUTHERFORD** |

PUBLISHED: December 3, 2017 at 6:10 pm | UPDATED: December 3, 2017 at 7:25 pm



Nicole Robinson wants her students to sweat.

But she's not making them write 100-page, single-spaced term papers or giving them daily pop quizzes.

She's getting them moving with dance.

"I tell them if you're not sweating, you're not doing what I'm expecting you to do," she said.

Nicole defines Action Hero on many levels, and that's why I nominated her to be the Second District's Vision2BActive Action Hero. The goal of this effort is to recognize folks in our communities who are working to promote physical fitness and inspire others to be active.

Encouraging physical activity is important because only 23 percent of adults and 34 percent of San Bernardino County's youths get the recommended 150 minutes a week for adults and 60 minutes a day for youths, according to the most recent data from the California Health Interview Survey.

Nicole came to A.B. Miller High School in Fontana 22 years ago to teach dance and physical education and to coach cheerleaders – three things the Cal State San Bernardino graduate and former high school gymnast/cheerleader was really good at.

She didn't expect to stay long, but she fell in love with teaching dance and stuck around to help grow one of the most robust public school dance programs in San Bernardino County.

Today, A.B. Miller is home to the Fontana Unified School District's dance conservatory. The high school has two dance teachers, and thanks to grants Nicole has helped secure and funding from the district, students in Fontana elementary and middle schools are being introduced to dance as well.

Her efforts haven't gone unnoticed. She was named the California League of High Schools Region 10 Teacher of the Year in 2015, and this year she was named a Carlston Family Foundation Teacher of the Year.

"From my conversations with Nicole's former students, it was exceptionally clear that her instructional skills and techniques, as well as her personal guidance, significantly contributed to both their academic and personal success," Carlston Family Foundation CEO Tim Allen said. "They commented on the incredible passion and energy she has for teaching dance. The day I spent in her classroom, I confirmed what they experienced and much more."

Here's how the student who nominated Nicole for the award described her: "... graciously demanding, loyal, patient, willing, confident, humorous, rigorous, and tremendously knowledgeable in her subject matter."

During the course of her teaching career, Nicole has seen how sedentary lifestyles and poor diets have affected students. Obesity is common among youth, and some students even have difficulty doing cart wheels because of their weight.

According to the California Department of Education, the childhood obesity rate has tripled since 1980, and about 32 percent of California students are considered overweight.

That's bad news considering the long-term health implications of obesity, including type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, asthma and heart disease.

But Nicole is a strong believer in people's ability to change, and she's working hard to introduce more students to dance and to motivate them to stay active and healthy and that's why she's an Action Hero in my book.

Learn more about Nicole and the A.B. Miller Conservatory of Dance at www.abmillerdance.com.

Janice Rutherford is the San Bernardino County Supervisor representing the Second District. For more information about the Vision2BActive campaign, check out Vision2BActive.com, an interactive resource that provides residents with information about physical activity events, fitness tips and a GIS map featuring places to be active in the county.

Tags: **Guest Commentary**



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Janice Rutherford

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ECONOMY

How a Company Actually Plans to Spend Its Tax Cut Money

By NATALIE KITROEFF DEC. 3, 2017

ORO GRANDE, Calif. — Republicans have pitched their tax plan as an economic godsend that will offer deliverance from middling growth and set off a torrent of investment, hiring and raises. But at a quarry here in Southern California’s high desert, the outcome doesn’t look so straightforward.

The pit of rock belongs to CalPortland, which mines limestone to create the cement that goes into some of the country’s most iconic stadiums and hotels. The company would hardly object to keeping a chunk of profits that currently goes to the government. But the extra cash probably wouldn’t be enough for CalPortland to expand immediately in ways requiring serious hiring.

“Ten percent extra profit would be good,” said Steven Regis, a senior vice president for corporate services at the company. “But it’s not going to fund big projects.”

Like executives across the country, Mr. Regis has spent the last few weeks scouring the House and Senate tax proposals for signs of hope for his industry — and new sources of pain.

Many economists are skeptical that the tax savings will transform business decisions. And when President Trump's chief economic adviser recently asked a room of chief executives whether lower taxes would prompt them to invest more, only a few hands shot up.

Mr. Regis's deliberations suggest why those executives — especially at manufacturers like CalPortland, the companies at the core of Mr. Trump's vision for the economy — may have muted expectations.

Many welcome tax savings, but each industry and company will make different calculations about whether and how to spend that money. Much will depend on what customers and suppliers do and, of course, on the vicissitudes of the American economy.

“You always have competing interests for that cash,” Mr. Regis said. “Do you pay dividends? Do you buy new equipment? Do you buy out competitors? Do you add employees? Do you pay employees better?”

Many CalPortland drivers are unionized, and he expects a tax cut to produce demands for the wage increases that Republican sponsors said the tax plan would generate. Mr. Regis said he would like to oblige, but wasn't sure which of the company's priorities would win out.

Mr. Regis, who says he “leans to the right,” said he believed in the economic logic of cutting corporate taxes to 20 percent from 35 percent. Yet he's worried about how the Republicans in Congress are pushing through their tax bills, quickly and without the support of Democrats. Can a business count on the provisions of a law that the other side might try to rewrite in a couple of years?

“I think it's bad news for the country to have one side make the rules,” Mr. Regis said. “It was bad when they passed the health care bill; it's bad now if they pass the tax bill.”

The uncertainty is particularly frustrating for a company like CalPortland, since its biggest spending commitments often have to be made far in advance. And the tax bills have fleeting components, like the idea of allowing companies to take the entire

cost of equipment off their taxable income the year they start using it. In the House bill, that provision expires after five years. In the Senate version, it phases out gradually after five years and ends by the 10th year, 2027.

In Washington, five or 10 years may be a lifetime. But CalPortland probably could not even get the permits for a new cement plant in that amount of time. The company, Mr. Regis noted, is not popping out iPhones — it is blowing up rocks in the desert.

Workers at its quarry in Southern California blast limestone out of the ground once a week. They then load it into trucks, crush it, combine it with other minerals and heat it to 3,000 degrees in a giant kiln until it rains down like lava into a cooler.

After being ground up, the cement that emerges travels to concrete plants, which operate a bit like massive bakeries — whipping the powder together with sand, more rock and water to form concrete. By law, the company has just 90 minutes to move that mud from one of its 100 concrete plants into the foundation of a building. CalPortland's proprietary mix has gone into the Hoover Dam, Los Angeles City Hall and the football stadium being built for the Los Angeles Rams and Chargers.

Ryan Montgomery, whose father and grandfather worked here in Oro Grande, spends most days scooping limestone into a dump truck. "It may get a little bumpy," he says, before breaching a wall of boulders that shakes his cab, perched a healthy 30 feet from the ground.

His loader — a sunflower yellow Caterpillar vehicle with an arm attached to an oversize shovel — costs \$2.3 million. Replacing a pair of tires is a \$50,000 expense, and the transmission goes for \$130,000. The company leased the vehicle from a bank.

Quicker expensing for tax purposes would not prompt CalPortland to make an upfront purchase of Mr. Montgomery's loader.

"Getting the money back faster definitely helps, but that's big money, and that big investment means we have to be able to have the cash or the financing available," Mr. Regis said. The company is slowly replenishing its bank account after six years —

from 2008 to 2014, a period bridging a housing bust and a fragile economy — in which it did not turn a profit.

On the rise once more, CalPortland is making new bets on its future that will take years to pan out. The company is planning, for example, to buy new equipment that will wash clay and dust off rocks so they can eventually be turned into concrete and asphalt.

But regulatory permits for such a project, covering everything from land use to pollution, can take four years to materialize. Then, CalPortland has to buy and build the washers and crushers, which can take another year or so. By then, the House bill's five-year window for immediate expensing will have closed.

“It takes businesses time to plan and time to envision and time to start building,” said Scott Greenberg, a senior analyst at the Tax Foundation, an independent group that typically finds tax cuts an economic boon. The foundation expects that making fast expensing permanent will stimulate growth. “When the provision expires,” Mr. Greenberg said, “the positive effects in the first years would go away.”

Another sticking point for CalPortland is that the tax bills tie the amount of interest that companies can deduct to a measure of their earnings. For now, the threshold is high enough that it wouldn't affect the company's borrowing — it finances much of its spending with debt because the tools it needs are so costly. But Mr. Regis said he is worried that introducing any limit opens the door to further restrictions down the line, or even bigger changes, especially if the Republicans lose control of Congress.

That is not to say the company won't make some shorter-term use of the extra cash — most likely to buy concrete trucks to augment and eventually replace an older fleet in the Northwest. That would also mean hiring two dozen new drivers, but they would stay on in the long term only if orders remain strong.

That will be up to big builders like Turner Construction Company, one of its most voracious customers and a giant in the industry.

Turner is optimistic about the future, but not because of lower taxes. “On the list of 200 things we worry about, that would be No. 300 right now,” said Michael Kuntz, an executive vice president at Turner, which recently built the Wilshire Grand Hotel in Los Angeles — the tallest building west of the Mississippi. “It’s a nonissue for us.”

Construction is going gangbusters everywhere, Mr. Kuntz added, and the company already has billions in projects on its books for in 2018. “It doesn’t seem that the 35 percent corporate rate has held anyone back from building,” he said.

A version of this article appears in print on December 4, 2017, on Page A1 of the New York edition with the headline: A Company Ponders How to Spend Its Tax Cut.

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Adelanto officials could use legal authority to remove embattled colleague

By Shea Johnson
Staff Writer

Posted Dec 2, 2017 at 5:26 PM

Updated Dec 2, 2017 at 5:26 PM

Officials now seem interested in searching their legally provided options to remove Wright more quickly than it might take him to withdraw from public office, a sign of their eagerness to try to move beyond what has become a far-reaching distraction.

ADELANTO — As calls from city leaders persist for embattled Mayor Pro Tem Jermaine Wright to resign, it's Adelanto's charter that would appear to enable top officials to enact a swifter recourse.

According to the city charter, if a council member is an unexcused no-show for 60 consecutive days from their last regularly scheduled meeting appearance, the Council may deem their seat vacant.

Considering that Wright last attended the Oct. 25 meeting, it would seem plausible that officials could declare his seat vacant as early as late this month.

If such a declaration was to occur, the Council would have 30 days to appoint a replacement for the remainder of the incumbent's term — in this case through 2020 — or it would forfeit its rights to name a successor and be forced to conduct a special election.

Officials now seem interested in searching their legally provided options to remove Wright more quickly than it might take him to withdraw from public office, a sign of their eagerness to try to move beyond what has become a far-reaching distraction.

Still, it's unclear whether Wright would even want to resign. Although he was granted bail eligibility last month, his custody status has been murky, although Mayor Rich Kerr said Friday he was still in jail.

Kerr, who was the first policymaker to publicly call for Wright to step down, said he'd want the Council to explore using its authority under the charter to officially pivot from Wright as the mayor pro tem, who faces federal charges for bribery and attempted arson.

Kerr said he'd prefer the Council appoint a successor — someone who is well-versed in the city's position on commercial marijuana, involved in city functions and strongly opinionated — rather than allow a costly special election that he estimated could cost taxpayers up to \$20,000.

He projected that such a Council action could happen in early January, enabling two weeks to gather resumes and then the announcement of the appointee by the end of that month.

As for early potential candidates, the mayor suggested, "I've got three people out there that have been involved in the city."

Councilman Ed Camargo also said he'd be interested in looking more closely at the city's legal authority, while suggesting it would be "appropriate" if Wright was to resign.

And Councilman Charley Glasper offered this week his toughest public criticism of Wright, saying he had believed the mayor pro tem to be intelligent when in fact he was "a big dumb-ass" who had wasted his potential.

"It's really saddening," Glasper said. "I thought we were on a roll, ready to make some progress and this Jermaine thing set us back."

Glasper added that even if Wright was to be exonerated, his continued presence at the dais would act merely as a vexing reminder.

"Even if they dismiss all the charges against him, the groundwork has been laid," he said. "The doubt-ability is there whether he's legitimate or on the take or what."

Yet there is recent precedent for elected officials to remain in office after felony arrests, according to David Dupree, the chairman of political science at Victor Valley College, who noted that in the high-profiled corruption scandal in the city of Bell, voters took matters into their own hands to recall officials before their cases were adjudicated.

“What makes the Wright situation different is that prosecutors are alleging that he admitted to the arson plot and agreed to cooperate with the FBI’s continuing investigation into Adelanto corruption,” Dupree said.

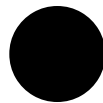
“In the Bell and (U.S. Sen. Robert) Menendez scandals, none of those officials admitted to wrongdoing,” he continued. “With Wright’s alleged admission of committing crimes, this certainly presents two (other) possible scenarios.”

If Wright is convicted, the city charter authorizes automatic expulsion from office, Dupree said. Or Wright could be tossed out of office by city constituents.

“This story is still developing, but Wright’s arrest and alleged admission to crimes,” Dupree added, “may prompt people in Adelanto to begin a recall petition campaign to have him removed from office.”

Recall proponents would need to collect qualified signatures from 20 percent, or roughly more than 2,000, of the city’s registered voters to launch the effort. And Dupree warned the process can be lengthy, sometimes up to six months between signature collection and the actual recall election.

Shea Johnson can be reached at 760-955-5368 or SJohnson@VVDailyPress.com. Follow him on Twitter at [@DP_Shea](https://twitter.com/DP_Shea).



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Adelanto public works yard deal was close until it fell apart

By Shea Johnson
Staff Writer

Posted Dec 2, 2017 at 4:48 PM

Updated Dec 2, 2017 at 11:32 PM

ADELANTO — While other council members had grown uneasy over particulars of the would-be deal, the death of the city's \$1 million sale of its public works yard and emergency operations center was a bitter denouement for the mayor.

City Manager Gabriel Elliott confirmed last week the city has decided not to jettison the property after all.

The sale, once believed to be imminent when it was announced June 28 to American Scientific Consultants LLC, would have been a critical payout to Adelanto to embark on a major sewer-pipe installation project for future developments on the city's south side, according to Mayor Rich Kerr.

"I'm pretty disappointed because my whole thought process as you know has been infrastructure, infrastructure, infrastructure," Kerr said, lamenting how Adelanto was just "a day or two" from receiving the money. "It doesn't stop progress on the south side, but it makes it where I have to do a little more work."

The capital upgrade for a 24-inch sewer main would have relieved pressure on pipes that are already at full capacity, he said, and been completed to accommodate plans for three sizeable projects on Highway 395 at Rancho Road and Mojave Drive.

The 1.5-acre public works yard property, appraised for only \$700,000, also might have represented the best possible return to the city — had it not been re-zoned for commercial cannabis use just weeks after a preliminary deal was divulged, significantly increasing its value above \$1 million, according to two regional brokerage firms.

Drawing a comparison to the earlier controversial sale of redevelopment land to Kojima Development Company LLC in December 2015, Kerr suggested that C.B. Nanda, with American Scientific Consultants, like Kojima, had merely also “took a calculated risk and he won.”

But for Councilman Ed Camargo, the timing of the agreement and the re-zone — a one-two punch reminiscent of many other real estate deals in this city — was too “suspicious.”

“I’m not (here) to short-change my residents for pennies on the dollar,” Camargo said, adding he was never in favor of the sale, or selling city assets in general, and then doubly opposed after the property was transferred into the green zone.

He also said he believed the yard and EOC to have been “an invaluable asset” to the city, equipped with retrofits to meet the needs of the Public Works Department and “the latest and best facility up in the High Desert.”

Kerr said he understood that fellow policymakers might have changed their tune on the deal when it was announced that Mayor Pro Tem Jermaine Wright had been arrested to face federal charges of bribery and attempted arson.

“I’m seeing it,” he said of a certain cautiousness at City Hall amid an ongoing FBI probe into possible public corruption. “But I haven’t slowed down.”

The mayor acknowledged that officials were now scrutinizing items “more closely than we have in the past,” realizing it was both beneficial and healthy to ask more questions.

Yet according to Camargo and Councilman Charley Glasper, who were asked to share their opinions on the land deal’s backslide, their disfavor of the sale was traced less to an ultra-considerate tenor, as Kerr hinted, and more to the realization that a U.S. Congressman might have been involved.

“I wanted to know what in the hell does a Congressman have to do with our inter-city business?” Glasper said. “That really ticked me off.”

Camargo described the feeling of a Congressman’s engagement as having made him “very uncomfortable,” noting how it was seemingly kept deliberately quiet.

“It struck me kind of curious. It didn’t impress me that a Congressman would be here; I’m not impressed by it,” he said. “If there’s a Congressman that wanted to get involved, why not come introduce yourself to the city rather than hiding behind closed doors? Let’s get it out in the open and be transparent.”

The Congressman reportedly involved in some capacity — the Daily Press had first heard the murmur in September from non-city officials — was Dana Rohrabacher, a representative whose district includes Pacific Coastline cities in Orange County and who had co-authored legislation at the turn of the century to prevent federal tax dollars from being spent on enforcing federal rules against states that have legalized marijuana.

Kerr, when asked about the supposed Rohrabacher connection, chalked it up to a misunderstanding of sorts: the Congressman was simply a neighbor of Nanda’s, but not a part of the proposed deal, and the mayor and the Congressman had met “three or four times.”

“Is it nice to know Dana Rohrabacher? Yes, it is,” Kerr said. “Will I use that friendship for the City of Adelanto? You’re damn right, I’ll use that friendship.”

A message left with a Rohrabacher spokesman Friday to gauge his relationship to Nanda and his deal involvement, if any, was unreturned. A call to a number later confirmed by the mayor as believed to belonging to Nanda was answered, but a reporter was told, “I think you have the wrong number.”

Kerr concluded by describing Rohrabacher as a “good contact” because of his knowledge of the cannabis industry, but nothing more.

Ultimately, he said, he was confident the city would garner enough revenue to make up the \$1 million lost anyway and upgrade the south side’s sewer situation in the next six months.

Shea Johnson can be reached at 760-955-5368 or SJohnson@VVDailyPress.com. Follow him on Twitter at [@DP_Shea](https://twitter.com/DP_Shea).



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LOCAL NEWS

UPS using San Bernardino International Airport to transport millions of packages this holiday season



UPS employees sort packages unloaded from freight containers at the San Bernardino International Airport in San Bernardino, Friday Dec. 1, 2017. UPS expects to move approximately 150,000 packages a day close to the holidays with around 200 employees. UPS expects to run 18 flights per week out of San Bernardino. (Eric Reed/For The Facts/SCNG)

By **BRIAN WHITEHEAD** | bwhitehead@scng.com | San Bernardino Sun

PUBLISHED: December 1, 2017 at 9:26 pm | UPDATED: December 2, 2017 at 7:47 pm

For the second year in a row, San Bernardino International Airport has a role in getting holiday presents and other precious cargo to online shoppers around the world.

UPS, which expects to deliver 750 million packages globally between Black Friday and New Year's Eve, will again use the airport to transport shipments to its main air hub in Louisville and a regional air hub in Illinois.

To keep up with the growth of e-commerce and online shopping worldwide, the logistics company plans to run 18 flights per week out of San Bernardino, nearly quintupling last year's number of weekly flights.

Boeing 757 and 767 aircraft will be used for the job.

"The number of packages, that volume we're dealing with, we need additional facilities to handle that crunch," said Jim Mayer, UPS spokesman. "San Bernardino is part of that plan to handle the additional volume at our busiest time of year."

UPS, already a major employer in town, hired 200 seasonal employees to support the endeavor.

“We’re very excited to see UPS return and come back in a strong way,” said Mark Gibbs, the airport’s director of aviation. “Logistics is growing, air cargo is growing, and UPS is in the center of that.”

UPS is operating out of a 55,000-square-foot facility at San Bernardino International. Planes are loaded for evening departures.

The company is using several other Southern California airports as gateway facilities: LAX, Hollywood Burbank, John Wayne and Long Beach. UPS’ West Coast hub of operations for air and truck cargo is at ONT.

Recent investments to support air cargo activities at San Bernardino International have made the airport an appealing location for carriers, Gibbs said.

And while much of the business there today is in private business jet travel, officials said airport brass will continue pursuing commercial flights.

“There has been investment in the airport for quite some time,” Gibbs said, “and it’s great to be really capitalizing on the different market segments and growing those to benefit the airport and the community.

“At the end of the day,” Gibbs continued, “we’re here to promote aviation and do our due diligence to see the airport through the success.”

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By Amazon Studios

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Brian Whitehead

Brian Whitehead covers San Bernardino for The Sun. Bred in Grand Terrace, he graduated from Riverside Notre Dame High and Cal State Fullerton. For seven years, he covered high school and college sports for The Orange County Register. Before landing at The Sun, he was the city beat reporter for Buena Park, Fullerton and La Palma.

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NEWS > CRIME

Colton police shoot, kill man with 4-inch kitchen knife



Photo by Jim Steinberg, Staff

Colton police have cordoned of an area of San Bernardino Avenue east of Indigo Avenue on Saturday, Dec. 2, 2017, after officers shot and killed a man armed with a knife.

By **RYAN HAGEN** | rhagen@scng.com and **JIM STEINBERG** | jsteinberg@scng.com | The Press-Enterprise

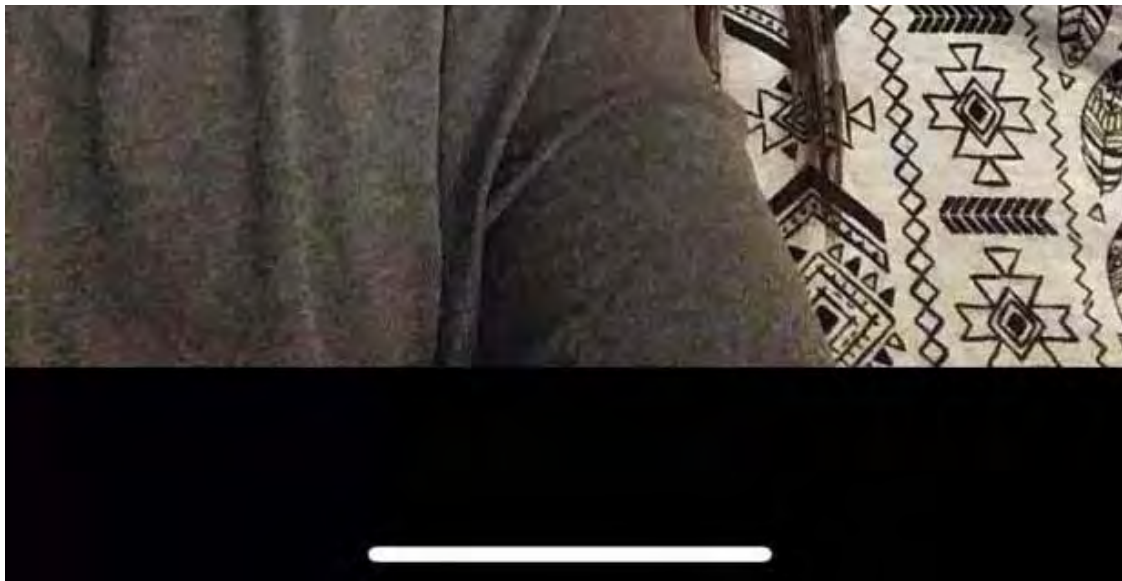
PUBLISHED: December 2, 2017 at 4:02 pm | UPDATED: December 2, 2017 at 7:10 pm



Colton police shot and killed a man armed with a 4-inch kitchen knife Saturday, Dec. 2, police and the man's family said.

Rudy Guevara, 41, on Saturday evening said he called Colton police to his home in the 1900 block of West De Anza Drive shortly before noon because his brother, Mario, 37, was in mental distress.





Mario Guevara, 37, shown with daughter Janine, was killed by Colton police about noon Saturday.

Rudy believes that Mario had run out of medication and hoped Colton police could place him on a three-day hold at nearby Arrowhead Regional Medical Center.

The family had requested such a hold, known as a 5150, before.

This time, though, was different.

Before police could arrive, Mario left the house where he lived with his brother with a 4-inch-long kitchen knife, Rudy said. Rudy doesn't know why Mario had the knife.

Mario then put the knife in his pocket and started walking along San Bernardino Avenue.

A short time later, a Colton police SUV pulled up.

Rudy said that's when Mario pulled out the knife. Rudy said he asked the officer to use a Taser on his brother.

Rudy said the officer then drew his gun and fired two shots. Mario stumbled and the officer fired three more times.

Colton police Colton police Sgt. Ray Mendez in a news release said the officer gave Mario several commands to drop the knife. When Mario didn't comply, the officer fired.

Rudy said the officer then handcuffed Mario.

The San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department is investigating the shooting, Mendez said.

Tags: [Top Stories PE](#), [Top Stories Sun](#)

HAGEN_RYAN

Ryan Hagen

Ryan Hagen covers the city of Riverside for the Southern California Newspaper Group. Since he began covering Inland Empire governments in 2010, he's written about a city entering bankruptcy and exiting bankruptcy; politicians being elected, recalled and arrested; crime; a terrorist attack; fires; ICE; fights to end homelessness; fights over the location of speed bumps; and people's best and worst moments. His greatest accomplishment is breaking a coffee addiction. His greatest regret is any moment without coffee.

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By ExxonMobil



Extension of Gold Line rail system to San Bernardino County breaks ground



A Metro Gold Line train leaves the new Azusa station. (Irfan Khan / Los Angeles Times)

By **City News Service**

DECEMBER 2, 2017, 5:05 PM

Officials broke ground today on a \$1.5-billion, six-station Foothill Gold Line extension from Glendora to Montclair in a ceremony at Citrus College.

The 12.3-mile extension, which is expected to take nine years to complete, will add new stations to the Metro Gold Line system in the cities of Glendora, San Dimas, La Verne, Pomona, Claremont and Montclair, and also marks the first Measure M-funded rail project to move forward to construction.

“Funding the second phase of the Gold Line Extension is the perfect example of what we’re trying to achieve through our agency’s comprehensive transportation plan,” Metro CEO Phillip A. Washington said. “As we make transit more available in new communities, we are changing the face of Southern California and creating an infrastructure inheritance for our children and grandchildren.”

The portion of the project within Los Angeles County — Glendora to Claremont — is being mostly funded by Metro’s Measure M half-cent sales tax that was approved by voters in November 2016, as well as residual

Measure R funds from the Pasadena-to-Azusa segment that was completed under budget.

The portion from Claremont to Montclair is being funded by San Bernardino County.

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NEWS > CRIME

Ontario police seek 16-year-old boy in abuse of kitten shared on social media

By **RYAN HAGEN** | rhagen@scng.com | The Press-Enterprise

PUBLISHED: December 2, 2017 at 11:49 am | UPDATED: December 3, 2017 at 10:01 pm



Ontario police are looking for a 16-year-old boy who they say is shown in a viral video throwing a kitten high into the air.

The kitten suffered a fractured leg when it landed in the middle of the street, police said.

The video, which appeared to originate on Snapchat, has also been shared thousands of times on Twitter, where it's caused an outcry against the boy. This publication is not sharing the video because of its graphic content.

Multiple agencies, including the Fontana and Ontario police departments, began investigating the video.

Ontario police said they found the cat and its owner.

"The cat has leg fracture but is going to be ok," the agency wrote on Twitter.



Ontario police said in a statement late Saturday that investigators identified a 16-year-old boy "believed to be responsible for the abuse of the kitten." The suspect was not identified because of his age. As of Sunday evening, he had not been located or arrested, police said by phone.

Anyone who has information about the incident, or may know the suspect's whereabouts, was asked to contact the Ontario Police Department at 909-395-2001.

A widely shared tweet that showed the video also said the boy goes to A.B. Miller High School in Fontana. However, A.B. Miller Principal Moises M. Merlos said by email that that was not true.

Fontana police said on Twitter that they had determined the incident took place outside of their jurisdiction and were working with the appropriate agency.





Fontana PD
@FontanaPD

We are aware of a video that depicts the abuse of a cat. We thank everyone for contacting our department with the video. It has been determined that the incident took place outside our city and we are working with the appropriate jurisdiction to find the cat and the suspect.

9:13 AM - Dec 2, 2017

197 2,934 7,305

Online comments suggesting it happened in Ontario led police in that city to investigate, said Ontario police Sgt. Stafford Cross.

The Inland Valley Humane Society is assisting with the investigation and care of the injured kitten, Ontario police said in their statement.

Police asked anyone with information about the incident or who knows the boy's whereabouts to call them at 909-395-2001.

Tags: [echo code](#), [Top Stories Breeze](#), [Top Stories IVDB](#), [Top Stories LADN](#), [Top Stories LBPT](#), [Top Stories OCR](#), [Top Stories PE](#), [Top Stories PSN](#), [Top Stories RDF](#), [Top Stories SGVT](#), [Top Stories Sun](#), [Top Stories WDN](#)



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Using Trading Volume to Help Determine Better Entry and Exit Points

By Charles Schwab



Traders use volume, which displays the number of shares that have been traded during a particular time period, as a...

012_ryan_hagen

Ryan Hagen

Ryan Hagen covers the city of Riverside for the Southern California Newspaper Group. Since he began covering Inland Empire governments in 2010, he's written about a city entering bankruptcy and exiting bankruptcy; politicians being elected, recalled and arrested; crime; a terrorist attack; fires; ICE; fights to end homelessness; fights over the location of speed bumps; and people's best and worst moments. His greatest accomplishment is breaking a coffee addiction. His greatest regret is any moment without coffee.

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NEWS > CRIME

Shooting leaves victim in critical condition in San Bernardino

By **GAIL WESSON** | gwesson@scng.com | The Press-Enterprise
December 4, 2017 at 7:12 am



A man was critically wounded outside an American Legion building in the 100 block of East 40th Street on Sunday afternoon, Dec. 3, according to San Bernardino police.

Police received several calls about 2:52 p.m. of shots fired in the vicinity of the Stater Bros supermarket parking lot. Responding officers found him in front of the Legion building, according to police Sgt. Mike Pacewicz.

The Legion building is near the northwest corner of 40th and Sepulveda Avenue.

The victim, who was not identified by name, was taken to an area hospital in critical but stable condition, Pacewicz said. No suspect is in custody.

Tags: **shooting**, **Top Stories PE**, **Top Stories Sun**

Staff mug
of metro
reporter
Gail
Wesson.

Gail Wesson

Gail Wesson has covered news for The Press-Enterprise for decades, mostly in Riverside County, with occasional forays across the county line. Datelines on her stories span the county – from the state agricultural inspection station in Blythe, to the

Column They're leaving California for Las Vegas to find the middle-class life that eluded them



Las Vegas is one of the most popular destinations for those who leave California. It's close, it's a job center, and the cost of living is much cheaper. (Genaro Molina / Los Angeles Times)



By **Steve Lopez**

DECEMBER 3, 2017, 7:00 AM | REPORTING FROM LAS VEGAS

The rent steals so much of your paycheck, you might have to move back in with your parents, and half your life is spent staring at the rear end of the car in front of you.

You'd like to think it will get better, but when? All around you, young and old alike are saying goodbye to California.

"Best thing I could have done," said retiree Michael J. Van Essen, who was paying \$1,160 for a one-bedroom apartment in Silver Lake until a year and a half ago. Then he bought a house with a creek behind it for \$165,000 in Mason City, Iowa, and now pays \$500 a month less on his mortgage than he did on his rent in Los Angeles.

Van Essen was one of the many readers who responded in October when I reached out to people who got sick and tired of the high cost of living in California. I heard from someone in Idaho and others who moved to Arizona and Nevada.

Solid recent data is hard to come by, but 2016 census figures showed an uptick in the number of people who fled Los Angeles and Orange counties for less expensive California locales, or they left the state altogether.

“If housing costs continue to rise, we should expect to see more people leaving high-cost areas,” said Jed Kolko, an economist with UC Berkeley’s Turner Center for Housing Innovation.

Las Vegas is one of the most popular destinations for those who leave California. It’s close, it’s a job center, and the cost of living is much cheaper, with plenty of brand-new houses going for between \$200,000 and \$300,000.

So I went to Sin City to see whether, when you add up all the pluses and minuses, there is life after California.

Cyndy Hernandez, a 30-year-old USC grad who grew up in Fontana, says the answer is yes, absolutely.

“It’s easier to live here and have a comfortable lifestyle,” said Hernandez, a community organizer with NARAL Pro-Choice Nevada.

I visited Hernandez in the two-bedroom, mountain-view “apartment-home” she shares with a roommate. Each pays \$650 a month in a gated development with free Wi-Fi, a swimming pool and cabana-shaded deck, fitness center, media room and complimentary beverages. It’s like living at a resort.

Like other transplants I spoke to in Nevada, Hernandez didn’t want to leave California. It’s home. It’s where she went to school and where her parents still live in the house she grew up in. But unless you choose a career that will pay you a small fortune to manage costs driven higher by a stubborn shortage of new housing, California is not a dream, it’s a mirage.

Moving to get a better job or move up the workplace chain is nothing new. But what’s going on here seems different — people leaving not for better jobs or pay, but because housing elsewhere is so much cheaper they can live the middle-class life that eludes them in California.

After college, Hernandez worked as a congressional staffer in Washington, D.C., and then went to Chicago for a few years. But the West drew her back. Not California, but Nevada, where she worked on Hillary Clinton’s presidential campaign in Las Vegas and then joined the staff of a state legislator in the state capital.

“I started looking at the bigger picture in Carson City, where I was able to pay the rent, have a car and a comfortable life and put some money into a 401(k),” Hernandez said. “Would I be able to do that in California? Probably not.”

She moved to Las Vegas in June, enjoyed exploring the city beyond the Strip and made new friends, and her financial stress melted away in the desert sun. Now she's saving up for a house, which she doesn't think she would ever have been able to do in California.

Hernandez connected me with Arlene Angulo, 23, who grew up in Riverside, worked as a cast member at Disneyland, loved the L.A. culture and got her teaching credential at UC Riverside. She had her pick of two teaching jobs — one in the Los Angeles area and one in Las Vegas.

“L.A. would have been my first choice, and I didn't want to have to leave California,” said Angulo, an English teacher who understands basic math. She knew that on a starting teacher's salary, “I couldn't afford to stay there.”

In Summerlin, a Las Vegas suburb, Angulo and a roommate each pays \$600 for a big three-bedroom apartment. Angulo is in graduate school at the University of Nevada Las Vegas while teaching by day, and said she's going to start saving up to buy a house in the area.

Jonas Peterson enjoyed the California lifestyle and trips to the beach while living in Valencia with his wife, a nurse, and their two young kids. But in 2013, he answered a call to head the Las Vegas Global Economic Alliance, and the family moved to Henderson, Nev.

“We doubled the size of our house and lowered our mortgage payment,” said Peterson, whose wife is focusing on the kids now instead of her career.

Part of Peterson's job is to lure companies to Nevada, a state that runs on gaming money rather than tax dollars.

“There's no corporate income tax, no personal income tax...and the regulatory environment is much easier to work with,” said Peterson.

Some companies have made the move from California, and others have set up satellites in Nevada. California, a world economic power, will survive the raids, and it will continue to draw people from other states and around the world. Its assets include cutting-edge tech and entertainment industries, major ports, great weather and dozens of first-rate universities.

But the Golden State is tarnished and ever-more divided by a crisis with no end in sight, and this year's legislative efforts to spawn more housing for working people lacked urgency and scale. Slowly, steadily, and somewhat indifferently, we are burdening, breaking and even exporting our middle class.

Breanna Rawding, 26, felt the squeeze. She grew up in Simi Valley and until recently worked in Anaheim as a marketing coordinator, but lived in Burbank because family friends let her stay in a tiny backyard cottage for just \$400 a month.

Her commute, by car and train, took between 90 minutes and two hours each way. She wanted to move to the Platinum Triangle area, near her job, but scratched the idea when she saw that studio apartments were going

for as much as \$1,700.

Rawding endured the commute, as well as a long-distance relationship with a boyfriend who was raised in Torrance and went to UCLA, but lived in Las Vegas. There, he could afford a nice apartment on his teacher's salary, and he recently signed papers to buy a house in a new development.

"I didn't want to leave California. I love the weather, I love the outdoors, I love my family and friends," said Rawding, a Chapman University grad.

But in California she saw a future in which she'd be trapped, indefinitely, by high rents, ridiculous commutes, or some combination of the two.

"I saw articles about millennials leaving California because they were never going to be able to have houses they could afford," she said.

In June, everything changed for Rawding.

She got a marketing communications job with the Global Economic Alliance in Vegas and rented a lovely \$900-a-month apartment that's so close to work, she goes home at lunch to let her dog Bodie out. And it's near her boyfriend's place.

Nevada's gain, our loss.

California, the place where anything was possible, has become the place where nothing is affordable.

[To read the article in Spanish, click here](#)

Get more of Steve Lopez's work and follow him on Twitter [@LATstevlopez](#)

ALSO

[A new California gold rush for homeowners, the poorhouse for renters](#)

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[Housing crisis can be good news, if you're a landlord](#)

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This article is related to: [Compensation and Benefits, Jobs and Workplace](#)

Expect the 'strongest and longest' Santa Ana winds of the season this week in L.A. area



Los Angeles residents might want to hold off on lighting up their homes as much as Riverside's Mission Inn Hotel & Spa does every year. (Brian van der Brug / Los Angeles Times)



By **Sonali Kohli**

DECEMBER 4, 2017, 8:10 AM

Deflate your giant Santas and unplug those twinkly holiday lights: The Santa Ana winds are coming to town.

Authorities anticipate high fire risk with a red flag warning in effect through Thursday — Los Angeles and Ventura counties could see wind gusts between 50 and 70 mph Monday night into Tuesday, the [National Weather Service predicts](#).

“This will likely be the strongest and longest duration Santa Ana wind event we have seen so far this season,” the National Weather Service red flag warning reads. “If fire ignition occurs, there will be the potential for very rapid fire spread, long range spotting, and extreme fire behavior.”

Sustained winds around 30 mph will likely begin around 10 p.m. Monday, said National Weather Service meteorologist John Dumas. Temperatures this week could reach from the high 70s to low 80s — that's lower than normal for Santa Ana conditions, but higher than usual for this time of year in Los Angeles, Dumas said.

The lower temperatures may help avoid fires. But if winds knock down a power line and ignite flames, Dumas said, the fire “could spread rapidly because of the wind condition.”

Southern California has also seen less rain than usual so far this season, Dumas said, which creates fire conditions. Downtown L.A. should have seen about two inches of rain between October and now. There has been a tenth of an inch of rain, he said.

Beyond the perennial fire safety measures that authorities recommend — don't pull over in dry grass, be careful with anything that could cause sparks outside — the holiday season could pose an added risk, Dumas said.

“What concerns me most would be all of the people who have been doing their holiday decorations. Generally you're not anticipating a big wind storm when you're putting things out,” Dumas said.

Beware of stringing lights outside the house and through trees this week, Dumas said. Tonight might be a good night to keep those unplugged, to lower the chances of them igniting flames.

“My advice is if you've got the big inflatable Santa in your front yard you probably don't want to inflate it this evening,” Dumas said. “It'll just blow away.”

Reach Sonali Kohli at Sonali.Kohli@latimes.com or on Twitter [@Sonali_Kohli](https://twitter.com/Sonali_Kohli).

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This article is related to: [National Weather Service](#)

LOCAL NEWS

L.A. firefighters gather for a fundraiser to help family of Las Vegas shooting victim from Corona



Harper Lynn Staples, 1, holds a flower as she joins others during a fundraiser event for her mother Kristina Terrill Staples at Blue Dog Beer Tavern in Sherman Oaks on Saturday Dec. 2, 2017. Her mother was struck by gunfire during the deadly mass shooting in Las Vegas. (Photo by Ed Crisostomo, Los Angeles Daily News/SCNG)

By **OLGA GRIGORYANTS** | ogrigoryants@scng.com | Los Angeles Daily News

PUBLISHED: December 2, 2017 at 5:50 pm | UPDATED: December 2, 2017 at 9:17 pm



Paul Scrivano, an owner of a sports bar in Sherman Oaks, said he couldn't stay still when he learned that a daughter of a Los Angeles Fire Department captain was seriously injured during the mass shooting in Las Vegas.

"These guys are walking into fire for us every day," he said. "I wanted to do something for them."

A Saturday fundraiser drew more than 100 firefighters, family members and friends.

"We are like a family here," said Brandon Terrazas, who attended the event at Blue Dog Beer Tavern at 4524 Saugus Ave in Sherman Oaks, with his fellow firefighters of Fire Station 88. "The whole family was affected by the tragedy."

RELATED STORY: [Las Vegas shooter Stephen Paddock was a CSUN graduate, university confirms.](#)

Kristina Terrill Staples of Corona, the 34-year-old daughter of LAFD Capt. Greg Terrill, was at the Route 91 Harvest Festival across the street from the Mandalay Bay resort in Las Vegas with her husband Daniel in October when Stephen Paddock opened fire, striking Staples in the head. Staples was in a coma for several weeks following the shooting and remains in critical condition.

Staples' family members said they were overwhelmed by the outpouring of support their family has received.

"I am very blessed and humbled," said Daniel Staples, Kristina's husband, as he held his 18-month-old daughter Harper Lynn. "It's a hard time, but everyone here is very supportive. It feels like a family."

Terrill, who retired from Station 88 last year after 35 years of service, said he learned about the fundraising, organized by his colleagues and friends, just a few days ago.

"I know everyone here," he said. "I am happy to see everyone."

For the fundraiser, Scrivano installed tables, chairs and a grill on a parking lot adjacent to his restaurant. Several firefighters grilled ribs and corn for guests. Another team sold t-shirts and hoodies with the fire station's logo.

RELATED STORY: [Suspected Las Vegas shooter graduated from Sun Valley high school](#)

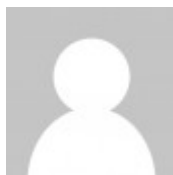
Scrivano said his goal was to raise \$5,000 for the Staples family.

“You could do millions of things in Los Angeles on Saturday afternoon,” he said. “But people still showed up. That tells you something about this community,”

To help pay medical expenses, [a GoFundMe page has been set up to support the Staples family.](#)

Editors note: This story has been corrected to reflect that Kristina Terrill Staples is still in critical condition in a coma.

Tags: [community](#), [San Fernando Valley](#), [Top Stories IVDB](#), [Top Stories OCR](#), [Top Stories PE](#), [Top Stories RDF](#), [Top Stories Sun](#)



Olga Grigoryants

Olga Grigoryants is a multimedia reporter focusing on urban development, business and culture. She also supports the paper in its watchdog role to hold San Fernando Valley power players accountable and loves digging for public records. After studying writing in Moscow, she moved to Los Angeles in 2007 and has called it home ever since. She earned her master’s degree from the USC Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism, and has published articles with Reuters, Bloomberg, the Los Angeles Business Journal and LA Weekly. Along the way, she picked up awards from the Los Angeles Press Club and Society of Professional Journalists. If you want to get on her bright side, she loves a perfect cup of matcha latte.

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How to Wrap Presents Like a Pro [↗](#)

By The Container Store



Ever wondered the secret to a perfectly chosen gift and beautifully wrapped present? We got all the answers you need...

Join the Conversation

911 now accepts text messages in L.A. County



By **Andy Nguyen**

DECEMBER 1, 2017, 4:25 PM

Residents across Los Angeles County now have the ability to send a text message to 911 to contact help during an emergency, authorities announced Friday.

The new system, called Text-to-911, is meant to allow people who are hard of hearing, speech-impaired or unable to talk safely on the phone to connect with emergency services. Cities such as Burbank, Glendale, Long Beach and Los Angeles now have the ability to field text messages sent to 911.

However, it is not meant as a total replacement for calling 911 traditionally. Sgt. Daniel Suttles, a spokesperson for the Glendale Police Department, said the time from when a text is sent and then received by the system can vary from instantaneous to several minutes, depending on a person's location and cellphone service.

"Phone communication is still the primary way we want you to communicate because it's more reliable," he said.

According to the Federal Communications Commission, [there are some caveats to texting 911](#).

The service is not available when a person is roaming, photos and video cannot be sent or received, and messages should be sent in plain English with no abbreviations.

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Column In L.A.'s misguided war on blight, an unpainted fence could cost you \$660



The Schwartz family got a warning from the city to paint its redwood gate or pay \$660. Above Caden Schwartz, 9, puts away a garden hose after washing his mother's car. (Kent Nishimura / Los Angeles Times)



By **Steve Lopez**

NOVEMBER 21, 2017, 1:30 PM

It's the little things that beat you up in the end, the daily irritations and indignities.

Mail from City Hall, for instance. You know, even as you draw blood with a paper cut while opening the envelope, that it can't be good news.

In Atwater Village, people have been receiving "courtesy notices" from something called the Pro-Active Code Enforcement division of the Department of Building & Safety.

The word "courtesy" is the first clue that your holiday spirit is about to be crushed, and "pro-active code enforcement" removes all doubt.

A colleague of mine got this notice about the gate to her back yard:

“PLEASE PAINT EXPOSED/BARE WOOD GATE AS NECESSARY AND MAINTAIN IN GOOD REPAIR. WHEN COMPLETE, CALL FOR RE-INSPECTION...TO AVOID A POSSIBLE NON-COMPLIANCE FEE OF \$660.”

She couldn't believe it. The redwood gate, once stained, has what might be called a “distressed” appearance. People pay good money to create such a look.

“It's kind of shocking,” said David Silver, a neighbor who got the same “courtesy” note about his redwood gate.

He had actually stained and sealed his, but to a city inspector, it was another example of “visual blight.”

Silver called the inspector and asked:

“Are you sure you've got the right house?”

Silver said he explained that he'd treated the gate, and the inspector said okay, then don't worry about the warning.

This was a hot topic on Atwater Nextdoor, the social networking site.

“I received one of these as well for my wrought iron gate,” said one resident.

“What is going on here?” asked another neighbor.

Dana Schwartz has a redwood gate, too. I went to see it, and I can tell you it's in great condition.

But she, too, got the warning to paint it or pay \$660.

“I haven't done anything yet,” said Schwartz, who doesn't intend to comply because she thinks the gate looks fine as is.

She wondered if the notice was some kind of scam. Others wondered if it were a plot to further gentrify the neighborhood, or if a handyman was trying to line up some work.

The answer is no.

This is for real.

Your tax dollars at work.

I called the inspector whose name was on one of the courtesy notices and pointed out that people use redwood because you don't have to paint it. Redwood lasts a long time, has beautiful coloring and grain lines, and maintains its character as it ages.

“There’s a city ordinance that says you can’t have unpainted wood,” the inspector told me.

If that’s true, I think it could spoil Mayor [Eric Garcetti](#)’s dream of becoming president of the United States. People are always screaming that they want government off their backs, so who would vote for a man who runs a city that forces you to paint your wood?

I felt like I was already halfway down the rabbit hole, so I called the inspector’s boss, who referred me to Lucas Zamperini at Building and Safety. He sent me L.A. Municipal Code Section 91.8104 and highlighted the section on wood:

“All fences shall be maintained in good repair and shall be kept straight, uniform and structurally sound. Wooden fences shall be either painted or stained or otherwise treated or sealed in an approved manner to prevent their becoming a nuisance from weathering or deterioration.”

But it’s redwood, I said.

Zamperini said he doesn’t make the rules.

This is a city, I noted, with thousands of potholes and hundreds of miles of broken sidewalks uprooted by untrimmed trees, among other problems. If you sent members of the Proactive Code Enforcement team out to have a look, their heads would explode.

City Controller Ron Galperin just put out a report card on the general condition of 40 of the city’s 444 parks. Grades were high for recreation areas, but restrooms got an overall grade of C, with 16 getting Ds or Fs. At one park, the blight included litter and graffiti, worn out bleachers and dilapidated soccer goals.

What’s the fine for all that?

[Blight is certainly a problem](#) on commercial and residential properties, and it can be irritating for neighbors. (A [blunt city report published in 2014](#) found that L.A.’s streets, alleys and empty lots of are so trash-filled it threatens the city’s image and makes some areas appear “unsafe and ungoverned.”)

But when it comes to private property, let’s go after the over-heaped dumpsters and front-yard car-repair operations.

That seems more important than the little stuff.

Zamperini said the crew in Atwater may need a little coaching to do just that.

“This is ludicrous,” said L.A. City Councilman Mitch O’Farrell, who represents Atwater. He told me he thought the program was supposed to assist people who can’t afford maintenance improvements rather than crack down on them.

Zamperini sent me a flier that offers maintenance assistance to those who are seniors, disabled or low-income, but O'Farrell said he was unaware of such a flier, and residents hadn't seen one, either.

Zamperini said the residential Pro-Active Code Enforcement unit has been operating for 17 or 18 years and is currently funded through the federal Community Development Block Grant program administered by HUD.

OK, and how big is the grant?

Right now it's more than \$2.2 million, he said, which pays for 11 inspectors and two senior inspectors.

So in a city with a critical shortage of affordable housing and thousands of people barely hanging on as prices soar, we're spending \$2 million worth of federal housing money on courtesy notices in a blight abatement program?

If unpainted wood is a crime, why not go to Hancock Park or Pacific Palisades and drop some "courtesy notices" in mailboxes?

Because, said Zamperini, the program targets only low-income areas.

Which raises another question.

Some Atwater residents are on the lower end, but I wouldn't call the hip and happening neighborhood low-income. And besides, to the extent that blight exists in bonafide low-income neighborhoods, it's often because people can't afford upkeep. So the solution is to threaten them with penalties of \$660?

That doesn't happen often, Zamperini said. Last year, 34,000 properties were surveyed, 3,401 "courtesy notices" were sent, and only about \$6,600 in fees were paid, largely because most people complied with the ordered improvements.

If you get a courtesy notice for something trivial, do not give in, do not back off, and do not paint.

It's time to rise up, calm down, and celebrate the fact that the Pro-Active Code Enforcement team will be off duty for the next four days.

Happy Thanksgiving.

Get more of [Steve Lopez's work](#) and follow him on Twitter [@LATstevlopez](#)

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This article is related to: [Poverty](#), [Eric Garcetti](#)

Former official accused of stealing \$800,000 from nonprofit San Diego County clinic



The dental clinic at North County Health Services' office in San Marcos is shown in 2009. A former employee of the nonprofit, which offers healthcare at clinics throughout north San Diego County, is accused of stealing nearly \$800,000 from the organization. (Howard Lipin / The San Diego Union-Tribune)

By **Teri Figueroa**

DECEMBER 1, 2017, 10:25 PM | REPORTING FROM VISTA

The former head of information technology at the nonprofit North County Health Services, which aids low-income people, pleaded not guilty Friday to siphoning nearly \$800,000 from San Diego County organization.

Hector Ramos, 55, of Murrieta, was charged with 49 counts related to the loss of the money, which authorities say happened over the course of eight months in 2015.

If convicted on all charges, Ramos faces 36 years in state prison, said San Diego County Deputy Dist. Atty. Anna Winn.

During Ramos' arraignment in a Vista courtroom, his attorney, Thomas Warwick, said Ramos was "a very credible individual," and had "lived a blameless life for 30 years."

According to Winn, North County Health Services hired Ramos — at an annual salary of \$200,000 — to run its IT department in January 2015.

Winn said Ramos created two fraudulent corporations and submitted false invoices from those corporations to North County Health Services.

Ramos would create a sense of urgency, Winn said, by telling staffers in the purchasing department that the entire computer system might shut down if the invoices were not paid quickly.

Ramos' assistant grew suspicious, investigated the two corporations and found that Ramos was on the board, Winn said. The assistant reported it to organization officials, she said.

Bank statements show that while the payments were made to Ramos' companies, Winn said, the records do not show purchases of computer equipment or software that matches what North County Health Services had been billed.

Rather, she said, the bank statements show “lavish spending,” including international vacations and thousands of dollars in purchases from a wine website. Other spending was on cigars, clothing, and a \$44,000 check written to a Porsche dealer, the prosecutor said.

Winn said that the loss of the money “was very demoralizing” to the organization's employees and that they felt a sense of betrayal.

Superior Court Judge David Danielsen set Ramos' bail at \$1 million, and granted Winn's request that, should Ramos make bail, he must prove that the source of the money was not illegally obtained.

Aside from the criminal case, the clinic's insurance company filed a civil suit against Ramos in July to recover nearly \$800,000. That case is pending.

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Figuerroa writes for the San Diego Union-Tribune.

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This article is related to: [Vista](#)

A county in Utah wants to suck 77 million gallons a day out of Lake Powell, threatening the Colorado River

By **Keith Schneider**

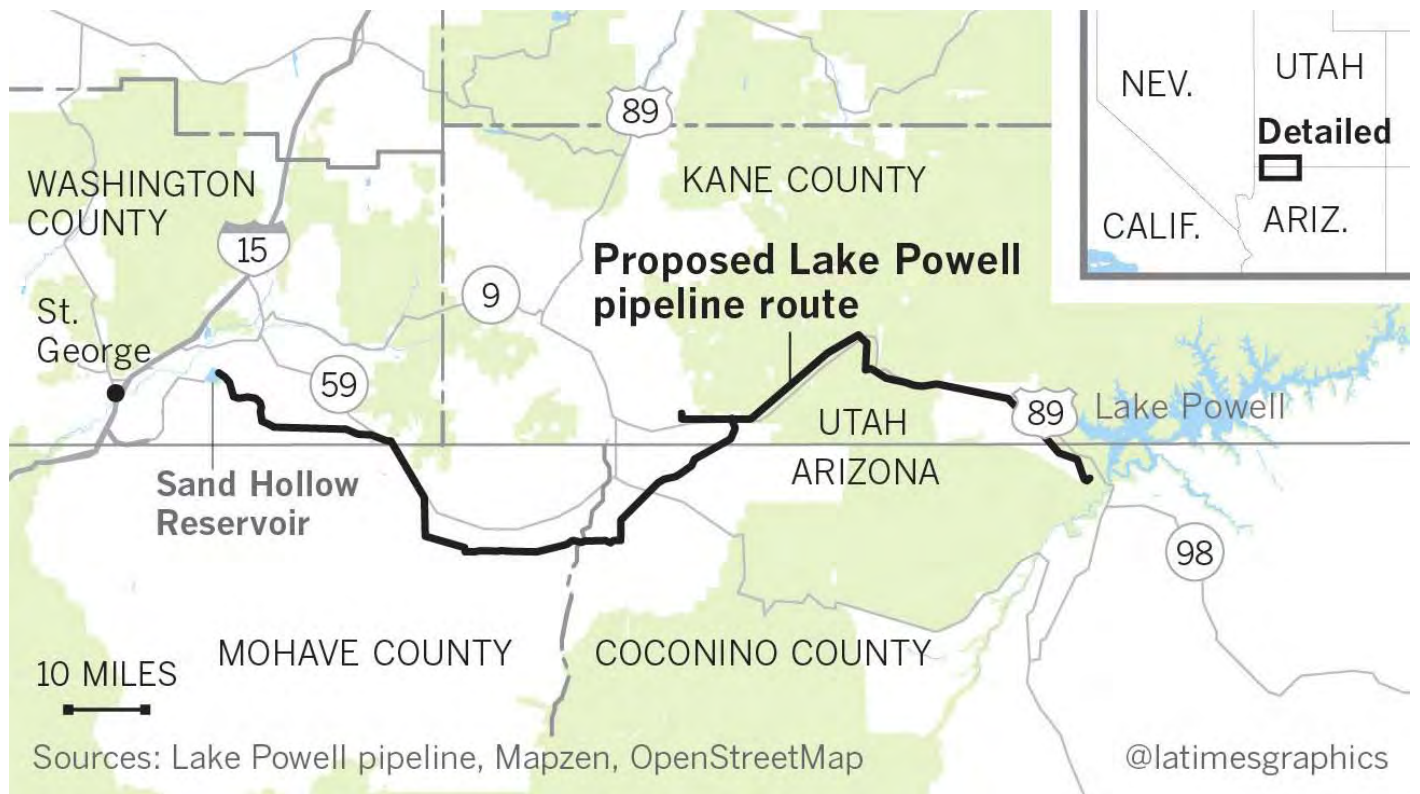
DECEMBER 3, 2017, 3:00 AM | REPORTING FROM ST. GEORGE, UTAH

Sun-scorched desert mesa, 140 miles of it, lies between Lake Powell, the nation's second-largest reservoir, and Utah's Washington County, one of America's driest metropolitan regions.

It's a long way in miles — but not insurmountable to the Washington County Water Conservancy District, which is charged with ensuring a rapidly growing desert community has water. The district plans to link the reservoir and the county with one of the longest and most expensive water pipelines ever proposed in the West.

Ample sunshine and less than 8 inches of rain a year have proved so attractive that a seemingly ceaseless wave of residential and retail construction blankets the desert near here and climbs to the summits of the region's red rock buttes.

Since 1990, Washington County, 90 miles east of Las Vegas, has more than tripled in population to 165,000 residents, many of them living in St. George and its rapidly growing suburbs. Demographers project that 400,000 more people could arrive by 2060.



(For the Los Angeles Times)

The 140-mile-long Lake Powell pipeline is what state planners see as the best way to avoid a water shortage calamity.

Almost 30 years after county and state water managers introduced the idea — and three years after it was initially scheduled to be completed — the mega water transport plan is finally inching toward its first significant regulatory decision.

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, which is overseeing the pipeline proposal, is weighing whether to start a two-year study of the environmental consequences of construction and operations on the project's route through four counties in Utah and Arizona.

The long regulatory process is emblematic of the uncertainty and unending impediments that characterize water pipeline development in an era of a warming climate and more frequent droughts.

Even in the 20th century, when city leaders worked with federal agencies to shift water from river basins to build the region's growing desert cities, it took decades to get a big water transport project built. The Central Utah Project, a network of tunnels, pipes,

canals, pumps and reservoirs that supply water from the east side of the Wasatch Front to the Salt Lake City area, was authorized by Congress in 1956 and still is not finished.

In its current design, the Lake Powell pipeline will transport 86,000 acre-feet — nearly 77 million gallons a day — from an intake 1,200 feet upstream of Glen Canyon Dam in Arizona to Washington County's Sand Hollow reservoir.

The 69-inch diameter pipeline will have five pumping stations to push water 2,000 feet uphill, and six turbine stations to produce about 45 megawatts of electrical generating capacity. Most of the water will be used by Washington County. Neighboring Kane County will receive roughly 5%.

The pipeline would diversify the region's water supply, which now comes from a single source: the Virgin River.

"These projects take years," said Ronald Thompson, general manager of the Washington County Water Conservancy District. "You can't build them in an election cycle. You have to plan decades into the future. You have to be adaptive. That's what we've tried to do here."



Ronald Thompson, the Washington County Water Conservancy District's general manager, said, "Not many communities go from 13,000 people to 165,000 in a 50-year period. That's a lot of growth. We had a plan. We worked the plan." (Keith Schneider / For the Los Angeles Times)

Yet such reasoning has run into a storm of opposition driven by one central assertion: the Lake Powell pipeline is a costly taxpayer burden that is not needed now or in the foreseeable future. Its construction in an era of meteorological disruption in patterns of snow and rainfall, moreover, is seen as a threat to the diminishing water levels in the Colorado River. That crucial waterway supplies Lake Powell and 30 million downstream users in Arizona, Nevada and California. (The three states have not commented on the proposed pipeline.)

“The truth behind the Lake Powell pipeline is that it is a water grab from the Colorado River by firms and agencies in Utah to convince Utahans that we are running out of water. We’re not,” said Zach Frankel, founder and executive director of the Utah Rivers Council, a water research and advocacy group in Salt Lake City funded by foundations, members and events.

“The reality is that St. George and Washington County residents have the highest per-person water use in the United States because they have some of the cheapest water rates in the world. They are wasting a tremendous amount of water there,” Frankel said.



Lake Powell, the nation's second-largest reservoir, is a little more than half full. (Keith Schneider / For the Los Angeles Times)

In the arsenal of facts developed by the pipeline’s opponents, several stand out. The Utah Division of Water Resources asserts that St. George and Washington County have

achieved a 25% reduction in water use over the last decade; yet per capita consumption is still somewhere between 289 and 325 gallons a day. Up to 70% of that waters lawns, golf courses, parks and cemeteries.

In other desert Southwest cities, consumption is around 100 gallons a day. Per capita water use in Phoenix is 175 gallons per day.

Underlying high water consumption are exceptionally low water prices. The Water Conservancy District charges its wholesale customers \$1.04 for 1,000 gallons of water. St. George households pay \$24.72 a month for their water meter and receive the first 5,000 gallons a month for no extra charge. The next 5,000 gallons costs \$1.18 per thousand gallons.

A family of four in St. George that uses 300 gallons per person per day would pay \$1.62 per thousand gallons, or about \$50 a month for water, plus the meter fee. A family of four in Phoenix would pay just a few dollars a month more — but for using half as much water.

“It’s much more reasonable and much less expensive to implement serious water conservation measures and to implement water rate changes,” said Lisa Rutherford, a member of Conserve Southwest Utah, an environmental group in St. George. “As the area grows, those two changes by themselves will push water usage down and alleviate the need for any pipeline.”

The Lake Powell pipeline was authorized and its construction will be financed by the state of Utah under a law passed by the Legislature in 2006. It is the first big water project ever undertaken by the state.

Water ratepayers in Washington and Kane counties will start repaying Utah in regular assessments upon completion, through water rate hikes, plus an \$8,000 construction fee on every new home, and property tax revenue.

Nobody, though, knows how much the project will cost. An estimate made in 2008 by the Water Resources Division, and another by a consultant in 2015, put the cost between \$1.1 billion and \$1.8 billion, or as much as \$12.85 million a mile. Eric Millis, director of the Utah Division of Water Resources, is sticking with that estimate, as is the project manager, John Fredell, who just supervised development of a simpler, 50-mile

water pipeline in Colorado Springs, Colo., that opened in 2016. It cost \$825 million, or \$16.5 million a mile.



St. George, Utah, is the largest city and county seat of Washington County, one of the country's fastest-growing metropolitan regions. (Keith Schneider / For the Los Angeles Times)

Millis projected that following completion of the pipeline's environmental study, construction would start in the early 2020s and operations would commence in the late 2020s. If the schedule holds, water will be flowing into Washington County before the trend line for projected population growth collides with any shortage of water supply, said Thompson of the water conservancy district.

Conservation, Thompson said, isn't an alternative for a region growing so powerfully that it will be ready to pay heavily to avoid running out of water.

"If I turn on the tap, I've got to have water. If I had to pay \$10 per thousand gallons, I'd pay that in a heartbeat," he said. "By 2028, if we don't have it, we'll be in trouble."

Schneider is a special correspondent.