

San Diego Newsline

Downtown San Diego news — the budget, public safety, business, and the civic life of America's Finest City

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COUNTY

High School Students Learn About Sheriff Career



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Everyone knows to call 9-1-1 in emergency situations and the dispatcher who answers the phone is often a lifeline to the person in distress.

“It’s a challenging job and ultimately, a very rewarding job,” said Jeff Hebert, a San Diego Sheriff’s Office Communications Coordinator. He is one of three managers who are responsible for the operations of the Sheriff’s Office communications center, but he started out as a dispatcher some 30 years ago and has stayed on because he loves what he does.

Last year, the Sheriff’s Office developed a Responder Ready Public Safety Communications Academy geared toward high school students to expose them to this civilian career in law enforcement. The 12-week academy was held on Saturdays for four hours and on Feb. 1, 19 students graduated from the first academy. A new academy is planned for April.

Honors graduate Sage Sekerke, 16, of San Marcos said it was an amazing experience.

“I’m applying as soon as I turn 18 and graduate high school,” Sekerke said. When she first went to the academy, she didn’t think she would want to be a dispatcher, but after getting to learn about job and observe real dispatchers at work, she feels drawn to the role.

Hebert said the coursework included everything from professionalism and ethics to looking for jobs, gaining job interview skills, using critical thinking, decision making skills and phone

procedures for taking calls and using the radio to dispatch help.

To learn how to use the computer aided dispatch system, the students worked on a simulator to learn how to gather information and document it, often with a dispatcher sitting with them to help guide them. They also got to sit and observe a dispatcher at work.

To be a dispatcher, you have to be 18 years old and have a high school diploma or equivalent. Hebert added that one of the graduates in the academy turned in her application the next day and several told him they are interested in applying when they turn 18. To learn more about Sheriff emergency dispatchers visit the Sheriff’s Office page and keep an eye out for the next academy.

County of San Diego news release · Feb 13, 2025



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COUNTY

Saving San Diego's Adult Residential Facilities

Board and care homes serve adults and seniors with serious behavioral health conditions who need specialized care. Many are at risk of becoming homeless.

Licensed by the state of California, board and cares offer a home-like atmosphere where residents have private or semi-private rooms and receive

meals, housekeeping, transportation, medication management and grooming support.

Here in San Diego, only eight board and care providers serve individuals with serious mental illness who are receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI). The supply of beds has been shrinking. Since 2019, the region has seen a loss of over 3,200 board and care beds.

Now, a new state grant program will soon provide board and cares a helping hand. The County has already received \$16.6 million to step in with help.

The Community Care Expansion – Preservation (CCE-P) Program was created to preserve and avoid the closure of residential adult and senior care facilities that serve SSI recipients. Operators of these residences applied for grant funds issued to the County to help cover capital improvements including construction, property upgrades and rehabilitation projects.

Providing financial assistance to the struggling Board and Care community will help ensure individuals with serious behavioral health challenges have a safe place to land when there are no other options. The investment will improve their quality of life, treatment outcomes and help prevent the cycle of homelessness and unnecessary hospitalization.

County of San Diego news release · Feb 19, 2025

COUNTY

County Breaks Ground on New Casa de Oro Library

County officials and community members broke ground Wednesday on a project that will bring a new library branch to Casa de Oro to meet the growing needs of the community.

The new library will be located at 9610 Campo Road in Spring Valley near Spring Valley Academy.

The current facility is in a leased

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DOWNTOWN, CITY & COUNTY

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County Breaks Ground on New Casa de Oro Library

location and is 6,000 square feet. The new library will double in size to 12,000 square feet with an approximately 2,000 square foot Community Room. In 2022, nearly 30,000 customers visited the branch and checked out over 63,250 items.

Some of the features of the new library will include:

Public computers plus laptops for checkout

High speed internet access and Wi-Fi throughout the branch

Community Room with after-hours access for community events

Children’s area with early literacy play equipment

Patio space and a Friends of the Library Bookstore

The library is being built on Zero Net Energy and LEED Gold standards. This means that the library’s solar panels will produce the electricity it needs to operate.

The County gathered community input and engaged residents, businesses and other stakeholders about their needs for the library. This feedback helped to shape the design and types of features planned for this location. County staff will continue to work with the community about future design concepts as the project moves forward and revisions are made.

This project supports the library’s mission to celebrate our communities and help you create your own story. The project is funded by the County of San Diego.

The construction phase will begin winter 2025 with the branch set to open spring 2026. For more information about the project, visit sdcl.org.

County of San Diego news release · Feb 19, 2025

COUNTY

County Breaks Ground on Phase One of Bonsall Community Park

County officials and community members broke ground Tuesday on a project that will transform a former golf course in North County into more than 24 acres of recreational amenities for the Bonsall community.

The Bonsall Community Park is located at 5290 Camino Del Rey and W. Lilac Road. The park was selected for active recreation because of its location. The acreage is next to Bonsall Elementary School, Bonsall Community Center, several housing

developments and Highway 76.

The first phase of the new park will include:

Parking, with two new vehicle access points to the property

Sidewalk and intersection improvements to Camino Del Rey

The active recreation site is one of two parks in the County’s San Luis Rey River Park Master Plan. The Master Plan is made up of more than 1,700 acres along the San Luis Rey River between Interstate 15 and the Old Bonsall Bridge. It sets aside 95% of the San Luis Rey River Park for passive, open space uses and trails.

Building this park makes progress toward the County’s goal of providing 3 acres of local, public parkland for every 1,000 residents. Currently, the Bonsall community does not have any designed public parks.

The County’s Department of Parks and Recreation gathered community input and engaged residents, businesses and other stakeholders about their needs for the park. This feedback helped to shape the design and types of features planned for this location. County staff will continue to work with the community about future phases of Bonsall Community Park.

Last year, the County finalized a construction contract to build the first phase of Bonsall Community Park, set to open Summer 2026. For more information about the project, visit sdparks.org.

County of San Diego news release · Feb 18, 2025

COUNTY

County’s Bancroft Safe Parking Program Provides Road to Housing

Gillie and Henry drove their black sedan onto the County’s Bancroft Safe Parking site in Spring Valley in January and since then, they say they have been able to breathe a sigh of relief.

The couple had spent months staying at various shelters or sleeping in their car on the side of the road after increased rent and a job loss forced them out of their long-term rental apartment and into their vehicle.

“No matter how we tried to keep our boat afloat, it was impossible,” Gillie explained. She says being at Bancroft Safe Parking “makes a whole world of difference to know that at five o’clock, we can come here, we get a shower, there’s a heater, there is coffee, oatmeal for the morning. It’s a relief.”

Gillie and Henry were

referred to Bancroft Safe Parking by a County Office of Homeless Solutions outreach worker. The lot is operated by County contractor Dreams for Change.

“Safe parking lots provide people with a place to park and sleep for the night, without the risk of being towed or asked to move,” said Dijana Beck, Director of the County Office of Homeless Solutions. “Participants also have support to get things like documents in order, reunifying with family and of course finding a more permanent housing solution.”

Those in the program are paired with a Dreams for Change case worker to help them find housing options. There are also employment, health and social services resources as well as flexible funding to help remove any barriers to housing.

Bancroft Safe Parking opened in August 2024. It has space for 27 cars that stay overnight only, starting at 5 p.m. There is security on the property, along with clean restrooms, hot showers, a dog run and a small kitchen. Dinner and breakfast also are provided.

The goal is to help the families, couples, and other people find more stable housing. Pets are welcome, too. On average, residents stay at Bancroft Safe Parking between three to six months.

For Gillie and Henry, their wait is over as they move into a studio thanks to support from the program.

The County’s Bancroft Safe Parking Program is part of County’s broader efforts to expand emergency housing options for people experiencing homelessness in the unincorporated communities.

In addition to Bancroft Safe Parking, these Compassionate Emergency Solutions and Pathways to Housing Efforts include Magnolia Safe Parking Program in El Cajon which opened in 2022.

The Magnolia location is being renovated to improve the site for staff and residents with updates to its bathrooms and shower, picnic and meeting areas and a new dog run.

The Troy Street Sleeping Cabins also are in development and anticipated to open in 2026. Learn more about programs and resources on the County’s Office of Homeless Solutions website.

County of San Diego news release · Feb 18, 2025

COUNTY

State Issues New EBT Chip Cards to Avoid Fraud

The County’s CalFresh,

CalWORKs, and General Relief recipients will receive new security-enhanced benefit cards.

Approximately 405,000 County residents are eligible to use Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards. The most common ways benefits are stolen with the existing cards are skimming and scamming. Nearly 23,000 thefts were reported last year in San Diego County and hundreds of thousands statewide.

The new chip and other enhanced security features make the cards much less accessible to thieves and more difficult to steal benefits or reprint and use a fraudulent card elsewhere.

“We are excited the State has made this change to protect our customers,” said Rick Wanne, director of County Self Sufficiency Services. “These benefits are essential for San Diegans on their path to self-sufficiency.”

The state is asking EBT recipients to check their mailboxes starting Feb. 25, 2025. When the new card arrives, activate it as soon as possible by using it at an eligible retailer. New cards must be activated within 180 days of receipt.

All recipients are encouraged to use their new EBT card by tapping or inserting the chip side of the card into a card reader when making a purchase, rather than sliding it. All benefits will automatically be transferred to the new card. Personal information and the pin number will remain the same. Be sure to destroy the old EBT card after receiving the new one.

Other changes on the new chip EBT card include:

All personal information has been moved to the back side of the card.

An expiration date and Card Security Code have been added to increase security. The expiration date is only for the card, not related to benefits.

If you have questions, please call the State’s EBT customer service helpline: (877) 328-9677.

CalFresh customers use their EBT card to buy fresh produce and nutritious food at a variety of stores across the state. CalWORKs and General Relief customers use the cash aid to help them become more self-sufficient, whether that is paying for food, housing, clothes or other basic necessities.

County of San Diego news release · Feb 18, 2025

Courts · Transit · Public safety

COUNTY

Storms Clear Out for Valentine’s Day Weddings

The day started with a few showers, but the sun came out for many couples saying “I do” on Valentine’s Day.

A flurry of bridal gowns, hearts and flowers took over wedding venues at Assessor/Recorder/County Clerk’s (ARCC) offices across the region Friday.

Feb. 14 is traditionally one of the ARCC’s busiest days for weddings.

Between the four ARCC locations, 153 marriage licenses were issued, and 108 wedding ceremonies took place.

The busiest Valentine’s Day on record for the County was a decade ago. In 2014, the office issued 266 licenses and performed 242 ceremonies.

Valentine’s Day wedding appointments this year were booked days in advance, but those who made last minute decisions to tie the knot could still get married. Walk-ins were welcome at the ARCC’s office downtown.

Twenty couples also found themselves the happy recipients of a free marriage license and ceremony package.

ARCC partnered with the Larry Himmel Neighborhood Foundation to cover the costs. Radio Channel 93.3 gave away ten of the donated wedding packages on their morning show that were good for 90-days. The neighborhood foundation treated the first ten wedding couples at the County Administration Center with free weddings, flowers and chocolates.

The ARCC’s current yearly average for marriage licenses comes to nearly 25,000. For ceremonies, the ARCC reports more than 12,000 ceremonies. Half of customers who request a marriage license also hold their wedding ceremonies at the ARCC’s office.

For more information on how to get a marriage license or reserve a date for a civil wedding ceremony, visit the Marriage License & Civil Ceremony website.

See some of the Valentine’s Day newlyweds or couples getting their marriage license at the County Administration Center below.

County of San Diego news release · Feb 14, 2025

COUNTY

Probation Promotes New Assistant Chief

San Diego County Probation promoted a 23-year Probation veteran to the second highest ranking position.

Probation Chief Tamika Nelson promoted Tabatha

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DOWNTOWN, CITY & COUNTY (CONTINUED)

Courts · Transit · Public safety

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Probation Promotes New Assistant Chief

Wilburn to assistant chief. Wilburn most recently served as a deputy chief and will take on the position after the retirement of Denise Huffhines.

“Tabatha Wilburn has been an inspirational, compassionate, and knowledgeable

officer for the department for over 23 years,” Nelson said. “Her expertise in working around justice—both juvenile and adult—has been critical to help us move our approaches to our clients forward in our County. She will help us work to accomplish our vision of enhancing the safety of our communities through restoration and rehabilitation.”

In her most recent position, Wilburn’s duties were managing operations in Youth Development Community Support Services, including 150 staff and an operating budget. Additionally, she was responsible for financial planning related to Juvenile Justice Realignment and has served as a lead in several projects including Ending Girls Incarceration,

Department of Juvenile Justice Realignment and the Indian Child Welfare Act MOU with the Tribal Council. Wilburn was also instrumental as a major contributor in the transition of the state closure of the Department of Juvenile Justice.

Wilburn earned her Bachelor of Science degree in Criminal Justice and a

master’s in public administration with a specialization in leadership. In addition to her many roles with County Probation, Wilburn previously served in the United States Marine Corps and as a police officer in the state of Georgia.

County of San Diego news release · Feb 13, 2025

BUSINESS

San Diego commerce & the regional economy



Illustration

BUSINESS

Member Spotlight: Factory Direct Partners

Meet Factory Direct Partners , an employee-owned and operated innovator in educational, hospitality, and home furnishings. With more than

two decades of experience in maquiladora manufacturing and nearshoring logistics, our San Diego-based designers and engineers collaborate directly with our factory in Tijuana, Mexico.

FDP’s product assortment caters to a wide variety of needs, excelling in the development and production of upholstered furniture, case goods, multi-purpose tables, cut & sew, finishing, and assembly. Whether it’s for educational institutions, commercial spaces, or residential

settings, FDP offers a diverse selection of furniture and seating solutions. As a trusted and recognized brand in the educational market, FDP is expanding into the home and hospitality industry with new product offerings and contract manufacturing, OEM and Private Label opportunities.

At the core of FDP’s success is its dedication to the manufacturing process. The company prides itself on producing top-notch products that meet the highest standards of

quality, safety, and durability. From the initial design phase to final production, every step is meticulously executed to ensure that customers receive the best of the best. This commitment to quality has earned FDP a reputation for reliability and excellence in the industry.

Factory Direct Partners is more than just a manufacturer; it is a brand that stands for quality, reliability, and exceptional customer service. With its unwavering dedication to excellence, FDP

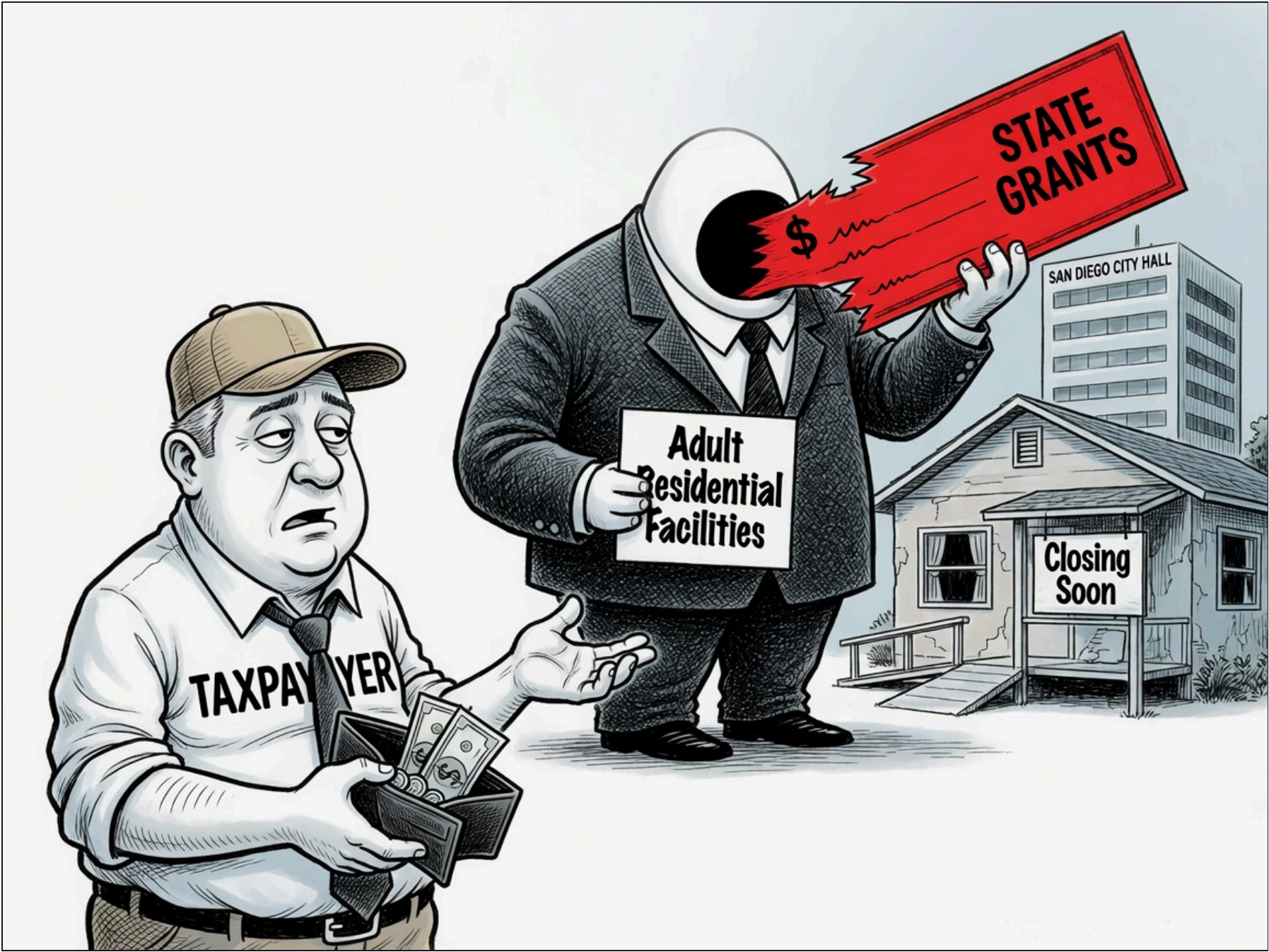
continues to set the standard in the manufacturing industry, delivering products that customers can trust and rely on.

To learn more about how FDP can help with your manufacturing needs or find out where to buy our products, visit www.factorydirectpartners.com or email sales@factorydirectpartners.com.

San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce news release · Feb 18, 2025

THE NEWSLINE CARTOON

Opinion



Grants to save board and care homes

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COMMENTARY

Opinion — the views of the writers named, not news reporting

ABOUT THIS PAPER

San Diego Newsline covers downtown San Diego first —

City Hall, the Gaslamp Quarter, East Village, Little Italy, Barrio Logan and the

waterfront — and the county around it. Every item names its source; read the originals

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