

## IN THIS SECTION

LOCAL NEWS: PAGES A2-A8

SOUTHWEST RIVERSIDE COUNTY ..... A3  
 RIVERSIDE-CORONA-JURUPA VALLEY ..... A4  
 SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY ..... A5-6  
 HEMET-SAN JACINTO AND THE PASS ..... A8  
 CALIFORNIA ..... A10-12

## LOCAL NEWS

## IN SECTION C

LOCAL NEWS: PAGES C1, C3

TV LISTINGS ..... C2  
 MOVIES ..... C5  
 COMICS ..... C6-7  
 CROSSWORD ..... C7  
 OBITUARIES ..... C8



CASSIE MACDUFF

## TRIALS TEST KIDS' METTLE

The defendant was found not guilty, although circumstantial evidence piled up against him like snow in a blizzard.

He had a motive to kill his classmate: She was threatening to report him for plagiarism at their college.

He stood to lose a \$20 million trust fund from his grandfather that required him to maintain a 3.5 grade point average and graduate in four years.

He had the opportunity: No one had seen him at the Woolly Wizard festival during the two hours between the time he confronted the victim outside a bar and when her slain body was found at her campsite.

Everyone knew the defendant carried a hunting knife of the kind the coroner said could cause the wound.

But the knife and the blue shirt he wore — which matched fibers found on the victim's body — had disappeared by the next morning.

When he was arrested, the defendant had a loaded handgun in his pocket, though he had no concealed weapon permit.

Those are the bare-bones "facts" of the homicide case six high school Mock Trial teams argued in semifinals Tuesday evening.

I sat in on the "trial" between Cajon High School and Redlands East Valley High School, in a real courtroom in downtown San Bernardino before Judge Kyle Brodie.

The Redlands East Valley team took the defense. Cajon played the prosecution.

First, the defense tried to have the weapons charge thrown out on constitutional grounds. The judge grilled the prosecution on its merits. The prosecution prevailed.

In opening arguments, a composed and articulate "prosecutor," Cajon 11th-grader Nia Bush, painted a picture of a promising life cut short by a calculating killer.

"Defense lawyer" Sean Rhodes, an 11th-grader from REV, came back strong, saying the evidence would show his client didn't do it.

Other students played the witnesses. Standouts were Marc Frizzell, a Cajon 11th-grader who played the victim's BFF with flair (he told me later he has no dramatic training), and REV 11th-grader Autumn Gerber, who played the defendant's self-absorbed girlfriend.

In closing arguments, the teams' tactics diverged:

"Prosecutor" Nicholas Ainsworth appealed to the "jury." (The 14-year-old ninth-grader told me it was the first time he'd done closing arguments, replacing a senior who moved away.)

"Defense attorney" Blake Berich appealed to the judge. (I don't think that's why his side won; the judge found "reasonable doubt.")

The six teams wouldn't know which two will advance to Saturday's finals until after my deadline Wednesday.

Mock trials, designed by the Constitutional Rights Foundation, help students learn the legal system and develop analytical and public speaking skills.

Competing against different schools and playing different roles in successive rounds helps the students learn to think on their feet, said Robert Grande, the Cajon team's head coach.

Students in this program get great preparation for life after high school, whether a career in law or otherwise.

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## School board OKs health study

San Bernardino trustees allow testing of children to gauge the health impact of a rail yard's pollution

BY DAVID DANELSKI  
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Loma Linda University medical researchers will be allowed to test schoolchildren to determine whether they have been affected by pollution from a nearby rail yard, San Bernardino City Unified School District trustees decided late Tuesday night.

The unanimous vote reversed a September decision by district administrators not to participate in the study.

Last month, following meetings between the researchers and district staff, district Interim Superintendent Yolanda Ortega decided to put the matter before the elected school board.

Sam Soret, one of the lead researchers, said he had hoped to test the schoolchildren sooner. However, his team has been able to focus on other parts of the study, including testing resi-

dents at their homes, he said.

With the board's vote Tuesday, the Loma Linda medical school team plans to park a mobile clinic at the Ramona-Alessandro Elementary School campus in southwest San Bernardino and test children's respiratory health in late February.

Soret, an associate professor of environmental and occupational health, said he's happy to move forward with the research.

Besides learning about more about rail yard emissions, it will be an opportunity to teach Ramona-Alessan-

dro students about health and pollution, he said.

"We are going to have a school assembly to include the students," Soret said. "We have written a play, and we think that would be a fun way to present the issues to the kids."

The school is two blocks north of the BNSF Railway yard in southwest San Bernardino.

In 2008, state officials determined that diesel pollution from the busy yard — where cargo is moved between trains and big-rig trucks — posed the highest

cancer risk to nearby residents of all rail yards in California.

School board members said parents wanted the study so they could learn about how pollution in the area may be affecting their children.

"The bottom line is the health of our children and staff," board President Barbara Flores said during the public discussion late Tuesday.

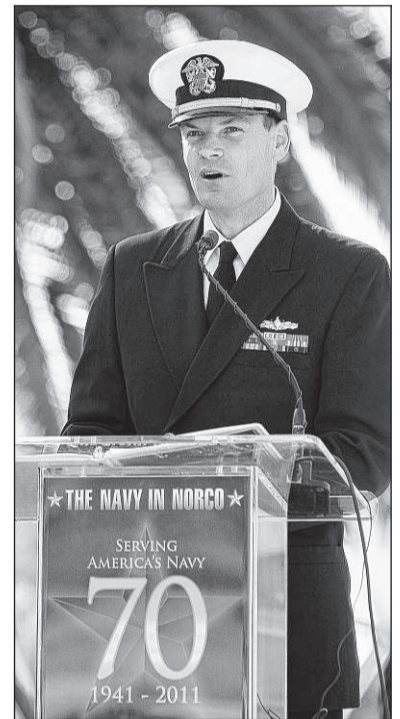
Board member Judi Penman said she feared the study could burden the dis-

SEE STUDY/AG

## NORCO: NAVAL CENTER OBSERVES PEARL HARBOR ATTACK, HONORS YEARS OF DEDICATION



Navy veteran and Pearl Harbor survivor John Busma, 94, rings bell during Pearl Harbor commemoration. GREG VOJTOK/U.S. NAVY PHOTO



Naval Surface Warfare Center, Corona Division Chief of Staff Lt. Cmdr. Rob Kuffel talks about childhood experiences that led him to become a naval officer.

## RECALLING A 'DAY OF INFAMY'

STAFF REPORTS

The Naval Weapons Station Seal Beach Detachment Norco honored the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Japanese attack of Pearl Harbor on Wednesday. The center is home to the Naval Surface Warfare Center, Corona Division.

During the fifth annual event — dubbed the Pearl Harbor Commemorative Celebration — Naval Surface Warfare Center, Corona Division Chief of Staff Lt. Cmdr. Rob Kuffel spoke about the childhood experiences that drew him to become a naval officer.

Themed "Keeping Traditions Alive," the event also honored 70 years of Navy presence in Riverside County, first as a naval hospital serving wounded from Pearl Harbor and currently as the Navy's independent assessment agent and one of its newest federal labs.



U.S. Marine Corps Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps Silent Drill Team perform at the Pearl Harbor Commemorative Celebration.

## Riverside County hires technology chief

BY DUANE W. GANG  
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A Los Angeles city executive will take over the job of Riverside County technology chief in January.

Kevin Crawford, 51, will be the chief information officer, overseeing information technology and financial computer systems, the county announced Wednesday in a news release.

Since 2008, Crawford has served as assistant general manager for the Los Angeles infrastructure and communications bureau, which has about 300 employees.

Crawford replaces Nathan Colodney, who was fired on Sept. 22, the same day supervisors accepted the resignation of former county executive officer Bill Luna. Luna had hired

Colodney in 2010.

In October, county officials said they could not comment on Colodney's departure, but supervisors confirmed he was fired. Colodney oversaw all of the county's data and information technology operations but had clashed with supervisors and others over many issues. For instance, a proposal to consolidate the board's own information technology department with the rest of the county was met with resistance.

Interim County Executive Officer Larry Parrish made the decision to hire Crawford.

The new technology chief has an extensive background working for public agencies, according to the county news release.

Before joining Los Angeles, Craw-

ford from 2000 to 2008 was the chief information officer for the Puget Sound Transit Authority in Seattle, and a senior manager for the Port of Seattle from 2000 to 2003, according to the news release. He also worked for the Weyerhaeuser Company, a large Washington state-based pulp and paper company, from 1993 to 2000.

Crawford has a master's degree in computer information systems from Boston University and a dual bachelor's degree in psychology and political science from the University of Washington, according to the news release. He was a U.S. Air Force officer for nine years, according to his LinkedIn profile online.

In Riverside County, Crawford will oversee a staff of about 200. His annual salary will be \$204,555.

## SETTING IT STRAIGHT

**CLARIFICATION:** A story Wednesday on a Field Poll gauging public opinion on pension changes was unclear in describing the union-county negotiations. In contract talks with the Service Employees International Union Local 721, Riverside County wanted employees to pay more toward their own retirement and have newly hired employees receive lower retirement benefits. The SEIU was willing to have employees contribute toward retirement but also wanted pay and cost-of-living increases, among other contract provisions, according to a summary of its counteroffer. The SEIU rejected the county's final offer, citing the pay cuts and a dispute over a fairness agreement, among other reasons.



## 'Book 'em, Dan!

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