

NEWS

From the County of San Bernardino
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SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY
AT YOUR SERVICE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The County of San Bernardino: 2011 in Review

JANUARY

Countywide Vision – Identification of the Countywide Vision begins with 18 community meetings conducted throughout the county, more than two dozen subject meetings, and an online survey. The data from the meetings and survey serve as the basis of the Vision statement, elements and values unveiled in March and April and adopted in June. The Vision Project marks the first time all sectors of the county community worked together to identify a shared vision for the future.



New Chair and Vice-Chairman – The Board of Supervisors select Fifth District Supervisor Josie Gonzales to serve as board chair and First District Supervisor Brad Mitzelfelt to serve as vice chairman for the next two years. “We are looking to the positive as my colleagues and I work with the county Chief Executive Officer to shape our vision, focusing on building strong, economically viable, healthy communities throughout San Bernardino County,” Chair Gonzales said. The voter-approved county charter states the chair serves as the board’s general executive agent. The chair’s duties include conducting meetings of the board, signing agreements approved by the board, and acting on the board’s behalf when the board is not immediately available.

In God We Trust – Following direction from the Board of Supervisors proposed by Supervisor Gary Ovitt, San Bernardino County joins a growing list of public agencies that displays the national motto “In God We Trust” in its meeting chambers.

-MORE-

County Year in Review

December 28, 2011

Page 2

FEBRUARY

Green Honor – The county's newly opened Jerry Lewis High Desert Government Center in Hesperia and neighboring Sheriff's Department police station are awarded LEED Gold certification by the U.S. Green Building Council for their environmentally friendly features. The 66,000-square-foot Jerry Lewis High Desert Government Center is one of only six structures in the county to earn LEED Gold certification. To achieve this standard, the county installed three solar panel carports, which are projected to offset more than 70 percent of the building's energy consumption. The building is surrounded by drought-tolerant landscaping intended to use as little water as possible, and is topped by a "cool roof" to reflect the sun's heat and reduce the need for air conditioning. Crews installed energy-efficient dual-glazed exterior windows, as well as plumbing fixtures that will reduce water consumption by 40 percent compared to standard fixtures. The paint emits a minimum amount of volatile organic compounds (VOCs), and 85 percent of the waste generated during construction was diverted away from landfills.



The Jerry Lewis High Desert Government Center

Camp Good Grief – The District Attorney's Office releases a short documentary on Camp Good Grief: Special Victims Program. The film demonstrates why the camp has become so critically important to children who have suffered the loss of a parent through violence. Camp Good Grief Special Victims Program is a grief camp for children and teens whose lives have been shattered due to an act of murder or suicide of a member of their family. The camp, now in its sixth year, provides a place for children to be with other children their own age to learn about and understand grief. The San Bernardino County District Attorney's office, in partnership with Loma Linda University Children's Hospital, offers this unique four-day camp that provides a relaxed, supportive and safe environment for children to enjoy the typical activities of a summer camp, as well as to have opportunities to work with professionals to share their feelings related to their loss, learn new ways to cope, and interact with other children and teens in an atmosphere of love and acceptance. A short trailer of the film, which debuted at the Lake Arrowhead Film Festival, can be seen at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dhrJac3cgbc&feature=BFa&list=UU3LyQy988h8LceIJAtc8dCg&lf=plcp>

MARCH

Vision Unveiled – The Countywide Vision, identified during a series of community and subject meetings and an online survey, is introduced for discussion at the City-County Conference in Lake Arrowhead, an annual gathering of city and town mayors and councilmembers and county officials.

-MORE-

County Year in Review

December 28, 2011

Page 3

Victor Valley Museum – The museum reopens as a branch of the San Bernardino County Museum with all-new exhibits inviting county residents to “Discover Your Own Backyard” by focusing on the cultural and natural history of the High Desert. The museum, first opened in 1993, was donated to the county in January 2010. The effort to renovate a 14,000 square foot facility included new flooring, lighting and paint. The thousands of collection objects were evaluated, and school programs were developed. Information on group tours and about the museum in general can be answered by calling (760) 240-2111.



Vice-Chairman Brad Mitzelfelt and County Museum Director Bob McKernan cut the ribbon at the remodeled Victor Valley Museum.

Medical Marijuana – After months of study and public testimony, the Board of Supervisors adopts standards for the existence of medical marijuana dispensaries in the unincorporated areas of the county. Already banned by the vast majority of Inland Empire jurisdictions, the county's standards allow dispensaries only under the most-strict of circumstances and bans outdoor cultivation.

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New Courthouse – Ground is broken and construction gets officially underway on a long-awaited new courthouse in downtown San Bernardino, funded in part by the county. The seven-acre property donated by the City of San Bernardino at Third Street and Arrow Avenue, across from the old historic courthouse, will be the largest civic building constructed in downtown San Bernardino in half a century once it is completed in spring 2014. In development since 2007, the landmark 11-story building will house 36 courtrooms and provide improved public access and security, increased efficiency of court operations, and significant relief for the court’s current space shortfall by replacing seven facilities and consolidating operations into a secure, seismically safe, modern court building. Sustainability features will save energy and make the building more efficient to operate.



Chair Josie Gonzales joins other local officials to break ground for the new downtown courthouse.

APRIL

State of the County – The county hosts its annual showcase at Million Air at San Bernardino International Airport, publicly unveiling the Countywide Vision.



Supervisor Neil Derry mingles at the 2011 State of the County

County Year in Review

December 28, 2011

Page 5

Blast from the Past – The County Museum in Redlands, host of many special exhibits each year, introduces “Turn, Turn, Turn” featuring the landmark social movements from 1965 to 1975.



*The Turn, Turn, Turn
exhibit at the County
Museum*

New Fire Chief – Mark Hartwig is appointed Fire Chief for San Bernardino County. The Rancho Cucamonga Fire Protection District’s deputy chief, Hartwig returned to the County Fire Department and teamed up with Dan Odom, who had served as interim chief, to lead the department into the future. Odom, a division chief who had made clear his desire to return to the field, became Deputy Chief to oversee operations. Hartwig had been with the Rancho Cucamonga Fire Protection District since 2005. Prior to that, he served with County Fire, working his way to the rank of Captain. County Fire includes 1,200 personnel, including more than 900 suppression personnel who handle in excess of 68,000 calls for service a year, and manage an annual budget of \$145.7 million.

MAY

Reform – Board members introduced several reform proposals during 2011 hoping to restore the public’s trust in government and change some of the practices put into place by previous boards. In May, Chair Josie Gonzales introduced a slate of proposed reforms that would disallow use of existing discretionary funds for board staff and promoting board members, eliminate discretionary funds from the 2011-12 budget, prohibit board staff from working on county political campaigns, standardizing board staff contracts, and requiring work performance evaluations for all board employees.

Public Service Recognition – As National Public Service Recognition Week, the Board of Supervisors publicly recognized 46 county employees as outstanding in their respective departments and divisions. Aside from their regular job duties, many honorees devote their time and expertise to support community service activities throughout the county.

JUNE

Vision Adopted – Following 18 community meetings, nearly 4,000 online surveys, two dozen expert roundtables and input from the county’s 24 cities, the Countywide Vision is adopted by both the Board of Supervisors and the San Bernardino Associated Governments board, representing all of the county’s 24 cities and towns. The adoption takes place at a special joint public meeting at the Maloof Foundation in Rancho Cucamonga. The Vision includes the five-paragraph Vision statement, information on how the Vision was identified, detailed elements of the Vision, examples of local programs that can be replicated to help achieve the Vision, results of the online surveys, and a sample of the Letters from the Future written by county residents. All can be viewed at www.sbcounty.gov/vision.

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Budget Passed – The Board of Supervisors adopts a balanced \$3.8 billion county budget, which Chair Gonzales says sets the county “on a path towards fiscal solvency while reforming the way we do business.” The budget closed a \$46 million gap – the first step in a multi-year process to align revenues and expenditures. This is being accomplished through sharp reductions in county staff and negotiated reductions and stabilizations in salaries and benefits for the remaining employees. The 2011-12 budget also eliminated board discretionary funds. “Eliminating the ability for supervisors to independently hand out funds or direct multi-million dollar projects is reform,” Gonzales said. “This is a change in the political culture that will bring about greater accountability and enable the development of a unified plan that delivers the county’s vision.”

Foster Youth Sports Faire – More than 400 county foster youth participate in the 5th Annual Foster and Kinship Youth Sports Faire at San Bernardino Valley College. The fair featured eight sports clinics, free foster parent and caregiver training, NFL star Eric Weddle of the San Diego Chargers as guest speaker, and professional athletes for a day of mentoring, sports, and fun. Since 2007, the sports clinics have been expanded based on youth demand to include football, basketball, softball, baseball, soccer, tennis, cheerleading/dance and, added this year, track and field. Many professional athletes and mentors volunteer their time to teach the youth the importance of an education and staying physically active.



Charger Eric Weddle speaks at the Foster and Kinship Youth Sports Faire

Military Leave Benefits – The Board of Supervisors extend supplemental military leave benefits for county employees called to duty. California law states that employees have a statutory right to be paid their regular salary only during the first 30 days of military duty. In 2001 the Board of Supervisors established the Supplemental Military Leave/Pay Program to provide extended support for its county employees. The program offers employees on active duty paid leave time, equal to the difference between their base county and base military pay, and continuation of full benefits after their 30-day entitlement under state law ends. Since 2001 the program has helped support approximately 235 county employees.

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JULY

Gang Prosecutions – The District Attorney's Office continues its aggressive prosecution of gangs, filing a lawsuit seeking a gang injunction in the City of Rialto against a well-known criminal street gang. Since the inception of the San Bernardino County District Attorney's Gang Unit in July 2005, 6,343 cases have been filed across the county; 2 on death row; 3,902 state prison commitments; 25,840 years + 108 life terms in state prison; 1,361 gang enhancements have been found true and 207 were found guilty by jury trial. The District Attorney released short documentary on gang prosecution in San Bernardino County, which can be viewed here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5IhSwv6DPdQ&list=UU3LyQy988h8LceIJAtc8dCg&index=13&feature=plcp>

AUGUST

More Reform – The board approves a policy that prohibits the naming of buildings or other facilities paid for with county funds after sitting elected officials. "Elected officials ... should not be allowed to use taxpayer money to build their political legacies by having their names attached to buildings, parks, and other public facilities supported by county funds," said Second District Supervisor Janice Rutherford, who proposed the policy. If the county chooses to name a facility after a person or family, the policy requires a full background investigation to ensure the honoree or honorees are worthy of such an enduring public recognition.



Supervisor Janice Rutherford listens to a constituent.

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Dozens of Awards – The county of San Bernardino once again distinguishes itself among the nation's counties, winning more 2011 Achievement Awards from the National Association of Counties than any other county in the country besides substantially larger Los Angeles and San Diego counties. The County of San Bernardino claimed 27 honors, which recognize counties for improving public services and management practices provided by county government. The awards also included a second prestigious "Best in Category" award for the San Bernardino County Probation Department. Nationwide, only 21 programs received this honor, and only four from California. Also, Vice-Chairman Mitzelfelt won a 2011 Challenge Award for his Community Liaison program, which he initiated in his office to reduce taxpayer costs while improving service to constituents.



Chair Josie Gonzales congratulates some of the county's NACO Award winners.

Fighting the Fire Fee – The board calls on the state Legislature to rescind the fire fee it imposed on residents who live in areas served by Cal Fire, the state's fire protection agency at the urging of Supervisor Neil Derry.

Animal Control – At the urging of Supervisor Derry, the board adopts an ordinance that would require all dog owners to spay or neuter their dogs should they be found guilty of failing to abide by another state or local animal control regulation. "We cannot solve the pet over-population issue through legislation, but over time we can minimize it and reduce the number of animals euthanized by our shelters at great expense to taxpayers," Supervisor Derry said. "This measure will apply to those irresponsible and careless owners that do not abide by the rules and not encroach upon those who follow the rules." If you believe that a pet owner is not caring for their animals properly, please contact Animal Care and Control at: 1-800-472-5609.

Health Care Accessibility – The county's Arrowhead Regional Medical Center in partnership with the county's Public Health and Behavioral Health departments receive final approval to open a "co-location" health care facility in Rialto that, when complete, will enable local residents to access behavioral health, public health and ARMC primary care services all under one roof for the first time. The facility is expected to open in March 2012.

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SEPTEMBER

More Reform – The board moves toward limiting how much money special interest groups, corporations, and others can donate to candidates seeking election to county offices. Supervisors directed county staff to draft rules for the board's consideration to regulate how much can be donated, modeling the limits after those in place for California Legislature candidates. The board also instructed staff to research how to enforce campaign finance regulations, including looking into the possibility of contracting with the California Fair Political Practices Commission, which enforces the state's campaign finance laws.

New Lines – The board adopts new supervisorial district boundaries to ensure each district contains approximately the same number of residents as shown in the newly released 2010 Census. The districts are largely the same as the previous districts, but with a few significant differences. Upland south of Foothill Boulevard is in the Fourth District; Lake Arrowhead, Running Springs, and Green Valley Lake are in the Second District; and Barstow, Lucerne Valley, and Twentynine Palms are in the Third District.

Realignment – The county adopts a plan to cope with a new state requirement that gives counties responsibility for thousands of state prison parolees as well as those convicted of "low-level" crimes in the future who will serve time in county jail instead of state prison. The Probation Department expects to have up to 6,500 "Post Release Community Supervision" offenders added to its caseload over the next three years. The board approved the hiring of more than 200 public safety personnel, including about 100 additional probation officers. The county Probation Department and Department of Behavioral Health have an array of programs to improve the prospects of rehabilitation. Those programs include three Day Reporting Centers where released inmates will be supervised and provided with a variety of classes and treatment for substance abuse, mental health and medical issues.

Hill Fire – Labor Day weekend proved to be very busy for firefighters as they battled a wind driven blaze from the ground and air. Although the 1,158 acre brush fire destroyed 3 homes, damaged 2 others, and destroyed several vehicles, firefighters saved hundreds of homes and numerous animals. The fire started on northbound Interstate 15 in the center median just south of Oaks Hills Road in Cajon Pass and quickly jumped southbound lanes, continuing into the ranch style communities of Oak Hills, Baldy Mesa and Hesperia. About 1,500 homes were evacuated and Interstate 15 was closed intermittently throughout the busy holiday weekend. The fire was fully contained by Monday, September 5.

Board Videoconferencing – Being in Victorville becomes the next best thing to being in San Bernardino for those interested in participating in Board of Supervisors meetings. A videoconferencing system linking a meeting room in Victorville to the Board of Supervisors chambers in San Bernardino went live for the board's September 13 meeting, allowing public testimony from a remote location for the first time in county history. The videoconferencing effort is a one-year pilot program. One year from now, the county will evaluate the effectiveness of the program and determine whether to continue or expand it. The location for the videoconferencing will be the County Transitional Assistance Department building, 15010 Palmdale Road, Conference Room A/B, in Victorville. Board meetings can also be viewed live on the Internet at <http://www.sbcounty.gov/main/countyvision.asp>. Past meetings can also be viewed at this site.

OCTOBER

New Clinic – Arrowhead Regional Medical Center opens a new adult primary care clinic in its Medical Office Building to meet the increasing need for primary care services in the local community. When fully staffed, the clinic will service more than 8,000 patient visits.

Welfare Call Center – It might look like a call center. But the San Bernardino County Transitional Assistance Department's newly opened, first-of-its kind Customer Service Center in San Bernardino represents a revolution in government services that will link more people to the benefits they need and inject more cash into the local economy. Modeled after a private-sector technical support or other customer service call center, TAD's Customer Service Center is staffed by 110 workers and uses the latest call-center technology and business practices to handle incoming calls from the county's continuing CalWORKs, CalFresh and Medi-Cal caseloads. This frees up the workers at "traditional" TAD offices to concentrate on the people who walk in their doors, and ensures that callers are served quickly and efficiently.

Online Advantages – The county unveils e-pro and e-plan, two revolutionary online systems aimed at making services more available to those who need them. E-pro allows county vendors and potential vendors to access information from the county's Purchasing Department. E-plan allows builders and others hoping to get plans approved to take care of their business via the Internet.

County Museum – Four major exhibits were completed in the Hall of Geological Wonders with funding from the California Cultural Heritage Endowment grant. The Hall was previewed by museum visitors on International Fossil Day.



The dire wolf exhibit at the Hall of Geologic Wonders.

A Piece of History – County Fire takes possession of a piece of steel that was part of a column from one of the World Trade Center buildings that collapsed on September 11, 2001. Getting the 11,000 pound piece of history, measuring 20'x3'x8", to County Fire Station 79 in Fontana was no easy task, but through the efforts of Firefighters Local 935 and YRC World Wide Trucking Company, the steel was safely delivered on October 21. It traveled by train to San Bernardino, where it was loaded onto a flatbed truck and escorted by a County Fire Engine and two Fontana Police Department units to Station 79. Personnel from County Fire's vehicle services were able to unload the item and place it on rail ties. County Fire personnel then draped the steel with an American flag. Smaller flags and lights line both sides of the steel, where it will remain until a monument can be erected.

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Safe Drug Disposal – The county Sheriff's Department in partnership with the Drug Enforcement Administration gives the public another opportunity to prevent pill abuse and theft by ridding their homes of potentially dangerous prescription drugs during a Nationwide Drug Take-Back Day. Residents brought unneeded medications to nine Sheriff's stations in a free and anonymous service. Traditional methods of disposing of unused medicines – flushing them down the toilet or throwing them in the trash – both pose potential safety and health hazards.



Supervisor Gary Ovitt demonstrates the safe disposal of unneeded pharmaceuticals in Chino Hills.

NOVEMBER

More Reform – The board directs county staff to draft an ordinance to reduce supervisors' benefits by nearly 20 percent. "San Bernardino County Supervisors must lead by example, and agreeing to impose more than \$50,000 in benefit reductions on ourselves is a good place to start," said Supervisor Rutherford, who proposed the measure. The proposed ordinance would eliminate all county pick-ups of supervisors' retirement contributions, county retirement medical trust fund contributions, county salary savings plans matches and supplemental contributions, county-paid life insurance or variable group universal life insurance, long-term disability insurance, medical expense flexible spending account matches, and portable communication device allowances. Research had shown San Bernardino County supervisors are eligible to receive the second highest total compensation among Southern California supervisors.

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Getting Your Kicks – On the eve of the 85th anniversary of Route 66, Vice-Chairman Mitzelfelt holds an official unveiling ceremony of the first installed “County Route 66” sign. Mitzelfelt initiated the County Route Marker program after seeing route markers used effectively in other counties. More than 250 miles of the iconic highway runs the length of San Bernardino County from Needles through Upland, making Route 66 the most appropriate place to launch the County Route Marker Program, the first to be added in the state since 1983. The signs, placed at various intervals along the route, will serve as “bread crumbs” for travelers to follow as they explore the route within the nation’s largest county.



*Vice-Chairman Brad Mitzelfelt
unveils the first
County Route 66 sign in Barstow.*

More Reform – The board accepts a menu of job classifications, including qualifications, salary and benefit levels, for board staff. Following a detailed analysis of surveys completed by current board staff, the County Department of Human Resources, compiled a list of 14 classifications that outline specific job functions and skill sets needed for each position. “Up until now, there were no established criteria or qualifications for many of the board staff positions,” said Gonzales, who brought forward the proposal. “We have an obligation to assure the public that the employees we hire are qualified professionals that meet the required criteria just like every other employee.”

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Adoption Ceremony – In honor of National Adoption Month, the county holds its annual Adoption Finalization event at the Ontario Convention Center and sees 50 children officially uniting with new families. County Children and Family Services facilitates between 300 to 500 adoptions per year.



The Annual Adoption Finalization Event in Ontario.

DECEMBER

Stroke Network – Arrowhead Regional Medical Center, which developed the county's first-ever primary stroke center, joins a stroke network under the auspices of the Inland Counties Emergency Medical Agency that will establish a new standard of care for stroke patients. Stroke certified centers provide rapid assessment, intervention and treatment for strokes.

Public Safety Center – The board approves an agreement with the City of Hesperia to construct a new Public Safety Operations Center in the new High Desert Government Center. The new state-of-the-art facility will provide numerous benefits, including improved coverage in case of a disaster. The San Andreas Fault runs through the Cajon Pass and after a major earthquake the High Desert will likely be cut off from the Inland Valley. Among other benefits are room to accommodate growth, the ability to undertake a major upgrade to the current 911 system, and establishment of a single High Desert location for Sheriff and County Fire dispatch. The project will feature a "fusion center" with technology and software that will allow public safety personnel to work together across agencies and disciplines to identify trends and issues, and then develop the most effective plans of action. The project is expected to be complete in early- to mid-2013.

Coverage Expansion – Arrowhead Regional Medical Center, in conjunction with the county's Public Health and Behavioral Health departments, finalizes plans for an ambitious coverage expansion program for low-income county residents that potentially will transform the way health care is delivered. The Low Income Health Program, known as ArrowCare, will establish "medical homes" for individuals so their care is more coordinated, efficient and patient-centered.