



NAOMI'S ON THE MEND SEE PAGE 15

Santa Monica Daily Press

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THE HEALTH OF THE ECONOMY ISSUE



Morgan Genser news@smdp.com

MOVING ON: Jasmine English has helped lead the Santa Monica College women's basketball team to its first appearance in the postseason in 27 years. The team hosts Antelope Valley tonight.

SMC women clinch league title and tournament berth

BY JON HABER

Special to the Daily Press

SMC For 27 years, the Santa Monica College women's basketball team has been on the outside of the California State Championship Tournament picture looking in. That streak is over.

For the first time since 1981, the Corsairs women will advance to the postseason after wrapping up the Western State Conference

title last Saturday in a 79-70 victory over West Los Angeles College.

The Corsairs won their final eight games of the regular season to clinch the conference title and a trip to the tournament.

"The first day of practice, we had the girls turn around and look at the empty [championship] banners in the gym," SMC head basketball coach Lydia Strong said. "They want-

SEE HOOPS PAGE 11

Business scam hits Westside

BY MELODY HANATANI

Daily Press Staff Writer

CITYWIDE An alleged scam that for years has duped unsuspecting business owners across the country into paying exorbitant fees under the guise of coming into compliance with state regulations has made its way to the Westside.

Just last week, the Westside Economic Collaborative (WEC) received a suspicious-looking piece of correspondence from the Annual Minutes Compliance Board (AMCB), asking the Culver City-based non-profit to cut a check for \$95 to pay for the preparation of minutes from its annual Board of Directors meeting. The two-page form cited various state codes that mandate corporations keep records of their shareholder and board of directors meetings, leaving the impression that if the WEC failed to respond, the organization would be out of compliance with state regulations.

When Joseph Palazzolo, the principal owner of Santa Monica-based Real Property Group and WEC treasurer, received the form, he was skeptical, aware that the organization had never had to pay a fee for such a service.

"I looked at it and it didn't seem right to me," Palazzolo said.

He became even more suspicious when he saw a few typos throughout the form, including grammatical and spelling errors. Curious, Palazzolo ran a quick Google search and found a number of sites that confirmed his suspicion — the Annual Minutes Disclosure Statement was part of a scam that had been circulating the country the past few years under various names.

"Overall it looks pretty darn good and I bet you they're doing quite well on it," Palazzolo said.

The alleged scam has been making rounds across different states in different iterations, some under the title of Corporate Compliance Recorder, others as the Compliance Annual Minutes Board, all insinuating that the addressee should pay a fee, which ranges from \$95 to \$150, to avoid falling out of compliance. One resident in Oregon noted in his blog, Hinessight.blogs.com that he received a letter in an "official-looking envelope" from



Photo courtesy
BAD DEAL: This fraudulent letter has been sent to a number of local businesses recently.

the Corporate Compliance Recorder, asking that a non-profit organization with which he's a secretary pay a \$95 fee.

"I believe this is the first time our annual corporation fee is due, so at first I thought the mailing was for real," the blogger stated in his 2005 entry. "But the \$95 fee was steep, and I'd never heard of a requirement to disclose annual minutes."

"Of course, there isn't such a requirement."

Locally, more than 17 complaints have been filed with the Better Business Bureau's Southland division since 2004, many of which are from business owners who ended up paying the fee and were demanding a refund as well as an apology.

Many of the complainants mention that the notice appears as though it were sent from a state-affiliated agency and that the return address was listed as being in Sacramento. The form that the Westside Economic Collaborative received lists a P.O. Box address in Los Angeles, the same address that received the majority of the Better Business Bureau complaints.

SEE SCAM PAGE 11



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Elderly face financial challenges

BY MELODY HANATANI
Daily Press Staff Writer

CITYWIDE Making ends meet is no easy feat and it doesn't get easier with age.

Tough times lie ahead for California's elder residents, according to a new statewide initiative that on Tuesday released data revealing that the Federal Poverty Line (FPL) covers less than half of the basic cost of living expenses for senior citizens living in Los Angeles County.

The California Elder Economic Security Initiative (CAL EESI) program released data that compared local costs to the national FPL, called the Elder Economic Security Standard, which shows the basic annual cost of living for retired individuals living in the county ranges from roughly \$22,800 to \$38,000, depending on whether it's a single

or married couple living in rental housing or with a mortgage. Conversely, the national poverty line in 2007 was about \$10,200 for a single senior citizen and \$13,700 for an elderly couple.

The purpose of the findings, which were presented to the state senate Subcommittee on Aging and Long-term Care, was to persuade federal officials to adopt the Elder Economic Security Standard as opposed to the FPL, which is used to determine eligibility for many public programs, including food stamps and medical care, according to Susie Smith, the director of Cal EESI.

"The Federal Poverty Line is an outdated [method to determine] who gets access to public benefits," Smith said on Tuesday.

The methodology for the poverty line was developed in the 1960s and applies to residents across the board, whether they



THE FEDERAL POVERTY LINE IS AN OUTDATED MEASURE TO LOOKING AT WHO GETS ACCESS TO PUBLIC BENEFIT."

Susie Smith, Director of the California Elder Economic Security Initiative

reside in Kansas or Santa Monica, Smith said. The poverty line is also less for senior citizens than middle-aged adults, assuming that the elderly need less to survive than their younger counterparts, she added.

The Elder Standard Index was developed by Wider Opportunities for Women and the Institute of Gerontology at the University of Massachusetts-Boston and later adapted locally by the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research, which came up with coun-

ty-specific results for the state of California.

Part of the reason for releasing the findings on Tuesday was to encourage state officials to look at where public dollars were being spent at a time when programs are being cut across the board.

"See which investment is making the biggest impact in the daily lives of seniors," Smith said. "It's more important to evaluate

SEE ELDERLY PAGE 10

Prolific television writer Baer dies in Santa Monica

By the Associated Press

SANTA MONICA Richard Baer, a prolific television writer who contributed to the hit sitcoms "Bewitched," "That Girl" and "The Munsters," has died. He was 79.

Baer died Friday at St. John's Health Center in Santa Monica from complications that followed a heart attack he suffered last month, according to his son, Matthew.

Baer's career began in the 1950s and spanned three decades.

His first credit was for NBC's "The Life of Riley" in 1953.

He wrote for some two dozen shows, ranging from a single episode of "Have Gun—Will Travel" to 34 for "Hennessey." He received an Emmy nomination for one episode of the show, which starred Jackie Cooper as a Navy medical officer.

His final TV script was an episode of the 1980s sitcom, "Who's the Boss?"

Baer also wrote a play, "Mixed Emotions," a comedy about the courtship of a widow and widower in New York, ran for more than six weeks on Broadway in 1993.

In addition to Matthew, Baer is survived by his wife, Diane; another son, Josh; a daughter, Judy; stepdaughter Michele, and three grandchildren.



DAY IN THE SUN

Eddie Gonzalez (left) and William Kriner (right) pose next to a giant sand castle they constructed on Tuesday at Santa Monica Beach. The weather was unseasonably warm on Tuesday with highs reaching the 80s in Santa Monica. The National Weather Service predicts more sun for today.

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GETTING BY: (Above) A senior enters the Senior Recreation Center on Ocean Avenue during lunch on Tuesday afternoon. (Left) Lawrence Lovisrde meets with fellow seniors for lunch.

Financial struggles exists for elderly

FROM ELDERLY PAGE 3

the true investment during the time of fiscal crisis."

According to the data, one in three senior citizens in the county live off of Social Security payments, which average about \$12,000 a year. For women residing in the county, the median retirement income is about \$17,000, while for men, it's about \$22,700.

Santa Monica's retired community is not immune to financial struggles, facing the same issues of living on a fixed income and choosing between paying for medical expenses and the basic necessity of food.

Rosemary Regalbuto, who helps run the Meals on Wheels program in Santa Monica, said that many of it's clients face the decision of whether they should pay for the prescription medicine or buying food, often choosing the former.

"Over the years we've had clients that would eat cat food because it's cheaper," Regalbuto said on Tuesday. "They're not getting proper nutrition."

"It's only going to get worse because the cost of medication is getting so expensive."

Yuliya Sullivan, the client coordinator for Meals on Wheels, said many of her clients live off of a small Social Security payment of about \$1,000 a month, which after paying for rent and medication, leaves little for meals.

Some have difficult paying for the \$6 fee to cover the cost of receiving two meals of days from the non-profit organization, Sullivan said, adding that the fee is waived for some clients.

"It's amazing how little they have," she said. "I know there is a person we serve who basically relies on us for food and I'm not sure if they have any food outside of what we deliver."

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Water agencies form group to tackle climate change

By the Associated Press

LOS ANGELES Eight of the nation's largest water providers from California to New York announced the formation of a coalition to develop strategies on dealing with climate change.

The newly formed Water Utility Climate Alliance includes the giant Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, the San Diego County Water Authority and the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission.

Members, which together provide water to more than 36 million people, also include Denver Water, the New York

City Department of Environmental Protection, the Portland (Ore.) Water Bureau, Seattle Public Utilities and the Southern Nevada Water Authority.

"Our systems are facing risk due to diminishing snow-pack, bigger storms, more frequent drought and rising sea levels," said Susan Leal, general manager of the San Francisco commission and chair of the newly formed authority. "We need to be organized to respond to these risks — that's why we've formed this alliance."

The group has been in the works since 2007, after San Francisco hosted a water utility climate change summit that drew more than 200 executives and government officials. In September, the eight agencies gathered to further discuss the

impacts of climate change and began studying existing research.

"The whole goal was to wrap our arms around the potential impacts of climate change on water infrastructure and water supplies," said Bronson Mack, a spokesman for the Southern Nevada Water Authority.

Over a series of conference calls, Mack said the newly formed group has developed a list of goals that include expanding climate change research, collaborating on adaptation tools and identifying greenhouse gas emissions from individual operations.

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