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LARKSPUR

NEW NAME, SAME GOAL

Nonprofit now called Schurig Center for Brain Injury Recovery to honor founder



PHOTOS BY JAMES CACCIATORE — SPECIAL TO THE MARIN INDEPENDENT JOURNAL

Ellen Perper, right, leads a yoga class Thursday at the Schurig Center for Brain Injury Recovery in Larkspur. The center serves about 400 people a year.

By Adrian Rodriguez
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In the past five years, the Brain Injury Network of the Bay Area has tripled its budget and the number of clients it serves and has responded by expanding its programs.

Patricia Gill, executive director of the Larkspur-based nonprofit, said that's part of the reason it has changed the organization's name to the Schurig Center for Brain Injury Recovery, which honors the namesake Karen Schurig, who founded it in 1985.

The center, under the new name, is also part of a team that is developing a Marin concussion coalition, which is aimed at educating parents, athletes, coaches and physicians about the risk of concussions in youth sports, and how — with timely treatment — injured players can heal.

"We wanted to put a focus on the recovery aspect of brain injury by having it in our name," she said. "That's what makes our center unique. A lot of people are coming through our programs and going back out into the community, which is something you can feel good about."

Gill said the center served nearly 400 people in the past year alone. About 70 percent of those clients were new to the nonprofit.

The center, which operates on an approximately \$700,000 annual budget with about 12 staff members, offers an array of rehabilitative and educational services to patients and families affected by an acquired brain injury. These include injuries from blunt force trauma, as in a car accident, or some medical condition, such as a stroke or aneurysm.

NAME » PAGE 2



Program coordinator Brad Leonard, left, and a class participant demonstrate how neurons work during a class at the Schurig Center for Brain Injury Recovery in Larkspur.

"We wanted to put a focus on the recovery aspect of brain injury by having it in our name. That's what makes our center unique."

— Patricia Gill, executive director Schurig Center for Brain Injury Recovery

SAN RAFAEL

Base for homeless reducing footprint

Ritter Center details steps to ease complaints over downtown facility

By Janis Mara
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An "ambassador" program, electric charging stations, a lost-and-found area, a new parking spot for the big yellow truck and several other changes are in store for San Rafael's Ritter Center.

The changes will likely be in place within a month, and come in response to specific criticisms and suggestions from residents who have long complained about drug dealing, litter and human waste left by clients of the downtown homeless center.

The changes are in addition to an agreement hammered out earlier this month by the city and the center in which Ritter plans to move elements of its food pantry, showers and mail service from its site at 16 Ritter St.

The goal of all the changes is to reduce the effects of Ritter's clients on the neighborhood.

The ambassador program was suggested by Hugo Landecker, who has lived in the Gerstle Park neighborhood of San Rafael since 1968 and weighs in frequently about homelessness in the area.

RITTER » PAGE 2

CIVIC CENTER

County expands veterans' office to meet demand

By Mark Prado
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The Marin County Veterans Services Office has expanded to help the county's estimated 15,500 former military personnel apply for federal benefits, pension claims and health care services.

The office's top official said most veterans need more assistance as they get older, and that new veterans from recent foreign conflicts need aid as they assimilate back to civilian life.

"Due to the volume, complexity, and time-sensitive nature of the needs of the veterans, a decision was made to add an additional person this budget year to work with me to assist this important population," said Sean Stephens, the veterans services officer.

COUNTY » PAGE 2

SACRAMENTO

Bill fueled by Stanford assault clears hurdle

By Jessica Calefati
Bay Area News Group

SACRAMENTO » Legislation inspired by outrage over a former student athlete's light punishment for sexually assaulting an unconscious woman outside a Stanford frat party cleared its last hur-

dle Monday when the state Assembly unanimously endorsed it on a bipartisan vote.

California law treats sexual assault of a conscious person as a more severe crime than attacking an unconscious person. Brock Turner's case, and the gripping testimonial his victim

read in court and later published online, drew national attention to the disparity.

Assembly Bill 2888, written by Santa Clara County District Attorney Jeff Rosen and carried by three Bay Area lawmakers — Assemblymen Evan Low and Bill Dodd and state Sen. Jerry Hill — seeks

to eliminate that imbalance by imposing the same punishment for both crimes. It would prohibit probation in cases like Turner's, effectively requiring jail time for anyone convicted of rape or sexual assault of an unconscious or intoxicated person.

BILL » PAGE 2

OBITUARY

Gene Wilder, star of Mel Brooks' films, dies at 83

The character actor who starred in film classics "Blazing Saddles" and "Young Frankenstein" has died. **PAGE A5**



NEW YORK

Clinton aide ditches husband in new scandal

Hillary Clinton aide Huma Abedin is done playing the good wife to former congressman Anthony Weiner. **PAGE A7**

BUSINESS

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TODAY IN HISTORY

1861

Union Gen. John C. Fremont instituted martial law in Missouri and declared slaves there to be free.

1862

Confederate forces won victories against the Union at the Second Battle of Bull Run in Manassas, Virginia, and the Battle of Richmond in Kentucky.

1945

U.S. Gen. Douglas MacArthur arrived in Japan to set up Allied occupation headquarters.

1954

President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed the Atomic Energy Act of 1954, which was intended to promote private development of nuclear energy.

1963

The "Hot Line" communications link between Washington and Moscow went into operation.

1967

The Senate confirmed the appointment of Thurgood Marshall as the first black justice on the U.S. Supreme Court.

1991

Azerbaijan declared its independence, joining the stampede of republics seeking to secede from the Soviet Union.

Birthdays

Actor Bill Daily is 89. Actress Elizabeth Ashley is 77. Actor Ben Jones is 75. Cartoonist R. Crumb is 73. Olympic gold medal skier Jean-Claude Killy is 73. Actress Peggy Lipton is 70. Comedian Lewis Black is 68.

Star report

Affleck hints that Deathstroke may be next villain

Ben Affleck shared a video that hints comic book villain Deathstroke will soon become Batman's next foe on the big screen.

Affleck posted the video Monday morning of someone dressed as Deathstroke without any explanation. The Wrap reported he will appear in the next Batman standalone movie, though it's not known whether he'll be part of the Justice League film.

Maybe Ben and Matt Damon had some beers and decided to role play. "Justice League" is due in theaters Nov. 10, 2017.

— Tony Hicks, Bay Area News Group

LOTTERY

WINNING NUMBERS

Daily 3 Afternoon: 9, 9, 4

Daily 3 Evening: 1, 0, 6

Daily 4: 7, 0, 0, 4

Fantasy 5:

4, 16, 18, 23, 33

Daily Derby

1st: 11, Money Bags

2nd: 9, Winning Spirit

3rd: 10, Solid Gold

Race Time: 1:40.28

SUPER LOTTO PLUS

Saturday's drawing:

20, 25, 37, 44, 45

Mega number: 27

Wednesday's estimated jackpot: \$30 million

MEGA MILLIONS

Friday's drawing:

10, 11, 31, 41, 44

Mega number: 14

Today's estimated jackpot: \$84 million

POWERBALL

Saturday's drawing:

4, 32, 48, 49, 63

Powerball: 20

Wednesday's estimated jackpot: \$154 million

Name

FROM PAGE 1

The services are designed to stimulate healing. People who suffer brain injuries can experience changes to thinking, language, learning, emotions, behavior and sensation.

At first the center launched as a series of support groups. It quickly grew to include a day activity program where clients learned coping strategies and life skills through classes such as art therapy, creative writing, yoga, gardening and singing.

There is also a class to teach clients about their injuries and how to manage emotions. There is also a support group for family members.

The center has also added an individual therapeutic computer program, occupational therapy, speech therapy, adaptive movement, a concussion education program and an expanded referral program. They will soon add a high-functioning independent living skills class, too.

Dr. Jim Wilson, a neuropsychologist who teaches a post-concussion education class at the center, said that when someone suffers a brain injury, insurance often only covers only a few weeks of care.

"The hospital provides an initial role in terms of survival, but in terms of ongoing care this type of program that we have here is really focused on daily needs, activities of daily liv-



Program coordinator Brad Leonard, right, uses a model to demonstrate how neurons communicate during a class Thursday at the Schurig Center for Brain Injury Recovery in Larkspur.

ing the development of interests and activities that promote recovery," he said.

When it comes to concussions, he said, about 80 percent of sufferers heal with timely treatment. Another 20 to 25 percent will endure residual problems.

Patricia Kendall, medical group administrator for Kaiser Permanente's San Rafael Medical Center, is leading the concussion coalition. She said part of the coalition's goal is to address concerns raised in a Marin County Civil Grand Jury report that recommended Marin schools take steps

to protect student athletes from long-term health consequences of repeated head injuries.

"What we are trying to do is connect all the dots, coming up with really good guidelines, so that if there is a child hurt at a school game, everyone is comfortable caring for him or her," she said, "from the athletic trainer, to coach, and making sure there is a comfortable handoff from pediatrician or ER to the parents."

Gill said the organization relies on donations from people and small family foundations, and said while

other programs exist, there is no other resource like this in Marin.

Schurig, who died of breast cancer in 2009, founded the center after her daughter, Lise, suffered a traumatic brain injury in a car crash in 1975. The Marin Brain Injury Network was formed in 1983 and became a nonprofit organization two years later.

Lise Schurig, who still attends classes at the center, joked that she thinks the new name is a bit too long, and Schurig is too hard to spell, but she likes the change.

"It's really important to have somewhere to go everyday," she said. "Everyone here is a friend, and there are so many great people to be around."

Novato resident Theresa Kilgariff agreed. She has been attending programs at the center for nearly 20 years. She suffers from anoxic brain damage, which is caused by a loss of oxygen, in her case, due to heart failure.

She enjoys the art and music lessons and "I like to tell other people what I'm thinking," she said. "It makes life easier."

Ritter

FROM PAGE 1

"It was an idea I came up with. The participants in the Downtown Streets Team represent a peer group (and) I think could successfully approach others who are doing things that aren't right," Landecker said.

The Downtown Streets Team has been working with San Rafael's homeless population for three years. The team enlists people living on the streets to work cleaning streets, sidewalks and public parking areas in the city's downtown.

"Most homeless people are good people, and their image is tarnished by those who don't act as they should," Landecker said.

"As an example: Someone who uses Ritter's services parks in a merchant's parking lot. The merchant needs those parking spaces. They are not for Ritter people," Landecker said. "That's where the ambassadors could step in and say, 'Excuse me, this is not a parking place for you, this is for the business. Please move

your vehicle."

Such feedback another homeless person is "much better than from an uninvolved citizen or the police department," Landecker said.

Andrew Hening, San Rafael director of homeless planning and outreach, agreed with Landecker.

"I think the messaging is a lot easier when it comes from a peer. It makes for a more productive conversation," Hening said.

"I'd like to know what hours and days the ambassadors will be working," Landecker said. He said that even though Ritter is closed all weekend, homeless people still congregate in the vicinity.

"The ambassador program right now is just a pilot, so at present it's Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to noon," Hening said. He said this might change over time depending on the results.

Hening said he expects all the various changes could be in place as early as mid- to late September.

"The big yellow truck parking place should be ready to go next week," he said. "We found city parking a block away that is con-



The Ritter Center, which serves homeless and low-income people in San Rafael, has drawn complaints over litter, alleged drug dealing and other problems in the neighborhood.

veniently close, but not in the way."

Landecker applauded the new parking spot for the center's truck, which he said is there "pretty much there 24/7."

"It should not be parked permanently on Ritter Street," he said.

As part of the agreement signed by Ritter and the city, the center will no longer offer food pantry services for the homeless. In addition to this change, outlined in the agreement, Ritter will be creating an appointment system for the

remaining clients to prevent rushes that create congestion on the street.

"Currently there are specific hours for the food pantry and people line up before opening time, so you get this huge backup," Landecker said. "I think the idea has merit for sure and I can't think of any downsides. It probably would make a big difference."

Downtown businesses have expressed concerns about people loitering outside to use Wi-Fi and electrical outlets, specifically at Fourth and A streets. In re-

sponse, Ritter plans to start providing electrical charging stations and Wi-Fi at the center.

"This will probably make a difference," Landecker said. "I'm not sure if it will be a 100 percent solution, but any little bit helps."

Other changes include installing larger lockers at the center. The hope is that this will keep people from leaving their belongings on the street or in front of businesses.

The center also plans to institute a lost and found in hopes of discouraging people from discarding clothing and personal items nearby.

"I met with Ritter Friday and we are already talking about implementing everything within the next three weeks or so," Hening said. "The main thing is that the city and Ritter have been hearing community feedback and we want to put changes into place to mitigate concerns."

"The emails and phone calls I've been getting (about the additional changes) have been positive. I'm glad Hugo feels positive about it as well," Hening said.

County

FROM PAGE 1

The office is now staffed with a full-time eligibility worker, a part-time mental health outreach employee as well as a part-time general staff member. The new staffing is partially paid for by federal and state funds, including Proposition 63, the 2004 state voter-approved Mental Health Services Act.

Ron Paul, the eligibility worker, served in the U.S. Army from 1984 to 1990, mostly in special weapons assembly and field artillery.

"Ron is a veteran himself, which will go a long way in earning trust and credibility with the clients he will serve," said Stephens, who



Stephens

served four combat tours in Afghanistan in the Army.

The Veterans Services Office was established in 1946, just after the end of World War II when most wartime military personnel were coming back to civilian life. Mort Tallen, a U.S. Army World War II veteran, served as the county's veterans services officer for 29 years, retiring at age 92 in 2010. After retiring from active duty, Stephens volunteered for Tallen before taking over the position in

2012.

The office notes that many veterans are unaware of the services and benefits to which they are entitled. The office can help veterans learn more about their entitlements and receive assistance obtaining services and benefits.

"Our hope is that bolstering staffing will decrease the amount of wait time necessary to obtain an appointment with our office," said Kari Beuerman, the county's Health and Hu-

man Services assistant director, in a statement. "We would ask for ongoing patience from the community, as we are still a small staff with a high volume of work, so some wait time for an appointment will continue to be a reality."

The Marin Veterans Services Office is at 10 N. San Pedro Road in San Rafael, across from the Marin Civic Center. More information is available at marinhhs.org/veterans-services.

Bill

FROM PAGE 1

Insisting the measure will make California safer for women, Rosen thanked Turner's victim for sharing her "courageous letter" with the world.

"It gave all of us the inspiration to make sure the next Brock Turner either leaves the next Emily Doe alone, or the next Brock Turner goes to prison," Rosen said in a statement. Under the flexible sentencing guidelines in place now for those convicted of an assault involving an unconscious person, Santa Clara County Superior Court Judge Aaron Persky in June ordered Turner to serve six months in county jail plus three years of probation rather than sending him to prison. He's set to be



Brock Turner, 20, center, makes his way into the Santa Clara Superior Courthouse in Palo Alto in June. Turner, a former Stanford swimmer, was convicted of three counts of felony sexual assault on a 22-year-old young woman on the Stanford campus following a party in 2015.

released on Friday after serving three months. The early release was widely expected due to his lack of prior criminal history.

Persky's judgment drew

much scorn, and next month, at his own request, he'll be transferred from criminal court to civil court.

"Judge Persky's ruling

was unjustifiable and morally wrong," said Low, D-Cupertino. "While we can't go back and change what happened, we can make sure it never happens again."

Michele Dauber, the Stanford law professor leading a campaign to recall Persky, said California's penal code on rape and sexual assault should be rewritten and simplified but that the modification sought by AB 2888 is a "common sense" adjustment.

"We shouldn't reward rapists just because they didn't use force," Dauber said.

The ACLU of California remains the legislation's most vocal opponent, and Natasha Minsker, director of the group's Center for Advocacy and Policy, said she will lobby Gov. Jerry Brown to reject it.

"The well-intentioned mandatory minimum sen-

tence this bill creates will have negative impacts on communities of color and other unintended consequences," Minsker said.

Last week, the Assembly took a largely symbolic step when it unanimously approved Assembly Bill 701, authored by Assemblywomen Cristina Garcia, D-Bell Gardens, and Susan Eggman, D-Stockton. The measure aims to broaden the definition of rape to include forced penetration of any body part with any foreign object. Both bills now await action by Brown, who has until Sept. 30 to sign or veto them.

The Assembly on Monday also approved Senate Bill 1069, authored by Sen. Bob Wieckowski, D-Fremont, which makes it easier for homeowners to build so-called "granny flats." It must go back to the Senate for final approval.