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NOVEMBER 5-6, 2011

Volume 10 Issue 305

# Santa Monica Daily Press

HOW TO SPOT FUNNY MONEY  
SEE PAGE 4

*We have you covered*

THE FIGHT ON! ISSUE



Photo courtesy Santa Monica-Malibu Education Foundation

**HELPING OUT:** Santa Monica Police Officer Jacob Holloway poses for a picture with kids putting on a bake sale for the Save Our Schools campaign, a district-wide fundraising effort in 2010 that secured \$1.58 million for local public schools.

## School fundraising changes get cold reception in Malibu

BY ASHLEY ARCHIBALD  
Daily Press Staff Writer

**MALIBU CITY HALL** Emotions ran high in Malibu City Hall Thursday as parents argued both sides of a policy change for the Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District that could significantly impact which classes are offered in schools.

District-wide fundraising, as it's called, would prohibit Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) from raising money to pay for staff salaries and transfer that responsibility to the Santa Monica-Malibu Education Foundation, a nonprofit organization that distributes money equally across the district.

The goal is to even out per-pupil instructional

spending at each of the school sites, which varies by a factor of 17 from the highest-spending elementary school to the lowest.

The result will be "mandated mediocrity" to the detriment of high-achieving, high-fundraising schools, parents against the change said.

Fundraising by PTAs in SMMUSD varies widely between school sites, in line with the socio-economic levels of the parents whose children attend each school.

That tends to mean that schools with more socio-economically disadvantaged students get less resources than wealthier schools and correspondingly fewer programs.

Less instructional opportunity exacerbates an already large gap in academic

achievement between minority students and their white and Asian counterparts.

Right now, PTA dollars buy those opportunities, said Superintendent Sandra Lyon.

The highest spending school uses its money, raised by PTAs, to buy instructional aides, a reading teacher, a choral music program, a marine science program, multiple reading assistance programs and an art program.

The other has a music program from kindergarten through second grade, an art program from kindergarten through fifth grade, an hourly science teacher and one instructional assistant.

SEE FUNDS PAGE 7

## Parents accuse special education teacher of abuse

BY ASHLEY ARCHIBALD  
Daily Press Staff Writer

**MALIBU** The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Office is investigating allegations of neglect brought by parents and aides of special education students against a teacher at Juan Cabrillo Elementary.

Parents and classroom aides spoke before the Board of Education at its Thursday meeting at Malibu City Hall, alleging that a special education teacher in charge of mod-

SEE ALLEGATIONS PAGE 8

## Homeless man blindsided by rock; in critical condition

BY KEVIN HERRERA  
Editor in Chief

**WILSHIRE BLVD** Santa Monica police are asking for the public's help in identifying a suspect wanted in connection with an assault with a deadly weapon.

Police said Friday the victim is in critical condition and may not survive after he was hit in the head with a rock while eating a hot dog at the corner of Seventh Street and Wilshire Boulevard.

SEE ASSAULT PAGE 9

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## Local

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WEEKEND EDITION, NOVEMBER 5-6, 2011

Santa Monica Daily Press

We have you covered

## ALLEGATIONS

FROM PAGE 1

erate to severely disabled children left her students unattended and improperly restrained them.

Parents were alerted to the alleged acts on Oct. 22 by classroom aides, said parent Christina Ficeto in her presentation to the board.

Since, parents met with district personnel on Oct. 28, but left unsatisfied after being told that an incident had been investigated, and no wrongdoing had been found.

The parents contacted the sheriff's office, and deputies have already taken statements from both parents and aides.

Parents have also retained legal counsel, Ficeto said.

The investigation into the alleged child neglect is being handled by the Los Angeles County Special Victims Bureau, said Sgt. Michael Holland of the Malibu/Lost Hills Station.

Many of the alleged victims cannot speak, and investigators have to rely on witnesses and physical evidence like bruising, Holland said.

Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District staff and administrators are cooperating fully with the investigation, Superintendent Sandra Lyon told the Board of Education at its Thursday meeting.

The district would not comment further, Lyon said, because personnel issues are confidential.

Ficeto challenged the Board of Education to deal with the issue because other school personnel had not witnessed the alleged abuses.

District personnel had similarly not witnessed Thomas Beltran's crimes, she said.

Beltran, a former teacher at Lincoln Middle School, pleaded guilty to multiple counts of sexual molestation involving nine female students in December 2008.

Beltran was arrested that spring, but evidence suggested the district had received at least one complaint about Beltran's behavior toward girls before a student went to the police department in 2008.

He was sentenced to 14 years in prison.

"Those girls are serving life sentences of shame, of guilt, of nightmares, of distrust, of fear, of dignity, of innocence robbed from them," Ficeto said.

The revelation about Beltran led the Board of Education to require an annual report documenting the number of child abuse reports made by school personnel, and which of those complaints involved employees.

According to that report, released in the Oct. 20 meeting agenda, district employees reported 95 suspected instances of abuse, categorized as sexual abuse, physical abuse, general neglect and emotional abuse.

In the 2010-11 school year, employees reported 13 cases of sexual abuse, 54 of physical abuse, eight of general neglect and 20 emotional abuse cases.

All employees are mandated reporters, meaning they have a legal responsibility to report even the suspicion of abuse to authorities.

Teachers, doctors, safety officers and others all fall into the category of "mandated reporter." It can be a misdemeanor for such a person to recognize abuse and not report it.

Chris Perkins, the project manager for a grant that funds [mandatedreporter.ca.org](http://mandatedreporter.ca.org), a free training program for mandated reporters, said that the most important element is to get past the fear of reporting.

"We emphasize that if you have suspicion of child abuse, go ahead and report it," Perkins said. "After that the actual research and an investigation happens. As long as you have a legitimate suspicion of abuse, report it. Even if it becomes unfounded, at least people are looking for these sorts of things."

[ashley@smdp.com](mailto:ashley@smdp.com)

## KIDS

FROM PAGE 3

"I started very young and always wished I could get in touch with famous people that inspired me and already experienced things I hadn't and I wanted to know about," she said. "I thought it would be great to be a part of these young artists' lives and give back to them what I've learned in the industry."

The 32-year-old also is struck by the generational difference. "The talent is insane now," Brandy said, and has a wealth of ways to get attention.

"There were fewer opportunities when I was coming up. There wasn't 'American Idol' or 'Majors & Minors.' 'Star Search' was the only show out there. You had to grind and grind to be discovered," she said.

Talent and the ability to handle the show's challenges were key in choosing the contestants, Bogart said. And there was another important element.

"I wasn't going to cast anyone who was overtrained. I didn't want to spend three weeks 'de-learning' anybody," he said, adding, "We saw plenty of 'pageantry' kids, those who were told every step to take for every note."

Instead, he wanted youngsters who "were primed for someone like myself to step in and say, 'I know what you're going through and I want to help you,'" said Bogart, a songwriter (including Rihanna's "S.O.S.") and music executive.

"N.B.T." takes a more traditional approach, with its compact field of five contestants gradually whittled down by viewer

voting over 10 weeks. The winner will be announced during a Dec. 7 live concert.

The contest, with episodes debuting Fridays, offers a "great way to showcase brand-new talent and expose them to our audience, who's looking for other artists to relate to and get excited about," said Kelly Edwards, Radio Disney's executive director of music and programming.

"N.B.T." launched on Radio Disney four years ago and branched out to TV in its second year. It gives singers a potential entry point to the Disney apparatus that has successfully marketed young sensations including the Jonas Brothers, Miley Cyrus and Selena Gomez.

Edwards spots contenders in clubs, online, through video submissions from kids or their families and with the help of talent representatives.

"I joke that I'm like a 12-year-old," Edwards said, with her radar always on for new performers who will appeal to pre-teens and teenagers. "I found some of my favorite artists looking on YouTube, some of them kids who are not looking to be discovered but are expressing themselves online."

The winner gets Disney concert exposure — season two winner Jasmine Sagginario opened for Justin Bieber — and a shot at recording. But, as with other talent contests, it's not all about being No. 1. Season three finalist Coco Jones is co-starring in a 2012 Disney Channel movie, "Let It Shine."

Contestants who "resonate with the audience and who have the talent and skills" can find opportunities at the Walt Disney Co., Edwards said.

Grown-ups need not apply.