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W. Hollywood Council Looks Into Campaign Finance Reform

■ Councilmembers Prang and Heilman Initiate the Review

BY AMY LYONS

West Hollywood City Councilmembers Jeffrey Prang and John Heilman recently recommended that the council initiate a review of local campaign finance regulations and determine whether or not current laws and regulations should be amended.

At the meeting on August 20, the council asked the offices of the city clerk and the city attorney to return a recommendation to the council in 90 days.

The Prang/Heilman proposal suggests the assessment of several campaign finance reform regulations, including reducing the contribution amount an individual can make to a campaign from \$1,000 to an unnamed amount. Prang said a reduction to that amount would level the playing field for incoming candidates.

"We are looking at changing the \$1,000 maximum contribution per individual, per election," Prang said. "Another idea is limiting the amount of time in which you can raise money. Right now, there are

See Council page 25



photo by Edwin Folven

The iconic Chinese Theatre on Hollywood Boulevard has been sold.

Chinese Theatre Changes Hands in Sale to CIM Group

BY AMY LYONS

The Grauman's Chinese Theatre, the Hollywood Boulevard historic icon where celebrities leave their footprints and handprints in cement in the exterior courtyard, has been sold to the CIM Group. The Los

Angeles-based real estate company also owns the Hollywood & Highland complex, the TV Guide building on Hollywood Boulevard and the Sunset & Vine Tower, among others.

The 1,162-seat Grauman's Chinese Theatre often houses the

See Chinese Theatre page 23

Trial Date Set in W.H. Firefighter Sex Case

■ Flaherty Scheduled to Appear in October

BY EDWIN FOLVEN

A trial date has been set in the case of a former West Hollywood firefighter who allegedly traveled to Michigan earlier this year with the intent to have sex with a minor.

The trial for Brian Lee Flaherty, 37, is scheduled to begin on October 2 before Judge Gerald E. Rosen in the federal district court in Detroit, according to Gina Ballaya, a spokesperson for the U.S. Attorney's Office in Michigan. Flaherty faces three counts involving soliciting sex with a minor over the Internet, and remains in custody in Michigan.

"He was arraigned on the indictment on June 4 and was held to stand trial on August 21, but that date was changed until October 2 because another attorney [for the defense] has been added to the case," Ballaya said. "There haven't been any additional charges, but he is still in custody for the three original counts."

Flaherty is named in a federal indictment issued on May 24 that claims he entered into a relationship over the Internet with an undercover sheriff's deputy posing



photo courtesy of the U.S. Attorney's Office
Brian Lee Flaherty faces federal charges in Michigan.

as a mother who was willing to allow her underage daughter to have sex with an adult. Count one of the indictment centers on Flaherty's using the Internet to make such an arrangement, in violation of federal law. Flaherty's arrest came as part of "Operation Safe Child", an investigation that was held by authorities in Macomb County, Michigan where sheriff's deputies entered chat rooms on the Internet and contacted potential suspects looking to engage in illegal activity. Ballaya said the operations are routine in Michigan, as they are in most parts of the country, including Los Angeles.

See Trial page 26

Panel Examines Plight of Trafficking Victims

■ NCJW/LA Hosts Forum With Several Experts on the Problem

BY AMY LYONS

The headquarters of the National Council of Jewish Women, Los Angeles was packed on Wednesday, August 29 with people interested in learning more about the crime of human trafficking and how to identify perpetrators. The evening event included a free screening of the film "Cargo: Innocence Lost" by filmmaker Michael Cory Davis, who has dedicated the last few years to chronicling the crime both internationally and domestically.

Human Trafficking is a \$9 billion industry, according to Davis'

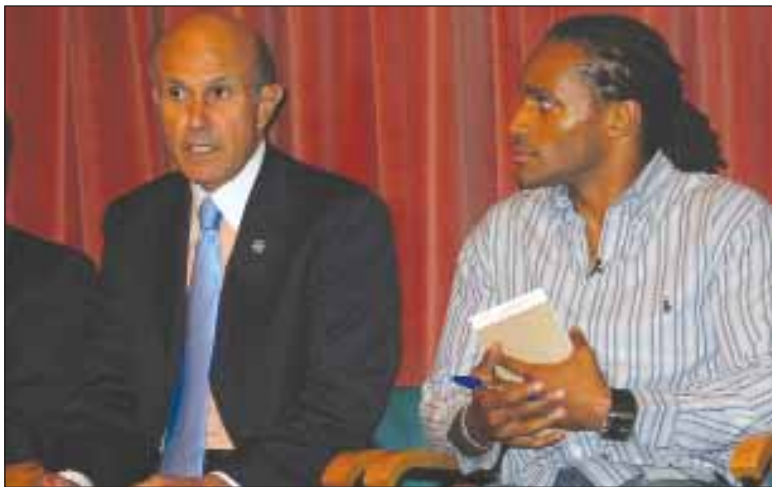


photo by Amy Lyons

Sheriff Lee Baca (left) and filmmaker Michael Cory Davis were part of a panel discussion held last week on human trafficking.

research. It is driven by the need for cheap labor and large profits. It is estimated that traffickers smuggle

nearly 17,000 individuals each year across U.S. borders, of which 80 percent are women and girls sold into sexual slavery. Victims are forced into prostitution, pornography, escort services, sex tourism and domestic servitude. Young boys are also at risk. According to studies by UC Berkeley Human Rights Center, California has one of the highest incidences of trafficking in the country.

The second type of trafficking is labor trafficking, which finds victims working long hours in service

See Forum page 25

Blaze at Palm Reading Shop Seriously Injures Woman

BY EDWIN FOLVEN

A fire that erupted in a palm reading and tarot card business in Hollywood on Monday caused major damage and seriously injured a woman who was inside the building.

The fire was reported around 9:00pm on September 3 at 5324 Sunset Blvd., which is one of three businesses located in one building at the location. Brian Humphrey, a spokesman for the Los Angeles Fire Department, said three additional apartments are located above the stores, but the fire was contained to the one downstairs unit.

"When firefighters arrived, they found heavy flames emanating from the structure," Humphrey added. "When they pulled up, they were also met by a female who had run out of the building.

Her clothes were still ablaze, and her hair had been

burned off."

Humphrey said the firefighters quickly rendered aid to the victim, who reportedly suffered second and third degree burns over 80 percent of her body. She was taken to Hollywood Presbyterian Medical Center in critical condition. Humphrey said the woman was believed to be in her mid 60s, and was the occupant of the busi-

See Fire page 25



photo by Edwin Folven

Investigators examined the damage caused by a fire in the shop on Sunset Boulevard.

INSIDE

■ W.H. Crime

Sheriffs release photos of suspects in gas station robberies.

See Page 3

■ Silence to Sound

Documentary film chronicles cochlear implant recipient's journey.

See Page 6

Implants Hold New Hope for the Hearing Impaired

BY AMY LYONS

Justin Garrett was born with severe hearing loss. Today, things sound much better, due to an operation that he says changed his life.

Garrett was the recipient of a bilateral cochlear implant in March, 2006, when he was 27 years old. A little more than a year later, he is touring the country to share his story via speaking engagements and a documentary film that tracks his journey. The film, "From Silence to Sound", premiered in Los Angeles at the Fine Arts Theatre on Tuesday.

The National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders (NIDCD) defines a cochlear implant as a small, complex electronic device that can help to provide a sense of sound to a person who is profoundly deaf or severely hard-of-hearing. The implant consists of an external portion that sits behind the ear and a second portion that is surgically placed under the skin.

A discussion with Garrett, director Chase Matthews, and producer



photo by Amy Lyons

Justin Garrett (center), a cochlear implant recipient, answers questions about the procedure via spoken word and sign language. Garrett was joined by producer Jenine Mayring (left) and director Chase Matthews, who created a film about Garrett's life.

Jenine Mayring followed the screening.

Garrett's parents discovered their son was profoundly hearing impaired at age two. With that diag-

nosis, their family life fell apart. They divorced and Garrett spent most of his childhood living with his physically abusive mother and

See Implants page 24

City Council Examines the Use of School Campuses for Recreation

Los Angeles City Councilmember Tom LaBonge, 4th District, recently proposed a city council motion calling upon the Department of Recreation and Parks to work with the non-profit organization People for Parks and others to identify LAUSD campuses that could be "greened" and kept opened after school and on weekends to provide neighborhood residents a place for recreation.

"What we need more in this city are places for kids to run around and participate in wholesome activities in a safe and welcoming environment," said LaBonge, who chairs the council's Arts, Parks, Health and Aging Committee. "I've long advocated for joint use of public facilities and this is a great start to this practice."

The motion will also be heard by the Education and Neighborhoods Committee.

The non-profit People for Parks, led by president Jack Foley, conducted extensive studies of green and park space around Los Angeles and found that existing recreational facilities are inequitably distributed in low income areas. Further, they advocate that children living in such

high need areas deserve walking access to parks or recreation centers. Not having such space has disturbing implications for young gang activity, obesity and other physical environmental and mental health issues.

LaBonge spearheaded the motion, which instructs the Department of Recreation and Parks to work with non-profit organizations, community groups, the LAUSD and other appropriate city departments and report in 45 days with recommendations for greening and opening schools to the community during times when schools are not being utilized.

People for Parks' recommendation is to identify an initial 10 sites in underserved areas to green and beautify by removing asphalt, planting trees and other landscaping and, where achievable, installing community gardens planted and maintained by residents. LAUSD Board President Monica Garcia is studying a similar proposal, according to Foley.

"Timing is everything," said Foley. "Breaking up the blacktop and landscaping schoolyards is cost-effective. The city can't afford to buy more land."

Audit Criticizes Construction of L.A. Children's Museum

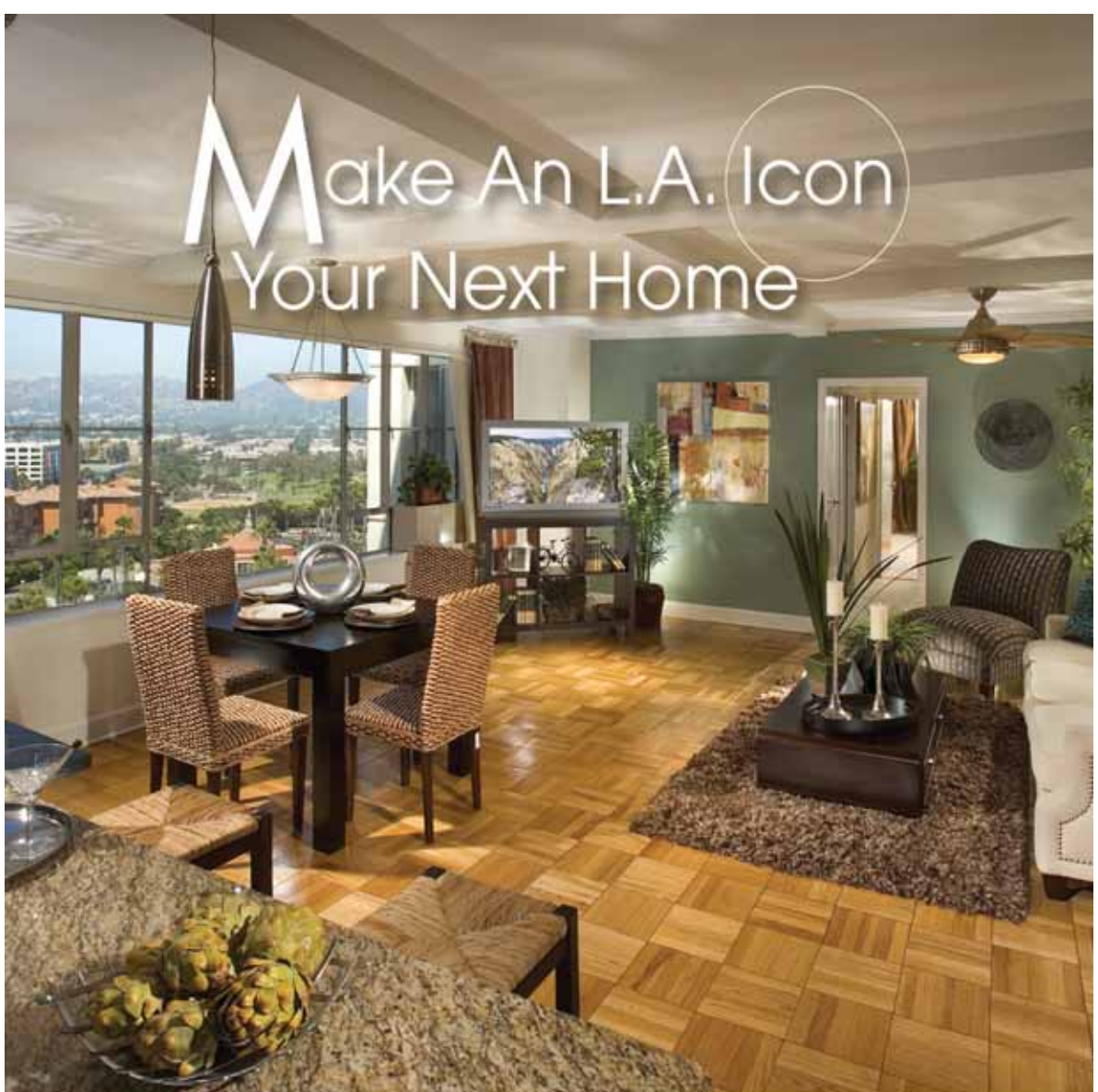
An audit conducted by Los Angeles City Controller Laura Chick's Office on the construction of the Los Angeles Children's Museum has determined that the cost of building the facility has far outpaced initial projections.

Originally founded in 1979 and located in downtown Los Angeles, it became apparent in the late 1990s that the Los Angeles Children's Museum was too small to accommodate the growing number of visitors. Consequentially, the Board of Recreation and Parks Commissioners and the City Council approved a plan in 2000 for the museum to relocate.

Construction of the new museum was delayed for several years because of funding problems. To date, the Children's Museum has received more than \$19 million in public funds. In May, the city learned the Children's Museum was having cash flow problems and that construction might be

halted. Concerned about the financial condition of the museum and its ability to pay for the remaining construction costs, the city council passed a motion requesting the city controller to perform an audit of the Children's Museum.

Among the audit's findings were that the museum has received \$19 million in public funds, 77 percent derived through the city. While the construction of the museum's outer shell is almost complete, the museum needs an additional \$22 million within the next one and a half years to complete fabrication of the exhibits and other remaining items in order to open by its March 2009 target date. The museum also expended more than \$5.8 million for design work, and more than half for an unfeasible design which was scrapped. According to the Audit, the museum spent 45 percent (\$3.8 million) of the private donations received on campaign consultants and overhead.



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Implants Help Restore Lost Hearing

From page 6



photo by Amy Lyons

Justin Garrett (right) answers questions about the cochlear implants that helped restore his hearing.

stepfather. His mother and father are featured in the film and talk about their struggles to raise him. Though he received a great deal of support in later years from his biological father, his biological mother refuses to see the film, Garrett said. "My father loves the film," Garrett said. "My mother, I told her about the film and she has not yet seen it; she won't see it. Hopefully someday she will."

As a young adult, Garrett's audiologists recommended a cochlear implant. If the surgery went well, it would enable him to hear. An unsuccessful surgery, however, would mean a lifetime of irreversible deafness. Garrett was approved for a bilateral cochlear implant, marking the first time in history a man from Oklahoma would undergo such a procedure. According to NIDCD, approximately 59,000 people worldwide have received cochlear implants and about 250,000 people would be good candidates for a cochlear implant. In the United States, about 13,000 adults and nearly 10,000 children have cochlear implants.

Garrett's surgery was a success. Growing up, he had two percent hearing. Since the cochlear implants, he reports having ninety percent hearing.

The film also features Justin's wife, Davina, a source of support in his life. There are scenes in which she takes him through their home after the operation, turning on the water faucet, playing the piano and creating other sounds for his benefit.

His insurance covered the operation and he paid \$300 of his own money. He estimated the total expenses without insurance at more than \$20,000. "One of the success stories for

insurance companies," Mayring joked.

Mayring, a former American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter, said her work with the hearing impaired community inspired her work on the film.

"Having an extensive background in the deaf community, one of my goals for this project was to ensure that the entire film, including the trailer, be subtitled in English," Mayring said. "By doing so, they became accessible to both hearing and deaf audiences worldwide."

Garrett demonstrated how the external hardware portion of his cochlear implants could be removed and put back on easily. He had the crowd laughing when he told a story about being seated next to a noisy engine on a plane after the cochlear implant operation. He was happy to be able to take the devices off.

On a more serious note, he said the cochlear implants have improved his life more than he could have imagined.

"The implants changed my life on so many levels. First of all I can talk to my family normally around the dinner table. I can enjoy conversations with my family. I still have a lot of work to do with my listening skills," Garrett said.

Garrett was told it would take him about two years to acclimate to hearing. Because of the extensive work he has done in therapy, he reduced that learning curve to just six months.

"From Silence to Sound" was recently nominated for Best International Documentary at the Everglades International Film Festival, which takes place in September, in Dargle, South Africa.

He was wearing a black baseball cap with white letters.

The second suspect was also African American, in his mid-30s and approximately six-feet to six-feet-three-inches tall and 210 pounds. He was wearing a white t-shirt and jeans.

"It appears like it was an isolated incident, but we are asking for the public's help if anybody knows these guys," Lee added.

Anyone recognizing the suspects is asked to call Wilshire Robbery Detectives at (213)922-8215, or (213)922-8205. On weekends and during off-hours, phone the 24-hour toll free detective information desk at (877)LAWFULL.

Several members of the hearing impaired community attended the screening and Garrett answered questions in sign language and

with speech. When asked by a hearing impaired audience member if he feels more a part of the hearing world or the hearing impaired world since the implants, Garrett said he tries to function and do work in both worlds.

"I have been involved a lot with

the hearing world, but I try to remind myself that I came from the deaf community," Garrett said. "I want to show the deaf community there is a lot out there they can do...I still take part in deaf activism, deaf awareness week and things like that."



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Suspects

From page 7

mately \$500 in cash. The men then fled, and were seen driving away in a blue, 1990s model Ford Explorer. No license plate was observed, and it is believed the vehicle had paper plates, similar to the type placed on vehicles by dealerships.

Lee said the suspect with the gun was described as being an African American man in his early 30s. He was approximately five-foot-eight-inches to six-foot-tall and weighed around 250 pounds.



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