

Santa Monica Daily Press

A newspaper with issues

DAILY LOTTERY

SUPER LOTTO

19 26 33 38 46
Meganumber: 1
Jackpot: \$16 Million

FANTASY 5

2 14 15 22 33

DAILY 3

Daytime: 8 4 6
Evening: 2 7 1

DAILY DERBY

1st: 02 Lucky Star
2nd: 10 Solid Gold
3rd: 11 Money Bags

RACE TIME: 1:43.02

NEWS OF THE WEIRD
BY CHUCK SHEPARD

Latest From the Class-Action Lawyers' Money Tree: (1) The six lawyers who helped 83 Wal-Mart workers win about \$2,500 each (for being improperly denied overtime pay) asked the Portland, Ore., judge in December for fees totaling \$2.57 million, about 12 times the clients' total winnings (citing the difficult work, Wal-Mart's contentiousness and the case's implications beyond their 83 clients). (2) And when phone company customers won \$25 refunds in a September class-action settlement with Ameritech in Madison County, Ill., lawyers got \$1.9 million in legal fees; a local watchdog group said (based on experience) only about 10 percent of eligible customers would bother to apply for refunds, meaning that lawyers' fees would ultimately account for about 60 percent of the amount Ameritech pays out.

TODAY IN HISTORY

In 1916, Mexican raiders led by Pancho Villa attacked Columbus, N.M., killing more than a dozen people.

In 1977, about a dozen armed Hanafi Muslims invaded three buildings in Washington, D.C., killing one person and taking more than 130 hostages. The siege ended two days later.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"Conscience is the perfect interpreter of life."

KARL BARTH
SWISS THEOLOGIAN (1886-1966)

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John Wood/Daily Press

With his 7-year-old daughter Sophia looking on, Dennis Rosa, 26, a city worker, lights a candle Tuesday evening at a makeshift memorial for Hector Bonilla and Jonathan Hernandez, who were gunned down at a weekend birthday party in Sunset Park. A teary-eyed Rosa said of his friend and former co-worker Bonilla, "Wrong place, wrong time ... He didn't deserve to die like that."

Coroner: Victims shot multiple times

BY JOHN WOOD

Daily Press Staff Writer

Initial coroner reports released Tuesday indicate that both Santa Monica men killed during a crowded weekend birthday party were struck by multiple bullets.

Hector Bonilla, 25, was shot multiple times in his torso and head, while Jonathan Hernandez, 19, suffered more extensive wounds to his torso, head and buttocks, according to David Campbell, a spokesman for the Los Angeles County Department of Coroner.

The exact number of bullets each of the victims were hit by will not be known until after autopsies are completed and released to the public. One autopsy was per-

formed Tuesday and the second was scheduled for this morning, Campbell said.

Guests at the Sunset Park birthday party said as many as 14 shots were fired by two or three gang members who opened fire on Hernandez, and later pointed their barrels at Bonilla, a long-time friend of Hernandez' who attempted to intervene.

A third victim threw a chair at the gunmen and suffered a gunshot to the leg, but was not killed, according to eyewitnesses. The incident took place in front of 50 to 70 people inside the Moose Lodge, a rented venue at Ocean Park Boulevard and 16th Street.

The gunmen have not been

See SHOOTINGS, page 6

Violence workshop postponed in light of weekend killings

BY RYAN HYATT

Daily Press Staff Writer

CITY HALL — A gang violence workshop set for Saturday will be postponed until April, out of respect for the families of two Santa Monica residents who were shot to death last weekend.

The workshop, designed as an action planning follow-up to the Feb. 26 event that drew 400 members of the community, is being rescheduled for between 9 a.m. and noon Saturday, April 9, at John Adams Middle School, according to a city press release.

"I have asked the city of Santa Monica to reschedule the

See POSTPONED, page 6

SM renters forced to take a hike

BY CORTNEY FIELDING

Special to the Daily Press

CITY HALL — Rents in Santa Monica have increased by more than 50 percent over the last six years, squeezing many lower- and middle-income renters out of the market, a recent City Hall study shows.

The most drastic price hikes occurred in the city's three-bedroom units, where rents have risen more than 83 percent since landlords were granted permission to rent their properties at market rate in 1999. The units now rent for an average of \$2,150 per month.

While the going rate for studio apartments is 49 percent higher than it was in 1999 — close to \$1,000 per month — one-bedroom apartments currently average more than \$1,200, 76 percent higher than in previous years, according to the study. Two-bedroom apartments jumped 82 percent, now averaging \$1,625 a month.

It takes between an extra \$17,000 and \$36,000 in annual income to afford the new rents, according to the study. And as a result of the high market rates, it keeps many lower- and middle-income families from renting in Santa Monica, said Rent Control spokeswoman Tracy Condon, who works in City Hall.

"They are definitely not moving in," she said.

The study, conducted by Condon and her staff, included a full inventory of all rental properties. The report was commissioned by City Hall's rent control division to detail the impact the state-wide market rate vacancy decontrol act — known as Costa-Hawkins — has had on the city since its inception in 1999.

Previous regulation had required landlords in Santa Monica with buildings built before 1979 to keep their rent prices fixed.

Since Costa-Hawkins passed,

See RENTS, page 5

Jacquie Banks

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ARE YOU READY?

The Santa Monica Council of the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), along with its partners Chase Home Finance and Freddie Mac is hosting a Homeownership Seminar aimed at understanding the components involved in homeownership such as credit, personal financial management, and the mortgage process.

Date: Saturday March 12, 2005
Time: 9:00 AM - 12 PM
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Yoga or a back rub, Libra

Santa Monica Daily Press

JACQUELINE BIGAR'S STARS The stars show the kind of day you'll have:
★★★★-Dynamic ★★★★★-Positive ★★★-Average ★★-So-so ★-Difficult

ARIES (March 21-April 19)
★★ A thought you have as you wake up might be more important than you realize. You might be stunned by the idea. Write it down before you forget this concept. Much goes on behind the scenes. If you are in an amorous phase, romance will bubble forth. Tonight: Enjoy your privacy.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)
★★★★★ Surprises that head your way will play out in your favor if you remain flexible. A meeting could develop into a networking event. You will be delighted. A friend could play a role in what happens. Tonight: Decide what would please you.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20)
★★★★ All eyes remain on you — still. Clearly, an unstable situation becomes a key factor in planning your day. Don't react; flow. The end result could be very positive. You receive praise, compliments and acknowledgment. Tonight: Out late.

CANCER (June 21-July 22)
★★★★★ News heads in your direction that might be almost unbelievable. Check facts and information. You will be most content if you lie back and watch what happens. Travel, foreigners, education and law are favored. Tonight: Choose something unique.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)
★★★★★ Someone you counted on could do the unexpected. If you have a sixth sense about a lottery ticket, go for it, especially if the results come in tonight. Let associates have their way. Make a point of giving others long-deserved compliments. Tonight: Dinner with a special friend.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)
★★★ You have a strong reaction to others this morning. Whether you are justified or not, you still experience your feelings. Give yourself time. Listen to a special friend with an understanding perspective. Tonight: Just don't stay home.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)
★★ Take your time adjusting to a stressful situation that could force you to re-organize your day. Still, don't forget that special person who makes a difference in your life. Let yourself wind down and plan a relaxing finale this afternoon. Tonight: Yoga or a back rub — whatever relaxes you.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)
★★★★★ Use the unexpected to trigger your imagination. Nothing needs to be a problem. Think of it as an opportunity to find solutions. Others admire your resilience and creativity. Let someone know you care. Tonight: Have fun.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)
★★★ Your family and domestic life give you a morning jolt. Though you might not be 100 percent content, on the positive side, you are wide awake and ready to go. Flow, and you'll discover that everything works out. Tonight: Buy flowers or a plant on your way home.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)
★★★★★ A call or event might have you shaking your head this morning. You could choose to be upset, or let it go. Give others the benefit of the doubt. Make an important call you have been putting off. Tonight: Catch up on another's news.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)
★★★ You pull the wild card financially. In the mood you are in, play it conservatively and don't take a risk that you cannot afford. Do buy a card or token of affection for a loved one. Of course, you might indulge yourself, too. Tonight: Treat someone as you would like to be treated.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)
★★★★★ You continue to surprise others with your actions. You could be changing rapidly — mentally and emotionally. Be generous with those around you. Make an extra effort toward a loved one or a friend you have ignored. Tonight: Smile away.

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LOCAL



COMMUNITY BRIEFS

A wild and wooly auction and dinner

By Daily Press staff

Cast out into the world of fly fishing next week to help fundraise for a conservation cause.

Wilderness Fly Fishers, a Westside nonprofit club, will host its annual Conservation Super Auction on Tuesday, March 15.

A silent auction beginning at 5:30 p.m. will be followed by dinner and a live auction at 7:30 p.m. Among the offerings are a variety of fishing trips. Many of the trips include guide, meals and lodging to not only the most renowned fly waters in California and the West, but also trips to some of the most sought after trout and salmon streams in the world — from Alaska to Argentina and from Montana to Oregon.

Additionally, there is a variety of fly fishing equipment and clothing donated which will be auctioned, as well as dinners to LA restaurants.

Founded in Santa Monica in 1965, Wilderness Fly Fishers has a long history of supporting conservation causes, including local stream clean-ups, restoration of southern steelhead runs and, most notably, "Trout in the Classroom." The latter is a program which, with the participation of wilderness members, teaches area elementary students both ecology and biology by having them raise trout from eggs to release in the wild.

Through Trout In The Classroom, Wilderness Fly Fishers has introduced more than 6,000 youngsters to the life cycle of California's native trout and the sparkling streams in which they live.

The auction will be held at the Olympic Collection, located at Sawtelle and Olympic boulevards.

The auction is open to the public. Dinner is optional. For information and reservations, call (310) 280-3459. Or visit www.wildernessflyfishers.org.

'Weapons of Mass Deception' plays locally

By Daily Press staff

The media was too soft on President Bush when he launched into the Iraq War. So says a film that will be featured at Santa Monica College next week. SMC will present the documentary "WMD: Weapons of Mass Deception," which casts a sharp eye at media coverage of the Iraq War. The viewing will be followed by an audience discussion with its filmmaker, Danny Schechter.

Billed as a "Media Literacy Dialogue," the screening and discussion will be held at 6 p.m. Friday, March 18 in room 214 of the SMC Art Complex, 1900 Pico Blvd. The event is free, as is parking. Seating is limited and is on a first-arrival basis.

Schechter's 98-minute documentary investigates and examines the U.S. government's influence over the media networks' coverage of the Iraq War. Schechter embedded himself in front of several televisions before and during the war to examine whether the networks kept the airwaves fair and balanced. The film reveals how the war Americans saw and read about is an entirely different one than that seen by the rest of the world.

The film has already has prompted executives at ABC, CBS and NBC to acknowledge publicly that they should have more aggressively questioned the Bush administration's grounds for invading Iraq.

Frequently comparing "WMD" to Michael Moore's "Fahrenheit 9/11," critics throughout the nation have praised the film. The Chicago Reader wrote that "WMD" goes beyond Moore to offer a "comprehensive and devastating critique of the TV news networks' complacency and complicity in the war in Iraq."

Schechter has had a long and distinguished career in journalism, government, political and social activism, TV and film. Among his many honors have been Nieman Fellow in Journalism at Harvard, where he also taught; Major Armstrong Awards for radio broadcast journalism; and Emmys for television news.

His writing has appeared in leading newspapers and magazines, including The Nation, Newsday, Boston Globe, Columbia Journalism Review and Village Voice.

The screening-discussion at SMC is sponsored by the SMC communication department in association with the SMC Foundation, SMC Associated Students and SMC Associates, a private organization that funds speakers and special programs at the college.

For information, call (310) 434-4588.

Imagine the possibilites of dance at SMC

By Daily Press staff

It's time to put poetry in motion this weekend at SMC.

As part of the college's year-round 75th Anniversary celebration, Santa Monica College's Synapse Dance Theater will present a program of dance featuring SMC alumni at 7 p.m. on Sunday, March 13.

The program will include modern dance, and elements of hip-hop, poetry, video, and puppetry to celebrate dramatic possibilities in dance.

A mixed-media collaboration between Synapse artistic director Linda Gold and SMC entertainment technology professor David Javelosa will explore movement-activated sounds and images on stage.

Returning to Synapse are guests Jolianne Baum, Ola Hudson, April Love Hughing, Rachel Lopez and Roberta Wolin-Manker, who also is an adjunct professor, as is guest choreographer Meri Bender.

Synapse performs regularly at SMC, throughout Southern California and the greater Southwest.

The program will be held at Highways Performance Space, 1651 18th St. Tickets are \$15 general admission and \$12 for students and seniors. Call (310) 315-1459.



SURF REPORT

Most west-facing breaks should see chest- to head-high sets today. Tuesday saw a good amount of NW ground swell along the California coast. The swell fills in more today and kicks up size on Thursday. More, minor NW is on the charts, and we have some SW on the surf radar as well.

Write us at wood@smdp.com and tell us what the surf is doing today at your local break.

Today the water is:

62°

	LOW TIDES				HIGH TIDES			
	Morning	Height	Evening	Height	Morning	Height	Evening	Height
SATURDAY	12:18	0.7	11:22	2.6	4:24	5.2	7:20	3.4
SUNDAY	N/A	N/A	1:03	1.1	5:36	5.7	7:44	3.8
MONDAY	12:25	2.0	1:43	1.4	6:34	6.1	8:10	4.2
TUESDAY	1:17	1.4	2:19	1.4	7:24	6.3	8:39	4.6
WEDNESDAY	2:04	0.9	2:52	1.2	8:11	6.3	9:08	5.0
THURSDAY	2:49	0.4	3:24	0.8	8:56	6.0	9:38	5.2
FRIDAY	3:17	0.6	3:47	1.0	9:34	5.7	9:57	5.1

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The Q Line

City Hall officials have been tapping the community for ideas on how to improve traffic in Santa Monica. Elected leaders will be pouring over a massive document in the coming year that will govern how development is dealt with for the next two decades. Part of that is how traffic should be handled.

More roundabouts, bike lanes and angled parking have been topics of conversation.

So this week, Q-Line wants to know, "What do you think will improve traffic in Santa Monica?"

Call (310) 285-8106 before Friday at 5 p.m. and we'll print your responses in the weekend edition. Please try to limit your comments to a minute or less. It might help to think first about the wording of your response.

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OPINION



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Bush's religious doctrine far from moral

Editor:

With regard to Alex Epstein's guest commentary (SMDP, March 5, page 5), I think that President Bush is definitely stepping over the line with his "new government establishment designed to help propagate religion" and that it is definitely a "violation of a Constitution that says that the government 'shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion.'" I strongly believe in separation of church and state and that no president should use "his presidency to promote religion."

It would seem clear that the fundamental "Christian" (Bush's choice of religious affiliation), thing to do would be to offer charitable services free and devoid of any religious expectations or requirement. I believe, however, that from the top down, those charitable religious groups helping the poor and needy have an agenda — which is to propagate the faith and enlist devotees. I find one of the most arrogant statements anyone can make is "God loves you." How in the world would anyone presume to speak for any "God?" It is just rhetoric aimed at recruiting converts to the faith. Get 'em when they are down and out, and most vulnerable, and pour on the faith rhetoric, is what it seems to me.

Religion, or the lack thereof, is a private matter between each individual and his/her own conscience and belief systems, and never should it be manipulated or controlled by the government. The word "theocracy" springs to mind, which is a frightening prospect to me.

One matter which I find to be completely hypocritical is President Bush's stand on abortion and stem cell research, while on the other hand he does not seem to mind bringing those embryos into life, only to send them off to war later in life to be killed or dismembered. Many of the veterans of war are psychologically scarred from their experiences, and many join the population of the homeless. Where is the morality in that?

Julia Reeves
Santa Monica

That's mighty white of them to put fluoride in our water



INCITES

BY ED SILVERSTEIN

A general launches a nuclear attack against Russia, ranting that a communist plot — water fluoridation — has left him impotent. It is here, in Stanley Kubric's film, "Dr. Strangelove," that I first hear about fluoridation and I am left with the distinct impression that all water fluoridation opponents are crazy. To be honest, many of the current opponents do little to dispel that notion. However, that doesn't mean that they're wrong.

Like most people, I was convinced that water fluoridation was completely safe. That is, until I read "The Fluoride Deception" by Christopher Bryson, an award-winning and very sane investigative journalist. Bryson, who supports his allegations with extensive research, paints a disturbing and frightening picture of the effects of fluoride in the water, air and work place.

Bryson explains that the main element of fluoride — fluorine — can cut through steel like butter, burn asbestos, etch glass and disintegrate organic material as if it were a fizzy. And for the past 50 years the Public Health Service, National Institute of Health, Institute For Dental Health and the American Dental Association have insisted that fluoride, in extremely diluted concentrations, is perfectly safe to drink and will reduce cavities. For 50 years they have been wrong.

For starters, Bryson notes that the fluoride used in tests was pharmaceutical grade without impurities. In contrast, the fluoride used in our water is scrubbed from the smokestacks of phosphate fertilizer plants and has high levels of cancer causing arsenic and lead. This alone is reason for concern, but it gets worse.

The pure fluoride was used in Newburgh, NY., the first city to receive fluoridation. The town was studied for 10 years and the results proclaimed that Newburgh's children had 65 percent fewer cavities and no negative health effects. In fact, this was not entirely true.

Neighboring Kingston, the control city in the study and which has never had fluoride, today has the exact same rate of cavities as fluoridated Newburgh. Even proponents now admit that fluoride is only responsible for a 15 percent decrease in cavities. Further, according to the Center for Disease Control, this small reduction is achieved through topical fluoride applications, with no benefit derived from ingested fluoride. But the announcement of a new genetic test developed by USC can tell with 97 percent accuracy that the exact number of cavities a child will get shows no significant impact of fluoride at all.

Research also has begun to demonstrate that fluoride is anything but benign. For instance, about 45 percent of kids drinking fluoridated water develop dental fluorosis, a mottling of the teeth. Originally dismissed as cosmetic, new information suggests that fluorosis may indicate a weakening of the tooth structure. Researchers also have noted a 50 percent increase in hip and other bone fractures, as well as higher rates of bone

and liver cancer in cities with fluoridation. One statistic mysteriously omitted from the original Newburgh study was that after five years of fluoridation, the city experienced a 50 percent increase in heart disease.

More recent studies have linked fluoride with thyroid problems, Downs Syndrome, arthritis, central nervous system disorders, breathing difficulties, premature puberty in girls and other disorders. It has also been shown that fluoride can carry aluminum into the brain, which can cause Alzheimer's lesions.

So why have we not heard more about these studies? Because scientists are frightened of having their careers and reputations destroyed.

But why would such a dangerous drug be added to our water, as it recently was here in Santa Monica?

Bryson explains that during WWII, and in the build-up to the Cold War, workers were exposed to high levels of fluoride in places such as aluminum processing plants, chemical companies, automotive factories and the atomic weapons programs. These workers had developed dozens of debilitating and even fatal diseases. Further, releases of fluoride into the air had destroyed crops, killed cattle and sickened ranchers and their families. Thousands of lawsuits were a virtual certainty.

The industries needed cover. They banded together and hired the Melon Institute to do fluoride safety studies. What they got were results that ignored, suppressed and even falsified negative findings.

One study, for example, claimed that workers at a factory had fewer cavities, but failed to mention that the workers had no teeth, probably the result of fluoride poisoning. Another, the paperwork of which was discovered by Bryson in an abandoned lab, was halted and concealed when industry scientists realized that it would prove that fluoride inhalation caused the very lung damage claimed by workers. And those skewed results were later used by government agencies — many run by ex-industry scientists — to assure the public that fluoride was perfectly safe.

But the coup de grâce was when industries got behind the then faltering effort to promote water fluoridation. To insure success, they enlisted an esteemed scientist, Dr. Harold Hodge, to act as the chief proponent for water fluoridation. Years later, Hodge would be exposed as the architect of human radiation experiments in which plutonium was injected into unsuspecting patients — many of them retarded children. The industries reasoned that if the government determined that fluoride was safe enough for our drinking water, then it would be virtually impossible for a defendant to win a lawsuit. And that is exactly what happened.

One thing is for certain. Any benefit fluoride might provide is vastly outweighed by its potential health danger. And with Santa Monica joining the ranks of cities with fluoridated water, Bryson's book should be required reading for every member of the City Council.

But don't believe me, just read your toothpaste's warning label.

(Ed Silverstein can be reached at incites@incites.net.)



LOCAL



Rental increases put squeeze on families

RENTS, from page 1

44 percent of the city's rental units have been rented at market rate, while more than half are still inhabited by their rent-controlled tenants, according to the study.

While some long-time lower- and middle-income renters living in rent-controlled units may still be able to make ends meet, increases in rent throughout the city provide a daunting challenge for those now looking to rent in Santa Monica, Condon said.

According to the report, only 12 percent of rentals in Santa Monica are affordable to low-income households, averaging \$35,700 a year or less, compared to 80 percent in 1999.

Rental options for middle-income families also have shrunk. Six years ago, a family with a \$55,000 annual income — the average for a family of four in Los Angeles County — could afford a three-bedroom unit in Santa Monica with money to spare. The same family in 2005 would only be able to afford a studio apartment without taking on a financial burden.

While the statistics are discouraging, they are not atypical in Los Angeles County, said Raphael Bostic, director of USC's real estate development program, who studies rent control in the state. As demand for housing continues to increase throughout the county, so do rent prices.

As a result, some lower- and middle-income families move to less expensive cities, while others take on bigger financial burdens, Bostic said.

Some bring in more renters into the apartment in order to stay in more expensive areas. According to Condon, there is anecdotal evidence in Santa Monica that occupants are sharing apartments, oftentimes doubling and tripling up in order to pay the rent.

While rents are on the rise, waiting lists for subsidized housing in Santa Monica have stalled out, said Peter Mezza, housing administrator for city Section 8 housing. Section 8 is a federal government-funded program that provides affordable housing to residents through the use of housing vouchers. The waiting list is closed and "the realities of funding means no vouchers in the foreseeable future," Mezza said.

At affordable housing provider Community Corp. of Santa Monica, executive director Joan Ling said very few new applicants this year will get one of her organization's units. Waiting lists are too long to accommodate a fraction of the city's affordable housing, and have been

for years.

When presented with the study's findings at last week's Rent Control Board meeting, members said they worried about gentrification becoming a side effect of increased rents.

"We are in grave danger of losing our eclectic and inclusionary characteristics," if the trend continues, said board chairman Alan Toy.

It's almost certain that minority populations and low-income families leave the city as rents increase, said Bostic.

While the percentage of blacks and Latinos in Santa Monica did decline slightly between the 1990 and 2000 censuses, no reasons were attributed to the drop.

"Santa Monica was already 'lily-white' before Costa-Hawkins," said Rosario Perry, an attorney who represents Action Apartment Association, and also a landlords' rights advocate.

"What they don't tell you is that owners did not rent to poor people," when rents were regulated, he said, because only wealthy tenants could afford to fix what he said owners did not have the money for without collecting market rates.

"Why would anyone rent to a poor person when someone else is willing to redo the floors and pay for new paint?" Perry asked rhetorically.

Perry filed a lawsuit against the city on behalf of a group of Santa Monica landlords in federal court in January calling for the elimination of rent control. The group called the practice unconstitutional because it "regulates land use, but fails to substantially advance a legitimate municipal interest."

The lawsuit was not designed to raise the rent on poor tenants, only wealthy ones, Perry said, adding a judge could create some sort of scale where income would be weighed against the right to rent-control protection.

City Hall has filed a motion with the court to have the case thrown out, but the court has not yet ruled on the issue.

Perry also has suggested setting one-third of a building's units aside for "truly low income" renters, while eliminating rent control for everyone else.

The Rent Control Board plans to send the results of the study to Sacramento. While not intended to go to the state, Toy said he wanted Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger and every state senator to get a look at the findings.

"Hopefully, the state legislature will see the effects and have some compassion," said board member Jeffrey Sklar.

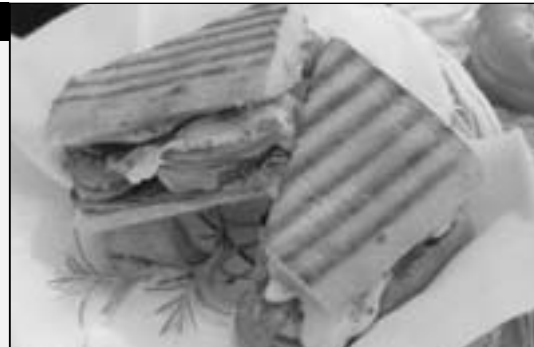
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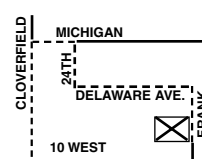
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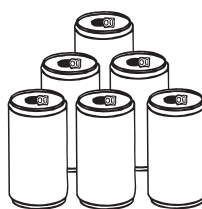
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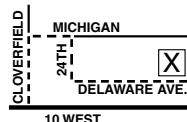
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LOCAL

Funeral arrangements are still being planned

SHOOTINGS, from page 1

caught.

Police on Tuesday said the investigation into the double homicide was ongoing, but declined to say whether the incident was gang related. Campbell said the initial coroner reports referred to the gunmen and the victims as belonging to rival gangs. Still, no weapons were found on Hernandez or Bonilla.

Bonilla had three young children. Hernandez, a recent high school graduate, hoped to become a psychologist for kids with disabilities.

"These young men did not have a gun. They weren't drawing on anybody. They weren't shooting anybody when they were killed," said Oscar de la Torre, head of the Pico Youth & Family Center, a Santa Monica nonprofit group dedicated to at-risk youths.

Asked if the victims belonged to a gang, de la Torre declined to comment, but offered an analogy. He said if someone had told him they were an alcoholic and went to Alcoholics Anonymous meetings, and had stayed sober, but then was involved in a car accident, it would be wrong for him to come out and say publicly that the person was a recovering alcoholic.

"For anybody to say they were gang members or former gang members, that's not important right now," de la Torre added. "That's trivializing."

More important, de la Torre said, will be to support the victims' families. Bonilla left behind many friends and relatives, including his long-time girlfriend Krizna Ayala and their children: Hector Jr., 7; Benjamin, 2; and Eli, 1. Hernandez is survived by a grieving mother, Natalie

"Bottom line is it's about hope."

OSCAR DE LA TORRE
Head of Pico youth center

Preciado, and three half-siblings, one of whom is autistic and relied on Hernandez daily for help.

Stemming gang violence, de la Torre said, will require not just imprisoning gang members but offering early intervention and ongoing support for youths.

"We try to understand why young people are involved in a lifestyle," de la Torre said. "Gang culture is a way to survive. We need to think about that as a community ... Bottom line is it's about hope. Once you lose hope, you can be violent. When you have hope and you believe in your future, you're less likely to be violent, period — gang member or not gang member."

City officials announced Tuesday the second of two workshops aimed at ending gang violence in Santa Monica would be postponed until April 9 out of respect to the victims' families. The meeting, co-hosted by City Hall and State Sen. Sheila Kuehl, will be held at John Adams Middle School, directly across the street from where the homicides took place.

Funeral plans for the two men had not been finalized. The Pico Neighborhood Association, a neighborhood group, has set up a fund to help raise money for the burials. A group spokesperson asked that checks be made out to the PNA, with "Victims of Violence" noted in the memo section, and sent to 1705 Pico Blvd., No. 125, Santa Monica, CA., 90404.

Workshop postponed after pair of weekend homicides

POSTPONED, from page 1

gang violence community action planning meeting," said Sen. Sheila Kuehl, whose office is co-sponsoring the series with City Hall. "I strongly feel that the community needs some time to grieve the loss of two of its young members, and to help the families that the two men left behind."

Authorities on Monday identified two Santa Monicans gunned down at a weekend birthday party as 25-year-old Hector Bonilla and 19-year-old Jonathan Hernandez. Both were fatally shot Saturday night before a crowd of 50 to 70 people inside the Moose Lodge at 16th Street and Ocean Park Boulevard, witnesses said. The gunmen escaped.

"Knowing that many people who want to be involved in the workshop will understandably need to turn their attention elsewhere, including funeral preparations and family support in the coming days and weeks, the City Council, staff

and our many community partners agree with Sen. Kuehl that rescheduling is the best course," said City Manager Susan McCarthy. "We share the Senator's optimism for continuing community commitment to this effort and expect a large attendance."

Information about the April 9 workshop is available online at StopGangViolence.smgov.net, along with information as to what took place at the Feb. 26 workshop.

Pico Youth & Family Center Executive Director Oscar de la Torre said he thinks it's a good idea to postpone the workshop.

"It is our way, as a city, to show respect for those who have been affected (by the homicide)," de la Torre said. "It will give us an opportunity to reflect."

Donations to the families of Bonilla and Hernandez are being accepted by the Pico Neighborhood Association. See related story for details.

INTERESTED IN YOUR DAILY FORECAST?
CHECK OUT THE HOROSCOPES ON PAGE 2!

STATE



Schwarzenegger looks to cut into poor's care

BY JIM WASSERMAN

Associated Press Writer

SACRAMENTO, — For all the deadly foes he vanquished on the silver screen, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger may be finally meeting his match — the growing medical bills of poor people.

In his rookie year, Schwarzenegger tried simply to slash the state's costs by \$900 million, then backed down after roars of protest. Now he's back with a new attack, one of many experiments proposed by U.S. governors to cut states' soaring medical costs. Schwarzenegger would limit a poor Californian's dental work to \$1,000 a year, steer nearly 1 million more people into managed care networks and make families pay up to \$27 a month in premiums for their government-funded medical help.

But advocates for 6.6 million low-income, disabled and elderly California residents are again trying to slow Schwarzenegger as he maneuvers the plan and its projected first-year \$12 million in savings through the Legislature.

While Schwarzenegger has to cope with the problems of the nation's most populous state, he's not alone among governors in fighting the spiraling growth in costs for Medicaid, the \$329 billion federal-state program that pays for health care for 53 million low-income Americans. In just about all the 50 states, Medicaid costs are rising rapidly and squeezing governments, poor people, doctors, hospitals and other health care providers.

California's annual medical bills for the poor have grown by \$4.5 billion since 1999, and now rival the yearly K-12 education budget. Nationally, such medical costs have already passed education inside all combined state budgets, state officials report. Worse, as states have survived the worst of their financial problems, President Bush has complicated their struggle by proposing a \$40 billion or more 10-year cut in Medicaid. Governors meeting last week in Washington told Bush their cash-strapped states can't handle such cuts without hurting their poorest residents.

The combination of state and federal budget woes "puts the Medicaid program in a very vulnerable position," threatening states, beneficiaries and providers, said Robin Rudowitz, senior associate with the Washington D.C.-based Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured.

Dozens of states are trying to balance preserving the program with stopping its rapid growth. Rising Medicaid costs — up 40 percent in the last five years because of job layoffs and higher medical charges with no end in sight — are forcing draconian choices. Governors pressed Bush for more flexibility from their federal partners for cost-curbing experiments, an argument the administration said it is considering.

"At the state level, governors are being forced to choose between health care and education," said Raymond C. Sheppach, executive director of the National Governors Association.

Democratic Tennessee Gov. Phil Bredesen is trying to cut 323,000 people from his state's Medicaid system known as TennCare, while in Connecticut, 13,000 low-income working parents are scheduled to lose Medicaid coverage this spring. More states are demanding co-payments from users, curbing costs of prescription drugs or simply reducing benefits. In an extreme example, a Colorado lawmaker has proposed that his state seize estates of Medicaid patients after they die to recoup the growing cost to Colorado taxpayers.

Schwarzenegger's plans for slowing growth in California's \$34 billion version of Medicaid — called Medi-Cal — accompany a goal to cut welfare grants by 6.5 percent and eliminate automatic cost-of-living hikes in welfare benefits. The ambition, said Sandra Shewry, Schwarzenegger's director of health services, is to design a new delivery system that gradually saves \$254 million over five years rather than simply "cutting the Medi-Cal program."

But he's also proposing cuts.

In January, Schwarzenegger proposed a \$111.7 billion budget that would cap dental benefits at \$1,000 a year. Many states already cap such spending, as do private sector health plans. Of California's 3 million Medi-Cal dental patients, administration officials said, fewer than 100,000 had dental bills last year higher than \$1,000.

The budget also proposed that at least 550,000 Medi-Cal patients with incomes above the poverty level begin paying monthly premiums for their care — \$10 a month

for adults, \$4 monthly per child or a \$27 family maximum. "We believe it's a reasonable and fair request to make that families contribute a very modest amount to the cost of their coverage," Shewry said.

But advocates for the poor, including many among the Legislature's Democratic majority, want the Republican administration to back off, focus spending cuts elsewhere and hike taxes to trim the state's red ink.

Schwarzenegger said he won't raise taxes.

Anthony Wright, president of Health Access, a coalition of groups which monitor health care issues in California, cited administration estimates that 100,000 people among the 550,000 targeted for monthly premiums will simply "fall off the program," while another 100,000 people would have to pay for major, necessary dental work out of their own pockets.

"The real savings comes from people falling off the program," Wright said.

Health care providers that serve Medi-Cal patients are also wary of the changes.

California already has one of the nation's lowest reimbursement rates, which is why many doctors and dentists don't take Medi-Cal patients and many hospitals com-

plain about wholesale financial losses from the program.

"Last year we lost \$20 million over and above what we were paid for Medi-Cal," said John G. Taylor, director of the chief executive office at Fresno's nonprofit Community Medical Centers.

The system, which runs three hospitals with more than 700 beds, lost \$30 million more on Medicare reimbursement shortfalls and made much of it up through charges to insurance-carrying for-profit patients and donations, Taylor said. The state also funnels \$2 billion a year in Medi-Cal funds to 24 "safety net" hospital systems to help make up such losses.

As California ponders its options, many states have already acted, according to a study by the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation. This year, 47 states trimmed or froze payments to health care providers, while 15 tightened eligibility requirements, nine instituted co-payments and nine cut benefits. Another 14 expanded managed care networks.

One state, however, is considering expanding its Medicaid program. Kansas Gov. Kathleen Sebelius, a Democrat, is proposing a \$50 million expansion of health care to 100,000 uninsured residents by hiking cigarette taxes by 50 cents a pack.



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STATE

Jury indicts three for taking too much credit

BY RACHEL KONRAD

AP Business Writer

SAN JOSE — A federal grand jury indicted three people this week on conspiracy charges in what appears to be one of the largest counterfeit credit card schemes in North America.

The United States Attorney's Office said the suspects, who live in California and British Columbia, allegedly stole credit card numbers and used those accounts to ring up millions of dollars in fraudulent purchases in San Francisco, New York, Philadelphia, Seattle, Calgary and Vancouver between 1998 and 2001.

Sun Keung Lee, 44, of Vancouver, British Columbia; Eva Yok Yau Eng, 54, of Lafayette, Calif.; and Sandy Ru Zhong, 41, of San Lorenzo, Calif., were charged with conspiring to produce, use, and traffic in counterfeit access devices, according to the U.S. Attorney's Office.

Zhong was released on \$500,000 bond, and Eng was released on \$150,000 bond. Federal prosecutors say Lee, who remains a fugitive, is leader of the scheme, which may date as far back as 1992.

Each suspect faces up to five years imprisonment, three years of supervised release, \$250,000 in fines, and reimbursement of stolen funds to victimized banks

and lenders.

The suspects could not immediately be reached for comment Monday afternoon.

Lee, Eng and Zhong's run-ins with investigators began in December 1998, when police in Oakland, Calif., entered Zhong's apartment after an unknown assailant shot and injured Lee.

Inside, officers found computers, printers, a magnetic strip reader, sheets of paper with allegedly misappropriated credit card account data, 24 unembossed Visa and MasterCard credit cards, and a device used to cut plastic cards.

Many of the credit cards were obviously fakes; they didn't have holograms or tamper-resistant signature panels on the back, and the printing was muddy, according to the criminal complaint. The lists of account numbers included stolen accounts from American Express, CitiBank, Wells Fargo, Capitol One Bank, and the Portland (Ore.) Teachers Credit Union.

Eventually, the Oakland police were joined in the investigation by members of the Secret Service, Federal Bureau of Investigation and the United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and they got a federal search warrant. In 1999, they found at least 2,031 more Visa, MasterCard, American Express and Discover account numbers on computers that belonged

to the suspects.

In January 2001, Canadian investigators raided a counterfeit credit manufacturing plant in Vancouver that prosecutors said was tied to Lee and Zhong. In that raid, agents with the Organized Crime Agency of British Columbia and Canada Customs discovered thousands of counterfeit credit cards and more stolen account numbers.

Like most counterfeit credit card scams, the newest scheme most likely involved numerous people, prosecutors said. Several other Canadian suspects were involved but not named in the indictment in the U.S. District court in San Francisco, according to the complaint.

The suspects most likely used "skimmers" — little magnetic devices that record thousands of credit card numbers. They deliver the skimmers to middlemen, who hand over the numbers to a counterfeit card manufacturer, who sells the finished cards to other middlemen. Then "shoppers" use the cards to make fraudulent purchases at retailers or e-commerce sites, or make bank withdrawals.

"Illegal credit card schemes undermine the integrity of our financial and banking institutions," U.S. Attorney Kevin V. Ryan said in a statement. "Consumers have the right to expect that their credit card accounts are safe and will not be compromised by individuals who develop illegal schemes for their own financial gain."

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Fish and Wildlife opt against looking out for little guys

BY DON THOMPSON

Associated Press Writer

SACRAMENTO — More than 136,000 acres of unique seasonal pools need no federal critical habitat designation because they already are protected by their state, federal or tribal owners, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service decided Tuesday.

The decision affirms the agency's earlier ruling, which was challenged in a January 2004 lawsuit by the Butte Environmental Council. A federal judge on Oct. 28 ordered the agency to reconsider its decision.

The agency has again concluded a critical habitat designation would be redundant to protect the four species of freshwater shrimp and 11 plants that survive only in shallow seasonal pools across much of California and southern Oregon.

"We don't see much benefit from critical habitat. We'd much rather have a commitment from the property owner to protect the species," said agency spokesman Al Donner.

While farmers and developers have fought critical habitat designation for fear it will affect their activities, that is not an issue in Tuesday's decision.

The agency ruled the excluded areas are protected because 42,914 acres are in national wildlife refuges or by a fish hatchery; 70,204 acres are on military bases; 644 acres are tribal land; 12,373 acres are in state wildlife areas or ecological reserves; and 10,224 acres are covered by habitat conservation plans.

Butte Environmental Council Executive Director Barbara Vlamis countered that state, federal and tribal owners rarely act to help species recover, and cited research that a critical habitat designation is at least twice as likely to result in a population increase for protected species.

An Endangered Species Act lawsuit by the environmental organization in 2000 forced the wildlife agency to designate critical habitat for the vernal pool species.

The agency first proposed to include the 136,358 acres in 2002, but excluded them in its 2003 decision because it said the existing protections were enough.

A separate decision excluded additional land in five counties on the reasoning that the financial cost outweighed the benefits. That decision also was challenged in court, prompting a reevaluation that is expected this spring, Donner said.

The agency last year designated 740,000 acres as critical habitat for the seasonal ponds and the creatures that dwell there.

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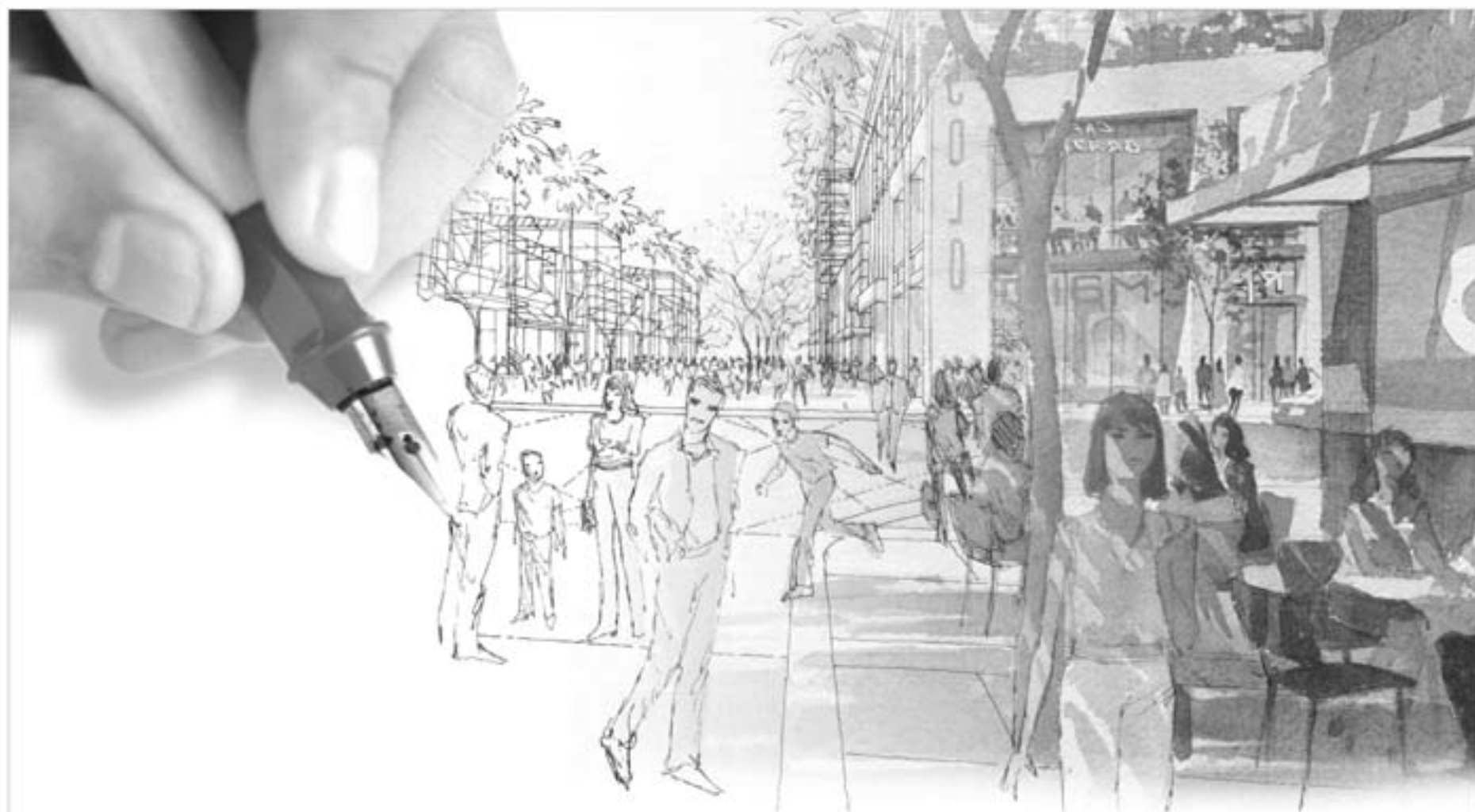
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The City Council reviewed the initial plan in January 2005 and directed City Staff to guide a process in partnership with The Macerich Company, to seek broad community input toward preparation of a new revitalization plan.

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March 13, 2005	2 pm	Santa Monica Place (Fourth Street entrance) Public parking at adjacent parking structures Big Blue Bus: Lines 1 - 10
March 14, 2005	6 pm	Grant Elementary School 2368 Pearl Street Big Blue Bus: Line 8
March 17, 2005	6 pm	Franklin Elementary School Franklin Elementary School 2400 Montana Avenue Big Blue Bus: Line 3
March 21, 2005	6 pm	John Adams Middle School 2425 16th Street Big Blue Bus: Lines 8 and 11



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BUYING AND SELLING
BY THOMAS KHAMMAR & BRENT PARSONS

The number of available homes for sale has been declining in Santa Monica. With the availability scarce, you might have to look harder than before to find the home of your dreams. To ensure that you find the home that is right for you, a real estate agent is more important than ever.

Real estate agents' resources reach further than their office. The good ones have industry contacts that may share upcoming homes for sale before they hit the multiple listing service, which is known as the "MLS." Agents also can provide you with search tools so that you have the opportunity to search homes for sale databases, such as the MLS.

As a buyer, you also want to consider the agent's expertise in the neighborhood that you are looking to relocate in, as well as the home search capabilities that they offer to you, and their dedication and resources to commit to you.

Their visibility in the neighborhood can bring new listings to them every day and they may be able to offer these to you before they open them up to the public. Their dedication and commitment to find you the home that you are looking for is a necessity. It takes more time to

As a buyer, you also want to consider the agent's expertise in the neighborhood that you are looking to relocate in, as well as the home search capabilities that they offer to you, and their dedication and resources to commit to you.

buy a home than to sell one.

To buy a home, there is a larger time commitment. Unless you are lucky, you will have to view more than one home before you find the right one. To get to the point where you want to view one home, you have to sift through several detailed property listing sheets. For the agent to present you several possible detailed listing sheets, the agent has to look through hundreds of homes for sale. So, make sure that the agent you select has the resources and time to do this background work. If they don't, they might not find you the right home.

As a seller, some of the things that you may wish to consider when hiring a real estate professional are his Web site, his client data base, the office market share, his expertise in your neighborhood, his marketing practices, the number of open houses that he will hold and the broker previews.

All of these things are important because they are going to contribute to the timely and profitable sale of

your home. An agent with a large office can share the details of your home's listing at his staff meetings. An agent with a large database of clients may have buyers already lined up that are seeking the qualities that you have in your home. An agent with expertise and visibility in your neighborhood is going to attract buyers that are interested in your neighborhood. The Web site is important because more buyers are searching for homes on the web. If you can have your home on their Web site, you will have visibility to more buyers.

There is a lot to contemplate before you sign an agent agreement. Make sure that the one you select is the one that will meet you needs.

(To contact ThePOWERHOUSE-Team, call Brent or Thomas at (310) 943-7656 or e-mail to thomas1@georgechungrealtors.com or brent1@georgechungrealtors.com. Or visit www.thepowerhouseteam.net.)

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Sold Santa Monica 02/25/2005	523 PACIFIC ST SqFt: 2,000 Lot Size: 3,999	SANTA MONICA 90405 List Price: \$1,189,000 Sold Price: \$1,335,000	Bed: 3 Bath: 2.00
Sold Santa Monica 03/01/2005	340 18TH ST SqFt: 4,937 Lot Size: 8,940	SANTA MONICA 90402 List Price: \$3,500,000 Sold Price: \$3,475,000	Bed: 6\ Bath: 3.50
Sold Santa Monica 03/03/2005	254 19TH ST SqFt: N/A Lot Size: 8,940	SANTA MONICA 90402 List Price: \$3,195,000 Sold Price: \$3,410,000	Bed: 4 Bath: 3.50
Sold Santa Monica 03/03/2005	231 20TH ST SqFt: 2,071 Lot Size: 8,940	SANTA MONICA 90402 List Price: \$1,995,000 Sold Price: \$1,995,000	Bed: 3 Bath: 2.00
Sold Santa Monica 03/01/2005	824 STANFORD ST SqFt: 1,902 Lot Size: 7,998	SANTA MONICA 90403 List Price: \$1,695,000 Sold Price: \$1,652,000	Bed: 4 Bath: 2.00
Sold Santa Monica 02/24/2005	214 15TH ST SqFt: 2,000 Lot Size: 7,500	SANTA MONICA 90402 List Price: \$2,099,000 Sold Price: \$2,115,000	Bed: 3 Bath: 2.00
Sold Santa Monica 02/23/2005	2626 HIGHLAND AVE SqFt: N/A Lot Size: 3,977	SANTA MONICA 90405 List Price: \$1,390,000 Sold Price: \$1,360,000	Bed: 3 Bath: 2.00
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Sold Santa Monica 02/27/2005	1440 23RD ST #202 SqFt: 659 HOD: \$225	SANTA MONICA 90404 List Price: \$375,000 Sold Price: \$365,000	Bed: 1 Bath: 1.00
Sold Santa Monica 02/25/2005	3108 BROADWAY SqFt: 427 HOD: \$235	SANTA MONICA 90404 List Price: \$399,000 Sold Price: \$410,000	Bed: 1 Bath: 1.00
Sold Santa Monica 02/25/2005	1331 BERKELEY ST #2 SqFt: 950 HOD: \$110	SANTA MONICA 90404 List Price: \$460,000 Sold Price: \$450,000	Bed: 2 Bath: 1.50
Sold Santa Monica 03/01/2005	1017 2ND ST #102 SqFt: 1,102 HOD: \$237	SANTA MONICA 90403 List Price: \$589,000 Sold Price: \$589,000	Bed: 2 Bath: 1.75
Sold Santa Monica 03/01/2005	515 N OCEAN AVE #404 N SqFt: N/A HOD: \$750	SANTA MONICA 90402 List Price: \$1,035,000 Sold Price: \$1,015,000	Bed: 2 Bath: 2.00
Sold Santa Monica 02/24/2005	1744 10TH ST #2 SqFt: 1,022 HOD: \$235	SANTA MONICA 90404 List Price: \$498,000 Sold Price: \$530,000	Bed: 2 Bath: 2.00
Sold Santa Monica 03/02/2005	1950 CLOVERFIELD #2 SqFt: 0 HOD: \$245	SANTA MONICA 90404 List Price: \$399,000 Sold Price: \$405,000	Bed: 2 Bath: 1.00
Sold Santa Monica 03/01/2005	1014 9TH ST #1 SqFt: 1,594 HOD: \$300	SANTA MONICA 90403 List Price: \$909,000 Sold Price: \$895,000	Bed: 3 Bath: 2.50
Sold Santa Monica 02/23/2005	707 GRANT ST #18 SqFt: 1,388 HOD: \$330	SANTA MONICA 90405 List Price: \$599,000 Sold Price: \$700,500	Bed: 2 Bath: 2.50
Sold Santa Monica 02/25/2005	1440 23RD ST #315 SqFt: 622 HOD: \$225	SANTA MONICA 90404 List Price: \$369,000 Sold Price: \$386,000	Bed: 1 Bath: 1.00
Sold Santa Monica 03/03/2005	933 21ST ST #9 SqFt: 1,254 HOD: \$275	SANTA MONICA 90403 List Price: \$649,000 Sold Price: \$682,500	Bed: 2 Bath: 3.00
Sold Santa Monica 03/02/2005	521 SAN VICENTE BLVD. #D SqFt: 679 HOD: \$180	SANTA MONICA 90402 List Price: \$449,000 Sold Price: \$433,000	Bed: 1 Bath: 1.00
Sold Santa Monica 03/01/2005	2940 NEILSON WAY #104 SqFt: 1,081 HOD: \$700	SANTA MONICA 90405 List Price: \$639,000 Sold Price: \$639,000	Bed: 1 Bath: 1.50
Sold Santa Monica 02/23/2005	1012 7TH ST #7 SqFt: 924 HOD: \$235	SANTA MONICA 90403 List Price: \$530,000 Sold Price: \$530,000	Bed: 2 Bath: 1.75

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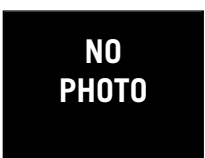
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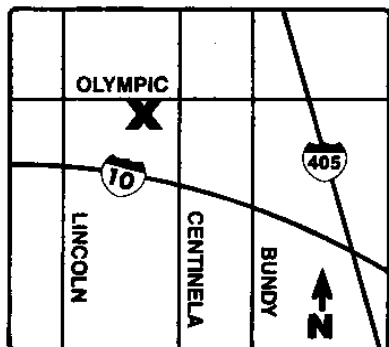
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**DAYS ON
THE MARKET**
BY JODI SUMMERS

IRR, but the RERC study show that investors are currently willing to accept going-in capitalization rates averaging 9 percent, with multi-family rental properties (7.8 percent) and hotels (11 percent) serving as book-ends.

Experts say that the increase in prices and decrease in returns can again be attributed to the lowest interest rates in recent history. Do the numbers — on big properties, the internal rate of return can be more satisfying than the stock market. Inspired by these impressive returns, institutional investors decided they needed real estate in their portfolios.

These investors joined the bidding war, competing with investment trusts, foreign investors and wealthy individuals looking for a tax break. As a result, it pushed up prices up even further, and limited returns.

Money Magazine notes that across the country, institutional real estate sales — from hedge funds, overseas investors, to private equity funds and partnerships — surged 50 percent to \$180 billion. They also noted that the commercial mortgage market rose 10 percent to \$2.2 trillion.

At this period in the investment cycle, real estate has become the venture of choice, creating a market that favors sellers. Around Santa Monica, properties that have been owned for 20 to 25 years are being sold for 10 times appreciation.

"Now is the time to take that profit and reinvest in other deals," said C. Frederick Wehba, chairman of private investment firm BentleyForbes. "It's such a great time to be selling."

A national survey of commercial real estate investors by Marcus & Millichap Real Estate Investment Brokerage Co. found that nearly two-thirds of commercial real estate investors expected the economy to be stronger a year from now, compared with 37 percent who felt that way in 2004. Nearly 75 percent of them plan to boost their real estate investment over the next 12 months by a median of 17 percent, compared with 13 percent in last year's survey.

PNC Real Estate Finance also predicts that real estate will still be a money magnet in 2005 — if yields on bonds and other types of assets this year continue to look less attractive.

(Jodi Summers is director of the investment division at Boardwalk Realty Santa Monica. For your real estate needs, e-mail Jodi Summers at jodis@boardwalkrealty.com, or call (310) 309-4219.)

Offices, shopping centers, industrial buildings and apartments were all hot ticket properties around Los Angeles in 2004. Investment dollars, inspired by continued low interest rates, and a growing perception of property as a safe alternative to the stock market, piloted the commercial property investment market to new heights last year.

Check out these figures: Commercial property buyers spent more than \$4.2 billion on office buildings in LA County last year, according to Cushman & Wakefield Global Real Estate Services. That's 6 percent more than 2003, and double the 2001 figure.

"There have been gobs and gobs of money thrown at real estate," confirms Nicolas Buss of PNC Real Estate Finance.

Sales are up, prices are up. The Los Angeles Times reports that the average price per foot for office buildings rose to \$196 in 2004, up from \$156 in 2003. Meanwhile, prices downtown hit \$350 a foot in 2004. Sale prices are above \$400 per square foot in downtown Santa Monica.

A member of the Action Apartment Association in Santa Monica called downtown, "A real sucker's bet. Market conditions don't justify the higher prices."

Office vacancy rates in downtown Los Angeles fell 2 percent to 17.3 percent in the third quarter 2004, but that's still well above the 10 percent level that the office building rental experts consider equilibrium. Around the county, vacancy rates came down 2 percentage points to 15.5 percent. The decline in vacancy rates didn't boost office rents, which continue to be flat throughout LA County.

"I would say the market is overvalued, based on historical comparisons of prices per square foot," said Wayne M. Brandt, managing director of real estate finance for RBS Greenwich Capital. "Cash flows are being overvalued by investors who have an abundance of capital to invest."

The Real Estate Research Corp. has concluded that investors are currently looking for an average 11 percent internal rate of return on all property types, ranging from 13.3 percent on hotels to 10 percent on multi-family rental properties.

They may be looking for an 11 percent

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Check Out the Question of the Week on Page 3 and let us hear what you have to say

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From left to right: Keren Acoca, Kynan McGary, Anne Fernandez, Amy Pesner, (Jack Susser) Geoffrey Mann, Lawrence Calmus, Bill Richards, Victoria Lobanov, Dudley Fetzner and Monica Casas.

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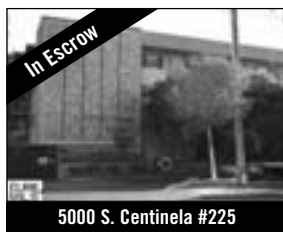
This property is located on a huge 1.126 acre lot; the 2871 sq.ft. 3 bdrm, 2 3/4 ba. home features a formal dining area, hardwood floors, recessed lighting, 2 fireplaces, central ac/heat, and updated kitchen appliances.

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On the move: Planning your relocation is critical

IN YOUR SPACE

BY CHRISTINA S. PORTER

The amount of time required to relocate your business is usually much more than anticipated. Some very smart people in my office came up with the six-month time line below. It provides a realistic step by step description of the process.

1. Evaluate your needs: Identify and analyze your company's needs and special facility requirements. This should take one to three weeks.

2. Determine allocation priorities: Analyze your geographic need by identifying your customer base, employee preferences, support services and the potential impact of the relocation. This should take one to three weeks.

3. Evaluate prospective sites: Research the entire spectrum of prospective sites, incorporating the parameters obtained through the needs analysis process. This should take one to three weeks.

4. Tour selected sites: Tour proposed sites identified in step three. Rank the sites in order of your preference. This should take one week.

5. Proposal process: Send an outline to the prospective landlords that includes all items of importance specific to your tenancy. This should take one to two weeks.

6. Planning your space: Interface with space planners to work out details and layout of your internal space requirements. Determine what type of tenant improvements will be required. This should take two to four weeks.

7. Economic and amenity analysis: Prepare and economic and amenity analysis for each site. This should take two to three weeks.

8. Negotiations: Negotiate the lease, coordinate and expedite the creation and execution of the final lease documents. This should take four to eight weeks.

9. Construction of improvements: Build tenant improvements to your specification. This should take eight to 13 weeks.

10. Move in: Assure that all of the landlord's obligations have been completely fulfilled to your satisfaction. This should take one week.

Moving your business is not a simple process. In addition to anticipating your needs for the new space, your exit strategy for the space you are vacating is critical. At the beginning of the relocation process have your commercial real estate broker check your lease for any special obligations you may have upon vacating the property. Among other things, your lease may require you to remove the tenant improvements that were done when you moved in. This could be expensive and time consuming. Some leases can charge you for "holding over," which means continuing to occupy the space after your lease has terminated. Holding over charges are generally somewhere between 150 to 200 percent of the rent you are paying at the time, which could get expensive. The timing

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430 Colorado Ave	Office	3/7/2005	163	\$2.50/fs
2525 Main St	Office	3/4/2005	905	\$2.75/mg
1500 Olympic Blvd	Flex	3/7/2005	7,000	\$2.35/nnn
2830 Pico Blvd	Office	3/3/2005	1,800	\$2.10-\$2.36/fs
1004 Santa Monica Blvd	Office	3/4/2005	2,345	\$2.60/mg
2812-2820 Santa Monica Blvd	Office	3/1/2005	2,575	\$2.00/fs
2812-2820 Santa Monica Blvd	Office	3/1/2005	385	\$2.50/fs
530 Wilshire Blvd	Office	3/7/2005	895	\$3.00/fs
900 Wilshire Blvd	Office	3/4/2005	1,000	Negotiable
1823 Wilshire Blvd	Office	3/4/2005	1,848	\$2.85/fs

The above information is deemed reliable but not guaranteed. The rates quoted are the asking rate and not necessarily the leased rate.

of when you vacate your office and when your new space is ready is something that should be planned carefully. Try to have some flex time with your existing landlord, just in case there is a delay in the completing of the tenant improvements in the new space. It happens all the time.

When relocating, the proper allocation of time can save you thousands of dollars. On the flip side, the improper allocation of time can cost you thousands of dollars. The most efficient way to save time is delegating as many tasks as possible.

(Christina S. Porter specializes in the business of leasing and selling office and industrial buildings Santa Monica she can be reached at (310) 806-6104 or cporter@naicapital.com.)

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Army of one: Combat keeps minorities from signing up

BY ROBERT BURNS

AP Military Writer

WASHINGTON — Young blacks have grown markedly less willing to join the Army, citing fear of being sent to fight a war in Iraq they don't believe in, according to unpublicized studies for the military that suggest the Army is entering a prolonged recruiting slump.

Fear of combat also is a leading reason fewer young women are choosing the Army, the studies say. Although female soldiers are barred by law from assignments in direct combat, they nonetheless have found themselves under attack by insurgents in Iraq, and 32 have died.

"More African Americans identify having to fight for a cause they don't support as a barrier to military service," concluded an August 2004 study for the Army. It also said attitudes toward the Army among all groups of American youth have grown more negative in recent years.

"In the past, barriers were about inconvenience or preference for another life choice," the study said. "Now they have switched to something quite different: fear of death or injury."

Statistically, the fear factor is about twice as strong among potential recruits as a whole as it was in 2000, the study said. That and other studies, all of which are posted on an obscure Defense Department Web site, cited the Iraq war as a major turnoff for many.

The Army has suffered more of the 1,500-plus U.S. deaths in Iraq than any other service, and thousands have been wounded. Some soldiers will serve their second

tour in Iraq this year. While Army leaders say soldiers have shown a strong interest in re-enlisting, the strains of war seem to have become a barrier to first-time enlistees.

The Army's recruiting challenge is critically important not only to the long-term commitment in Iraq but also to the Army's goal of expanding by 30,000 soldiers. Through the first five months of the budget year which began last Oct. 1, the active Army is about 6 percent behind schedule to meet its 2005 recruiting goal.

Explaining the overall drop-off, Army officials cite an improving national economy that offers more career opportunities as well as concern about the war in Iraq.

Blacks make up about 23 percent of today's active-duty Army, but the share of blacks in the recruit classes of recent years dropped. From 22.7 percent at the time of the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, the share slid to 19.9 percent in 2002; 16.4 percent in 2003 and 15.9 percent last year, according to figures provided by Army Recruiting Command spokesman Douglas Smith.

The slide has continued, dropping to 13.9 percent as of Feb. 9.

A July 2004 study of parents' influence on young people of recruiting age found that black parents have more say in their child's career decisions than is the case with white parents. Also, black parents trust the military less and have more moral objections to military service.

The Army isn't the only service having trouble finding recruits. The Marine Corps fell slightly short of its recruiting goal in January — the first month that had happened in nearly a decade — amid parents' concerns about the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Pro-Syrian protesters flood Beirut square

BY TANALEE SMITH

Associated Press Writer

BEIRUT, Lebanon — Nearly 500,000 pro-Syrian protesters waved flags and chanted anti-American slogans in a central Beirut square Tuesday, answering a nationwide call by the militant Shiite Muslim Hezbollah group for a demonstration to counter weeks of massive rallies demanding Syrian forces leave Lebanon.

Organizers handed out Lebanese flags and directed the men and women to separate sections of Riad Solh Square. Loudspeakers blared militant songs urging resistance to foreign interference. Demonstrators held up pictures of Syrian President Bashar Assad and signs saying, "Syria & Lebanon brothers forever."

Other placards read: "America is the source of terrorism;" "All our disasters are from America"; "No to American-Zionist intervention; Yes to Lebanese-Syrian brotherhood."

Black-clad Hezbollah guards handled security, lining the perimeter of the square and taking position on rooftops. Trained dogs sniffed for bombs.

Large cranes hoisted two giant red-and-white flags bearing Lebanon's cedar tree. On one, the words, "Thank you Syria," were written in English; on the other, "No to foreign interference."

Participants stressed that the foreign influence they referred to was from the United States, France and other countries, not Syria, which they welcomed.

"Syria should not leave. We are one hand and one people," said 16-year-old Esraa Awarki, who traveled by bus from Sharkiya in southern Lebanon. "Why do they want us to split now?"

The demonstration was in front of U.N. offices. Hezbollah opposes the U.N. resolution drafted by the United States and France last year calling for Syria to withdraw its 14,000 troops from Lebanon.

In Washington, President Bush demanded again that Syria pull its troops out of Lebanon and allow free elections. "All Syrian military forces and intelligence personnel must withdraw before the Lebanese elections for these elections to be free and fair," he said Tuesday.

The demonstration came a day after Syrian and Lebanese leaders announced that Syrian forces would transfer to eastern Lebanon before the nations discuss a

full withdrawal.

On Tuesday, two senior Lebanese officials said a major redeployment of the Syrian army from central and northern Lebanon would begin late in the day and be completed by March 23.

Lebanese Defense Minister Abdul-Rahim Murad told The Associated Press that "all the force in the (central) mountains and north will move to the Bekaa (Valley) as of 10 p.m." He said that included the main Syrian intelligence offices in Beirut.

Deputy Prime Minister Issam Fares, speaking to LBC television, said the full withdrawal to the eastern valley will be complete before the end of March, "or in other words before the (Arab) summit, which falls March 23."

Most of the Syrian troops were still in position Tuesday, with AP reporters in the mountains overlooking Beirut seeing only scattered movement of military trucks heading toward the Bekaa Valley.

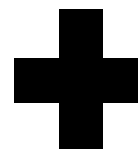
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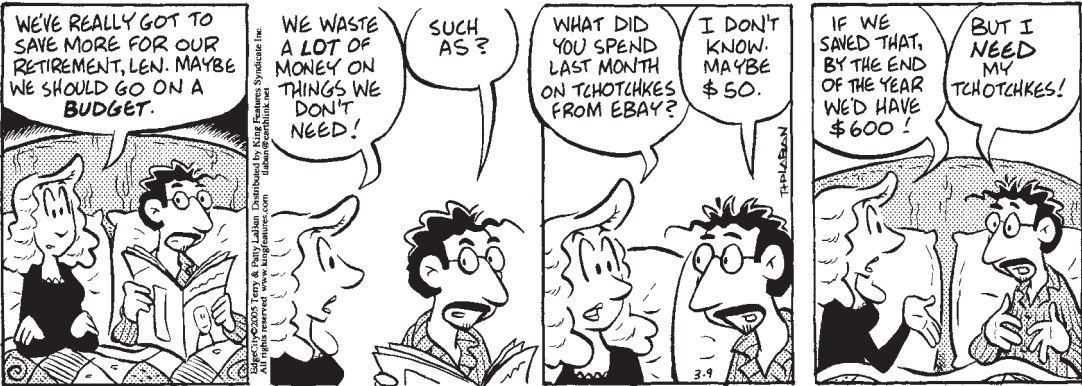
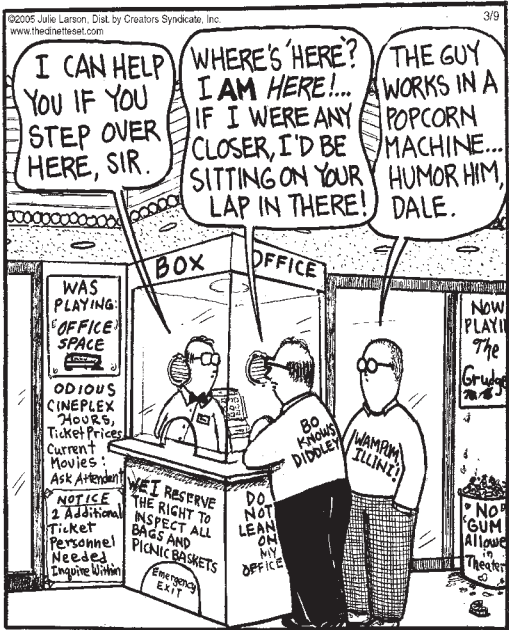
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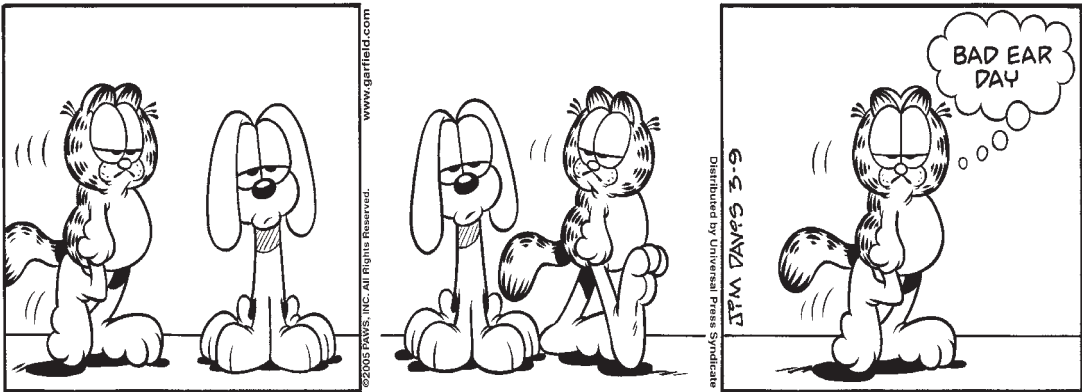


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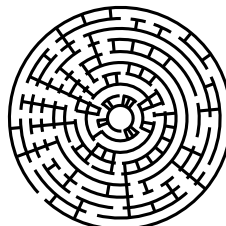
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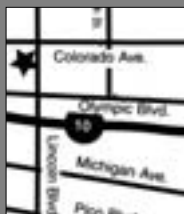
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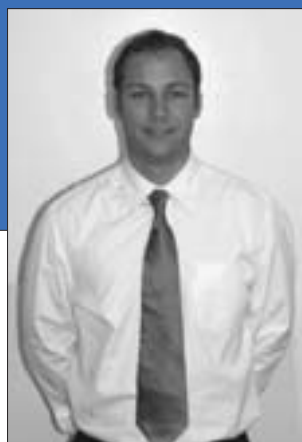
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