

## Departments and Programs Honored for Innovation, Productivity

Citing greater quality and service for residents, the Board of Supervisors on November 9 honored 30 County departments for projects expected to produce a first-year savings of about \$58 million.

Board Chairman Ed Edelman, along with Quality and Productivity Commission members, presided over the Productivity and Quality Awards ceremony in the Board Hearing Room and presented the Grand Award to the Superior Court—Edmund D. Edelman Children's Court "Dependency/Delinquency Early Alert Report" program.

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### SKELETONS IN THE CLOSET

## Coroner's Office Puts Afterlife Twist on Gift Giving



From *Newsweek* to *People Magazine*, Marilyn Lewis goes by a new title these days — County media star.

An executive secretary who doubles as the Coroner's Office marketing director, Lewis has been swamped with about 100 calls a day from customers and media around the world since the department started selling post-death paraphernalia as gifts.

"The Christmas orders keep pouring in," Lewis said. "People seem to think these are the perfect gifts for folks who have everything."

Started in August, the *Skeletons in the Closet* marketing program offers coffee



MARILYN LEWIS STOCKS THE "SKELETON" SUPPLY ROOM.

mugs, T-shirts and tote bags with the department's mascot, a pipe-smoking skeleton sporting a trench coat, cap and magnifying glass. Beach towels feature chalk body outlines.

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## *A Christmas Eve Toast; Downtown Holiday Celebration Still Free*



CITIZENS PACKED THE DOROTHY CHANDLER PAVILION LAST YEAR FOR THE ANNUAL COUNTY HOLIDAY CELEBRATION.



Staying true to tradition, the 34th Annual County Holiday Celebration at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion takes place December 24 in a new, three-hour format.

Featuring symphonies, dance companies and choral groups, the free, former 12-hour event received a last-minute reprieve when the Board of Supervisors approved \$90,000 in funding. Due to a bleak economic climate, the program's continuance was originally in question.

Produced by the County Music and Performing Arts Commission and the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, the event starts at 7 p.m. and features free parking and a live KCET, Channel 28, broadcast.

Located in downtown Los Angeles on Grand Avenue between Temple and First streets, the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion is wheelchair accessible. Reservations are not required and audience guests may drop by for all or part of the program. For a schedule of events, call 213-974-1343.

## Going "Outside" With the Winners

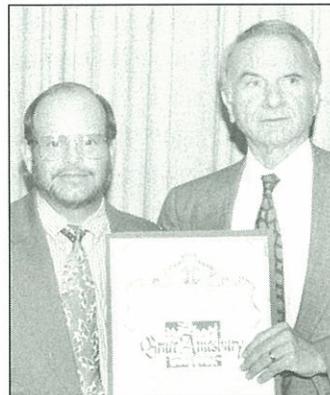
In the jazz world, *taking it outside* means pushing beyond all boundaries and stretching into uncharted musical terrains. That hipster terminology can also describe three award-winning County employees.

Kenneth Bell, a senior investigator and **JULY'S EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH**, works for the District Attorney's Hardcore Gang Section and pushes past the top professionals in his field. Over the years, he has taught 35 law enforcement agencies about gang life and lectured at the U.S. Treasury and Justice departments. While serving on the County Gang Diversion Task Force, he also developed a curriculum with the Office of Education to help educators deal with gang members.



KENNETH BELL AND SUPERVISOR MIKE ANTONOVICH

With 28 years County experience, Bruce Amesbury also knows about tackling tough terrains. Working for the Internal Services Department, Amesbury serves as a property agent who manages a wide range of agreements, including built-to-suit and operating leases. Whether relocating an Indochinese Service Center or managing the Museum of Natural History's warehouse lease, Amesbury is known for quick turnarounds and customer satisfaction. For his efforts, folks now know him as **AUGUST'S EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH**.



BRUCE AMESBURY AND BOARD CHAIRMAN ED EDELMAN



GERARDO RAMIREZ AND SUPERVISOR YVONNE BRATHWAITE BURKE

Gerardo Ramirez, **SEPTEMBER'S EMPLOYEE OF THE MONTH**, has also pushed back the barriers and reached new heights since arriving in the U.S. at 16. As a custodian at Women's Hospital, Ramirez has enhanced the image of custodial services and improved the work environment. In addition, Ramirez supervises and trains general relief workers who help supplement permanent staff.

## Chess Championship to Check into Alhambra



The seventh annual County Employees Chess Championship gets underway February 17 at the Public Works Conference Room B, 900 S. Fremont Ave., Alhambra.

Starting at 6 p.m., the event features both open and amateur divisions and offers prizes to the top winners in both divisions. For information, call Norman Cortez, 818-458-7188; Fred Ureta, 310-428-7866; or Lowell Harter, 213-267-2235.



## New Hotline Goes After Illegal Dumping Suspects

Thanks to the Public Works Department, citizens can call a new, 24-hour toll-free hotline to report suspected illegal dumping into storm drains, street gutters and natural watercourses.

The countywide hotline is 1-800-303-0003.

By calling, residents can help keep lakes, channels, rivers and the ocean litter free. For more information, call Public Works' Waste Management Division, 818-458-6972.

## RESPONDING TO DISASTER The County in Action

During catastrophes, Los Angeles County government forges a united front, mobilizing fast to help its residents.

With more than 85,000 employees, it's difficult for citizens to keep track of the County's full impact. But the recent fires offer opportunities to

examine a wide range of departments pulling together to save lives and property.

In this special edition, we spotlight some of the County's emergency response efforts during fires that destroyed more than 380 homes and burned 24,000 acres.

### **BOARD MARCHES INTO ACTION, HELPS THE DEVASTATED**

With embers still simmering, the Board of Supervisors voted to eliminate red tape and help victims with tax deferrals, fee waivers and rebuilding processes. At the heart of the action, the Public Works Department set up One-Stop Information and Permitting Centers in Arcadia and Calabasas. Open Monday through Friday, the centers help residents "fast-track" rebuilding. Building inspectors, engineers and representatives from Regional Planning and County Fire departments help streamline the permitting process and give advice on sandbagging and other tips to avoid further disaster during the upcoming rain season.

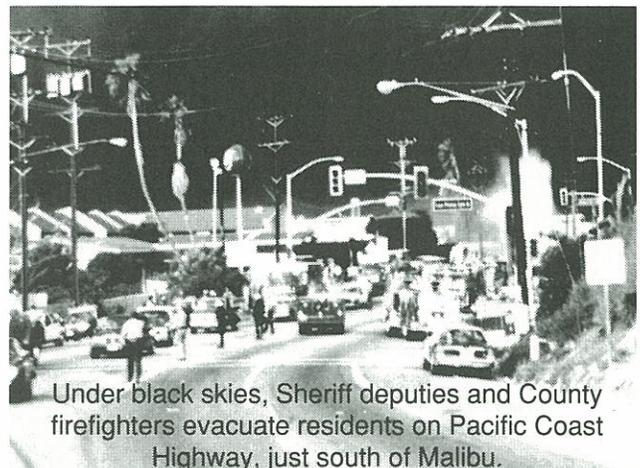
The Board, along with state and federal agencies, also opened Disaster Application Centers to provide state, federal and County services to disaster victims and set up a 24-hour disaster hotline.



Firefighters march into action in Altadena.

### **ANIMAL CARE GOES AROUND THE CLOCK**

More than 6,700 hours were logged to rescue, care, board and feed 1,113 horses, 270 goats, more than 250 dogs and cats along with geese, ducks and rabbits. More than 150 animal control units and rescue vehicles descended on the fire-ravaged areas. By combining forces with volunteers, about 1,700 animals were saved. So far, the department has reunited hundreds of missing pets with their owners.



Under black skies, Sheriff deputies and County firefighters evacuate residents on Pacific Coast Highway, just south of Malibu.

## FIRE DEPARTMENT: After The Flames

In the wake of the fires, the County Fire Department's work is far from over. The department is working with the United States Forest Service and other agencies to reseed the torched areas. So far, the reseeding is about 60 percent complete in the Kinneloa fire area. Plans are also underway to reseed in the Old Topanga area. In the meantime, residents can pick up sandbags from County fire stations. According to Public Works Director Tom Tidemanson, the department has 250,000 sandbags in reserve and has ordered a million more.

### **Mental Health Sets Up 24- Hour Hotline**

Once the flames cooled, Mental Health workers moved out across the County and counseled the stricken. Then employees set up a 24-hour hotline to provide referrals for mental health counseling in Spanish and English. "The most important thing is to encourage the victims to talk about their experience," said Barbara Cienfuegos, Emergency Support Coordinator for the Mental Health Department. "These people are experiencing normal reactions to abnormal situations."

### **Health Services Assists Red Cross**

Environmental Health Officers answered questions about private sewage systems and water well safety while public health nurses supported the Red Cross at service centers in Malibu, Calabasas and Pacific Palisades. The department's Toxics Epidemiology Program also answered questions about the fires effects on asthma, chronic lung diseases and heart conditions.

## ASSESSOR OFFERS TAX RELIEF

County Assessor Kenneth P. Hahn urged damaged property owners to contact his office for a tax exemption. While the first installment of taxes were due December 10, property owners who sustained damages were able to defer taxes if they filled out an application. The first installment will be deferred, without penalty or interest, until the Assessor has reassessed the damaged or destroyed property and the owner receives a corrected tax bill.

## Workers Hold Bake Sale For Fire Victims

Employees of the Clerk's Office at the downtown Los Angeles Criminal Court building raised \$455 from a one-day bake sale for fire victims. Sandy Montoya, Assistant Division Chief, said the money went to the American Red Cross and will be used for clothing vouchers. According to court officials, one district



A County helicopter drops water on the Altadena fire.

attorney wrote a check for \$100 and others bought goods with \$20 bills and didn't want any change back. The sale was so successful, Montoya said, that the employees feared they would run out of merchandise.

## LOOKING TO THE FUTURE: Safety Panel Formed

On a Supervisor Ed Edelman motion, the Board of Supervisors established a Wild Fire Safety Panel to study improving fire safety, including building material and construction design. The panel, slated to report back in 90 days, will offer suggestions on improving delivery of crucial water supplies and making narrow canyon streets more accessible to fire trucks. The panel's investigation could lead to even stricter codes, which already require new homes to have fire-resistant walls and roofs.

# ISD Information Technology Training Center Update

The Internal Services Department's Technology Training Center offers a variety of training-related services, including:

- More than 100 instructor-led classes in personal computing, telecommunications, information systems and personal skills
- NOVELL product training
- Self-study training in computer-based, audio and video courses
- An information technology library and self-study learning center with more than 350 free courses
- Free seminars and customized courses

For more information, contact your departmental training coordinator or call the ITTC voice response line at 310-940-3802.



## Senior Graduation

**DCSCS program director Gil Vargas, center, congratulates the first senior citizen class to graduate from a federal/state funded training program. The students tackled WordPerfect and other computer skills as well as basic English. The four-month program helps eligible persons 55 and over improve work skills and offers on-the-job training with private and public sector organizations. For more information, call 213-738-2631.**

## 999 Reach Out



**Central Jail deputies Lena Marino, second from left, and Leonard Lindenmeyer, receive congratulations from Sheriff Sherman Block for raising \$2,800 for 999 For Kids. The program, in its seventh year, raises money to buy goods for severely handicapped children. This year's efforts brought in more than \$20,000 to help 400 children assigned to the Department of Children's Services Medical Placement Unit. Children's Services Director Peter Digre, right, and 1993 Poster Child Nilofar also took part in the recent ceremony.**

## Departments Honored

*(continued from page 1)*

Under the program, an automated system lets Court officials receive police information on delinquent-prone children and alerts judicial officers, attorneys and court staff if a minor has a case pending in another jurisdiction. The program reduces continuances and improves information sharing between agencies.

Other award winners included:

- the Chief Administrative Office's Antelope Valley Telebusiness Center, a public-private partnership that reduces commuter traffic and improves air quality by providing an alternate work location for long distance commuters;
- the Probation Department's Electronic Monitoring Service, which provides electronic monitoring/home detention of low-risk adult offenders, saving \$1.9 million in annual jail costs and bringing \$312,000 a year in new revenue to the department.



## FIRE SAFETY TIPS

# Christmas Tree Precautions

No single item presents more fire danger in our homes than a dry Christmas tree. Even one treated with flame retardant can be consumed by fire in seconds if you don't keep it fresh. A few tips from the County Fire Department can lead the way to a safe Christmas tree:

### ▲ MAKE A FRESH CUT

Make a fresh cut at the base to open up the vein clogged by the sap. The cut surface should be creamy white. Otherwise, the tree will be unable to absorb any water. You may have to drill a hole in the trunk to accommodate the pin type stands. After the cut is made and the hole drilled, put the tree in water immediately so as not to allow the sap to reseal the trunk.

### ▲ WATER DAILY

An average tree may consume between a quart and a gallon of water daily. If the water level drops below the cut end of the trunk, a seal will form and no more water will be absorbed. So don't forget to add water daily. This includes flame retardant trees, too.

### ▲ USE MINI-LIGHTS

Mini-lights produce much less heat and reduce the drying effect upon the tree. Always check the light set for frayed wires, cracked insulation or broken plugs before use. Do not attempt to repair a worn light set. Throw it away and buy a new set. Always turn off tree lights when leaving the house or going to bed.

### ▲ REMOVE THE TREE PROMPTLY

After Christmas, before the tree dries, remove it from the house for pick-up by your disposal service or your local chipping and compost program.



## Skeletons in Closet

*(continued from page 1)*

The first-of-its kind marketing program has so far grossed more than \$60,000. The money helps support the Youthful Drunk Driving Visitation Program, which lets young people visit the Coroner's facility as a term of probation and strives to show the tragedies of driving under the influence of alcohol and drugs.

Employees interested in purchasing the Coroner collector items can call Marilyn Lewis at 213-343-0786.



COFFEE, TEA OR BONES? GIFTS RAISE MONEY FOR THE YOUTHFUL DRUNK DRIVING VISITATION PROGRAM.



**Happy Holidays!**  
**Drive Safely.**



## In the Top 10

*Supervisor Deane Dana congratulates Armando Lopez, Jr., former Rancho Los Amigos Medical Center Administrator, for ranking sixth in the nation by U.S. News and World Report for rehabilitation services. The event occurred during September's National Rehabilitation Week. Since then, Lopez has been promoted to Acting Assistant Director of Health Services.*

## County DIGEST

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