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Brainiacs
Local prep standouts excel on diamond and in classroom
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Circulation 25,890 | www.theacornonline.com | Camarillo and the surrounding areas

District passes budget

Revenue up over last year

By Hector Gonzalez
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When they were planning how Pleasant Valley School District should spend the money it expects to get to run its 11 campuses for

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Acorn file photo

LOOKING AHEAD—The Pleasant Valley School District approved its 2018-19 budget. In all, revenues are projected to be around \$63.7 million and expenditures are projected at \$63.6 million.

Council moves forward with veterans memorial

Camarillo's Constitution Park is often home to happy events such as concerts and movies, but a portion of the park will soon be devoted to a more serious subject: those who died while serving in the armed forces.

The Camarillo City Council voted unanimously June

27 to award a contract worth nearly \$26,000 to Oxnard-based Vogue Sign Company to build a concrete and granite memorial for fallen soldiers from the Camarillo and Somis areas. The council also authorized up to \$10,000 in contingency costs.

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CAMERON KISZLA/Acorn Newspapers

REMEMBERING THOSE LOST—The City Council authorized Vogue Sign Company of Oxnard to build a Constitution Park memorial for fallen service members from the Camarillo and Somis areas. The stone edifice, shown in a computer rendering at top, will go behind the current veterans memorial, above, at the park on Carmen Drive. The new monument will honor those who died in World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War and the global war on terrorism.

Split-second decision



Peace officers don't like proposed bill that changes when police can use deadly force in the field

By Cameron Kiszla
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The shooting of 22-year-old Stephon Clark sits squarely in the middle of a complicated intersection where race, police work, America's history and public perception come together.

The death of the Sacramento man in his grandmother's backyard the night of March 18 continues the debate about the split-second decisions police officers must make when their lives might be in jeopardy.

Clark, a father of two, was shot



MICHAEL COONS/Acorn Newspapers

IT TAKES TRAINING—Ventura County Sheriff's Dep. Jonathan San Jose talks about how to respond to a call of domestic violence in the use-of-force simulator during a recent class at the sheriff's training academy in Camarillo.

by a pair of Sacramento Police Department officers who were responding to a call about a man they believed had vandalized cars

in the neighborhood. When they spotted Clark, they yelled for him to stop. He ran and the officers

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Police say T.O. man preyed on runaways

By Daniel Wolowicz
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A Thousand Oaks man who reportedly plied five runaway teenage girls with drugs and alcohol so he could sexually assault them was arrested June 6 on multiple felony charges, police said in a press release issued July 6.

Ventura County sheriff's officials say between July 2015 and April 2018, Mario Gonzalez-Solano, 30, used booze and drugs to entice runaway girls in the Camarillo area and take them to hotel rooms in T.O. and Camarillo and to a beach in the unincorporated portion of the county, where he would have sex with them.

The girls ranged in age from

14 to 17 years old.

Police say they learned of Gonzalez-Solano on June 4 when deputies responded to the sexual assault of a 17-year-old girl.

Posing as a teenage girl seeking a sexual relationship, a detective contacted Gonzalez-Solano.

According to police, "Solano agreed to pick 'her' up and traveled from Thousand Oaks to Camarillo with the understanding he would be engaging in sexual relations with a minor."

Gonzalez-Solano was met



Gonzalez-Solano

by police and arrested. He was charged with one felony count of forcible rape, one felony count of forced oral copulation, seven felony counts of lewd acts against children and four felony counts of unlawful sexual intercourse with minors.

Following his arrest, detectives conducted an additional investigation and learned of several other unreported victims.

Gonzalez-Solano initially appeared in court June 12 and has since pleaded not guilty to all counts.

He is scheduled to return to court Aug. 14 for an early disposition conference.

Gonzalez-Solano remains in custody at the Todd Road Jail in Santa Paula. He is being held on \$500,000 bail.

Decision

From Page 1 —

gave chase. It ended when the officers fired 20 shots at Clark. He was struck eight times, according to an autopsy report, mostly in his back.

The two officers thought he had a gun. It turned out to be an iPhone. The incident took less than 30 seconds to unfold.

The fatal shooting sparked public outcry from the state capital to Capitol Hill. Footage from that night—taken from the officers' body cameras and from a police helicopter—has been released to the public and remains at the center of an ongoing investigation into the shooting, which is being overseen by the California Department of Justice.

Lawmakers in Sacramento seized the political momentum and took action on a controversial and complicated issue legislators have been trying to pass laws about for years.

Assemblymember Shirley Weber (D-San Diego) co-authored Assembly Bill 931, which raises the legal standard for officers' use of deadly force.

Joe Kocurek, Weber's communications director, said Weber's bill directs officers to use deadly force only when it's "necessary" rather than when it's deemed "reasonable," as currently defined by the U.S. Supreme Court case *Graham v. Connor*.

Kocurek said Weber's bill, which is winding its way through Sacramento, requires officers to de-escalate a dangerous situation unless the use of deadly force is the only viable option to preserve the life of the officer, victim or bystander.

Kocurek said some cities—Seattle is one—already use the "necessary" standard when it comes to deadly force.

"In the military and in several municipalities throughout the United States, they've adopted de-escalation techniques. We still understand that there are situations where the danger is imminent and officers have to act quickly, and then there are situations where that's not the case," he said.

Opponents of the bill, however, say it puts police officers' lives at risk because it further complicates a decision-making process that happens in the blink of an eye.

"There has to be an allowance for the fact that police officers are required to make split-second judgments in circumstances that are tense, uncertain and rapidly evolving about the amount of force in a particular situation," said Jonathan Feldman, a legislative advocate for the California Police Chiefs Association, at a recent state Senate safety committee meeting.

In the Ventura County Sheriff's Office, there is strong opposition to the proposed "necessary" standard. Several deputies told the *Acorn* the standard is too strict and endangers the lives of law enforcement.

Sgt. Eric Buschow said de-escalation is already part of VCSO training and is encouraged if it's safe for everyone involved.

"But situations don't always unfold that way," he said. "People are attacking you and you have people that pose an immediate threat."

Officers must make life-and-death decisions in a matter of seconds, he said. The public, on the other hand, has the luxury of time



MICHAEL COONS/Acorn Newspapers

DEFENSE—Ventura County sheriff's deputies use tasers, pepper spray and handguns equipped with lasers when they are put through a use-of-force simulator at the sheriff's academy in Camarillo.

in deciding whether a shooting is justified. Instead of reacting immediately, as officers must, Buschow said, the public can mull over all of the information that comes out after deadly force is used, rather than relying only on the limited knowledge responding officers have as the incident is unfolding.

For instance, if a 911 caller says a suspect has a gun, officers have to be prepared to engage an armed suspect, even if it's just a teenager with a squirt gun or iPhone in his hand.

Oftentimes, the public judgment is based on knowing the suspect did not have a weapon, Buschow said, even though the responding law enforcement officers had no way of knowing that.

"I've been to a lot of scenes where things don't always turn out the way the dispatcher said when they call," Buschow said.

That's why VCSO's training center on Durley Avenue puts recruits and active officers through a use-of-force simulator. Trainees are given a deputy's belt replete with training weapons (gun, taser, pepper spray and baton) and put through real-life situations like domestic violence, suicide threats and school shootings while Dep. Jonathan San Jose serves as a dispatcher.

The deputies must act how they think is most appropriate. Based on the participant's reaction to the simulation, San Jose can choose how the call proceeds.

If an officer does a good job of talking down a suspect, San Jose can make the virtual suspect comply. If an officer is too aggressive, San Jose can have the virtual suspect run or attack.

"The most powerful weapon is an officer's brain," San Jose said. "I can teach them tactics, I can teach them skills, but . . . it has to be (used) in conjunction with our use-of-force policy (which is based on case law)."

But that policy is based on the reasonable standard, not a necessary standard, and much of it relies on an officer's judgment and perceptions to determine what a reasonable response is.

A deputy's judgment is often one of his or her greatest strengths, Sgt. Greg Margetin said, so it's important to weed out recruits with biases.

That's why the academy puts recruits through 24 hours of bias and sensitivity training, Margetin

said, which includes eight hours at the Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles. Margetin said if a recruit has any biases, they'll be exposed during the six-month training period that forces them to depend on classmates who come from a variety of backgrounds.

If a recruit struggles to work with a classmate because of race, ethnicity, religion or another bias, they won't make it through, Margetin said.

"If somebody came in with a bias, that would probably become pretty apparent right away to the rest of the class."

The numbers tend to support Margetin's claims. Since 2010, officers from the Ventura County Sheriff's Office—which serves about half of Ventura County's population—have been involved in 14 officer-involved shootings.

In contrast, Kern County, which has about the same number of people as Ventura County, has had 124 officer-involved shootings since 2010.

Some cities in Ventura County have their own police departments, but the number of officer-involved shootings, both fatal and nonfatal, has also been low. The Simi Valley Police Department has had three such shootings since 2010, as has the Port Hueneme Police Department. The Ventura Police Department has had four.

Margetin attributes the Ventura County Sheriff's Office's comparatively low number of officer-involved-shootings to training and the relationship the department has developed with the community. The VCSO, he said, makes a conscious effort to show the good law enforcement can do.

Building the public's trust starts by reaching out to schools and other groups, he said.

"We humanize ourselves, (show) that we're not just robots with uniforms on, (and so) we have better relationships and develop that trust," Margetin said.

With a mutual respect between the public and the VCSO, use of force is less necessary, preventing the types of incidents that have launched public outcry in cities like Ferguson, Mo., and Baltimore, he said.

This has helped create a good relationship between the public and police, a vital part of a strong community, Margetin said.

"If you can't trust the police, then who can you trust?" he said.

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