

The San Diego Pro Chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists 2007 Awards

1st Place Award: Daily Newspaper Arts and Entertainment Writing

Joanna Smiley Today's Local News Weapons of Mass Expression Comment: Smiley spins hopeful yet sad and ironic tale of Marine rappers caught up in the Iraq War, traumatized by conflict, but yet aiming for a break in the music industry and getting their crack performing military base. Very interesting and nice piece.



Kymani White, front row from left, Sgt. Gabriel DeJesus and Naval Petty Officer 3rd Class Terrance Hampton are members of the rap groups Emcee Technique and West Bound. The groups performed June 29 at Camp Pendleton. Peter Nagaini

LIFESTYLE

Rap

>From B1

a "great" Marine, killed by an improvised explosive device.

"I've got post traumatic stress disorder," the burly Marine said as he started to choke up.

"Rap music is healing for me," he said. "You get a chance to say things and put things into words that normally people wouldn't understand."

"Rules of Engagement," an original beat created on an Apple Power Mac G4, is a song about the group's "unromanticized" experiences in combat.

The lyrics in chorus two, second verse, read: "Get scarred and bullet-holed daily, I'm thinking the next war might be wit' Haiti, cause nights I cried, played cards wit' friends, tha next day they lost they lives (why)?"

The third verse reads: "Mister Hussein this ain't no game. Apply remedial action like tap, rack, bang (shot), Bodies getting wet and it ain't by rain, by the time I get home I'm half past insane."

"Our eyes are our windows," Thomas said. "There's nothing glorious. War is death and destruction, we portray what we see. We try to get people to understand not the politics, ... the truth. What you don't see in the news."

Southunoyz was recently offered a record deal by a "pro-military" rep from Universal Music Group, according to Thomas, but the group is "back at the bottom again" because the Marines in the group (excluding Duncan) will be serving in the military until 2009.

"We're shopping around and hoping someone can accommodate us," he said. "We want to serve our country and do music."

"Even if you don't believe in the war or the politics, you believe in the mission, in taking care of each other. Somebody's got to do it, right?"

Weapons of mass expression



Marine group raps about 'what you don't see in the news'

By Joanna Smiley | joanna@tlnews.net

"Mama keep askin' me 'Baby, what's wrong?' All I can say is 'Baby I wanna go home.' I'm one man and I'm in a war. But I don't know what I'm dying for. Left, left, right, left!"

— "Rules of Engagement," Southunoyz

Lights out. Curtains up.

Boom, boom, boom, the bass ricocheted as Cpl. Brian Thomas burst on stage in a whirlwind of raw emotion. U.S. Marine by day, "Noyz" by night, Thomas' most powerful weapon isn't a machine gun — it's a microphone.

Thomas performed June 29 at Camp Pendleton's first rap show in the South Mesa Club, a dimly lit lounge not far from the main gate. Oceanside rappers including Emcee Technique, Lil' Uno, West Bound, DJ Focus and four dancers, who graduated last month from an Oceanside high school, also performed.

The show attracted a crowd of about 50 people, a small number because of the difficulty recruiting civilians.

"We do a show the same, whether it's 40,000 or four fans," Thomas said. Lawrence F. Sangis, manager at the South Mesa Club, was still pleased with the turnout.

"It's nice to see Marines advancing in interests that they have and sharing their talents with the base," he said. Naval Petty Officer 3rd Class Ter-

rance Hampton, of the rap group West Bound, had slept only two hours the previous night.

"I'm blessed," he said. "I'm just happy we got a chance to do something on base for the Marines, for everybody."

The first thing group members will tell you is that Southunoyz is more of a movement than a band. All four members met while serving in Iraq in 2002; all four have combat awards to show for it.

Dominique "Yung Sip" Duncan, 23, of Southunoyz, is now honorably discharged, but was in his second deployment when they started recording.

"That's what I don't miss about the Marine Corps," he said with a sigh.

Southunoyz began rapping in their barracks, writing rhymes and thoughts down on "anything we could get our hands on," said Thomas.

Their sound and CD "The Mason Dixon Movement" combines gritty lyrics with a lighter side, a slice of Southern life (the members are from Texas, Georgia, Mississippi and Louisiana).

On April 1, 2005, Southunoyz had its biggest career break. The band was invited to perform in front of 50,000 Marines, sailors and military families at Camp Pendleton's Rockin' the Corps concert.

They shared the stage with Destiny's Child, Kiss, Ted Nugent, Jah Rule and Godsmack.

"We're really humble," said Thomas. "Even if we made millions we'd be humble about it. Being in combat we've seen it all; that takes away a lot of the excitement."

Thomas performed combat operations in Iraq from 2003-04. He was stationed in Mahmoudiya, Iraq. He recalls a particularly "dark day" when he was the one who had to report the death of

Cpl. Brian "Noyz" Thomas, a rapper with the group Southunoyz, expresses himself and his combat experiences through rap music.

Rap B3 >

Reach reporter Joanna Smiley at 760.752.6735.

Dancing outside the box

Gays embrace an American tradition: square dancing

By Joanna Smiley | joanna@theews.net

Mike Neihsel stood in the Anaheim Marriott lobby clad in khaki shorts and a black polo shirt embroidered with a rainbow-sail logo. A mix of coffee, nicotine and adrenaline pumped through his veins.

Neihsel, 51, had left his home in Escondido at 6 a.m. that day with one thing on his mind: square dancing.

He wasn't alone. Neihsel was one of nearly 1,000 people who gathered July 1 at the hotel for the 23rd annual International Association of Gay Square Dance Clubs (IAGSDC) convention.

Some of the dancers flew in from as far away as Japan and Grand Rapids, Mich., to do-si-do.

Coincidentally, hundreds of teenagers disguised as action heroes were also in town for the Anime (AX) Expo 2006. A boy with a purple mohawk winced as he brushed shoulders with a gay square dancer in a pink tutu. The third group to book the hotel that weekend, a Christian televangelist group, had yet to arrive.

"It's wonderful here," Neihsel said. "The air is cranked way up, we're dancing, I'm seeing people I get to see once a year and once a year only." He floated into the main ballroom with his head held high and his smile utterly contagious.

Dance

>From B1

in the early 1900s probably had no idea how popular square dancing would become.

To unwind from a hard day's work, pioneers would gather in front of a fiddle player and twist and twirl their neighbors. It became a grand old American pastime.

Square dancing is the official state dance of 22 states, including California. However, in recent years the straight square dancing community has seen a decline. At this year's 55th National Square Dance Convention in San Antonio, approximately 7,000 people attended, a two-thirds drop from 1994.

Vivian McCannon, 88, of San Antonio, has been on the National Square Dance Convention Executive Committee for 32 years. The San Antonio convention was her last before retiring.

McCannon said she isn't keen on gays appropriating the square dancing tradition.

"I'm not in favor of (gays), and I'm not exactly sure why they've come into square dancing," she said. "Gays are a touchy subject wherever you go. I've seen some at straight clubs. As long as they stay to themselves and aren't bothering anyone, it's OK."

heels knowing we are dancing in a welcoming place." For Neihsel, it's all about the people.

"It's such a diverse group from all ages and backgrounds that comes together for this one common interest," he said. "There's also the benefits of socialization and physical activity. We have a guy in Finest City Squares (the San Diego group Neihsel is a member of) who is 80 years old and square dancing, so it's got to be good for you."

Barbara Klein is a straight square dancer who attended the convention with her friend Melinda, a member of Tucson Squares.

"What I love about it is that it's high energy and much more stylized than straight square dancing," she said. "Gay square dancing is not what you think of when you think of the high school honky-tonk."

Roots of the dance

New England settlers and immigrant groups who brought folk music to America

Dance B2 >

The gay square dancing boom

It's a scene that has grown significantly since its Florida debut in 1977. IAGSDC, which formed in 1983, includes 60 clubs, 2,400 members and international affiliates in Canada and Japan. For the past 15 years, the community has been growing steadily, according to Karl Jaeckel, archivist with IAGSDC and one of 10 people who has been to all 23 of the group's conventions.

"If I had to pick three reasons why we're growing, I would say it's because we operate as singles' clubs, so it's a great social activity," Jaeckel said. "We don't require uniformed clothing, and there is an added element of excitement with gay square dancing. We kick up our

Gay squares

- No special attire
- Groove to everything from hip-hop to country-western tunes
- Callers ad-lib and crack jokes
- A square has eight people in four couples; men and women can (and do) dance with the same as well as the opposite sex
- Partners not necessary; part of the experience is that you never know who you're going to twirl with next.

Straight squares

- Prefer traditional square dance attire, such as prairie skirts and long-sleeve Western-style shirts
- Most is strictly country-western music
- Callers typically stick to routine calls
- Eight people form a square of four male-female couples
- Dancers are encouraged to arrive with partners.



Fabian Alvarado, of San Francisco, and Paul Weiss, of San Diego, from left, perform a "weave the ring" maneuver at the International Association of Gay Square Dancing Clubs' annual gathering.

Gay acceptance: a work in progress

Brian Smith, treasurer of IAGSDC and a member of the Vancouver group Squares Across the Border, said about 20 percent of Saturday's attendees were reluctant to wear their passion for gay square dancing on their sleeves.

"There is less reason to hide in Canada," he said. "With everything going on in America, the trend is to hide. Where I'm from, gays can get married, gays can get divorced, gays can even file income taxes as a couple."

David Eppelheimer, a 52-year-old gay square dancer and kindergarten teacher from Grand Rapids, Mich., said July 1 was his 10th convention.

"I've always treated myself as a second-class citizen," he said, smiling at a friend he recognized from last year's dance. "Now I realize I don't want to believe that anymore. It feels good to be accepted here. It feels good to be in this room full of a thousand people who have dealt with it or understand and are straight."

In a room down the hall — the designated lesbian square dancer suite — a discussion ensued about why there are more gay men than lesbian

square dancers.

"Men need this outlet," said Olivia Pickette, a square dancer with DC Lambda Squares. "They can hang here and be themselves. It seems more culturally accepted to be a gay woman right now."

Sarah Skratulia, a teenager who sparkled in green sequins, whizzed by on her way to the Anime Expo.

"I haven't seen too many women square dancers, just kind of scary-looking, gay old men," she said loudly.

Peggy Waters, another member of DC Lambda Squares, chimed in. "We see that people have the closet open, but not all the way," she said.

Suddenly, a woman who resides in Oceanside surfaced from behind a soda machine. She said that she had to step out of a photo earlier in the day because she works in the military. (She declined to be named in this story.)

She has three more months until she is discharged, she said. She explained to the group that her sexuality is not accepted in her line of work. If she discloses to her commander that she is a gay woman and sexually active, it is grounds for dismissal.

Square dancing: the common denominator

The clock ticked and Neihsel emerged from a room packed with dancers. He rounded up his Finest City Squares crew. It was almost time for the Honky Tonk Queen and Fairy Tale Ball.

"The North County group is struggling," Neihsel said with a sigh as he handed out collared shirts. "... Finest City Squares is doing really well. We meet every week in San Diego."

Jim Dillon and his wife, Nancy, square dance with Neihsel's group. This was their second gay square dancing convention.

"We go to both straight and gay conventions," Jim said. "They're perfectly open to straight couples here. (Square dancing) is good exercise, a mental challenge and great fun. (Gay dancing) is very different than straight square dancing, which requires traditional attire, for one."

Veronica Ramirez, a 16-year-old from Santa Ana, draped in black and clutching a sword, hurried by Neihsel and his pals.

"Man, I think this is really cool," she shouted. "The fact that you're here and out in the open is a great thing."

Reach reporter Joanna Smiley at 760.752.6735.

<http://www.sdsjpi.org/content/2007/news/we-have-winners>
San Diego Pro Chapter
Society of Professional Journalists 2007 Awards

Sol Price Prize for Responsible Journalism

Honorable Mention: Joanna Smiley
"Dancing Outside the Box"

This award goes to a journalist whose work not only meets ethical standards but also shows uncommon sensitivity to issues. He or she pursued truth in the face of such obstacles as unpopularity, economic retribution or physical harm. Entrants must submit an essay of up to 500 words describing the ethical dilemma they faced in pursuit of the story and how the dilemma was resolved

Dancing Outside the Box Essay Submission

Sol Price Prize for Responsible Journalism

When I first told my editor that I wanted to cover a story on gay square dancing, he thought I was joking.

“Joanna, we’re a pretty conservative community and a small paper,” he said. “It’s really going to be a stretch to run something like this on the front page of our lifestyles section.”

I responded, “I understand, but this is an important story that is going to grab people. It has the potential to change their perceptions, however conservative they may be.”

I kept persisting and eventually we compromised. I volunteered to spend my personal time on a Saturday covering the story. I would write it (knowing it could very well not run) and we would see what the other editors had to say.

After reading the story, many of the editors felt that the topic alone would cause readers to stop their subscriptions. On the other hand, our editor in chief found a couple of people who encouraged her to run the piece. So, after cutting a “kissing photo” and making a few text edits, she gave me the green light.

In the face of doubt and disapproval, I stood by my convictions because I knew from the moment I arrived at the festival, the story wasn’t going to only be about gay square dancing. It was about straight people, gay people, blacks, whites, foreigners, even anime action fanatics, finding a common ground. It was a story that showed readers that it is possible to put aside differences.

The day after the article ran, I received two phone calls that I will never forget. The first was from a Carlsbad mother who told me she wanted to discontinue her subscription to our newspaper. She was irate because her three-year-old son woke up and saw a “disgusting picture of gay men hugging.” She told me my article could have made her son gay.

About an hour after this phone call, I received another call from an 82-year-old Escondido resident. He said, “Are you Joanna Smiley?”

I said, “Yes sir, I am.”

He went on to say, “For 82 years, I’ve hated fags. I just finished reading your article and dag nab it. You got an old geezer to stop hating on homos.”

In 27 years of my life, I have never experienced a moment like that. This is the reason why I became a journalist. I will never forget that conversation for as long as I live.

Aid to Artisans

Flotea Massawe: Tanzanian entrepreneur builds a sustainable international craft business that empowers women

Behind Flotea Massawe's smile, there's a business woman who won't take no for an answer, a mother who inspired her four daughters to become entrepreneurs, a mentor who is showing other women that men are not the only bread winners in Tanzania.

Pregnant at 17, Flotea, like many women in East Africa, married and never attended secondary school. As years went by, she realized that her husband's \$50-a-month salary couldn't feed her four children and extended family, 10 people total. One day, she did the "unthinkable"—she asked her husband's permission to start earning her own income.

"At first, he was worried because he was the head of the household. But he realized it was hard depending on one person. He realized I could make life easier. He supported me then, and even today. It's not very common for husbands to support their wives and see that craft can be a business," Flotea, now 49, said.

In 1992, Flotea made tie-dyed embroidery that sold in local markets for \$0.05. She began cultivating relationships within her community in search of capital, a difficult goal for a Tanzanian woman. She asked her friends to teach her how to use kilns. At 25, she started earning just enough money for bus fare and more clothing.

"When I met Aid to Artisans in 2004, that's when somebody really changed my life," she said.

Flotea had the determination and talent to succeed in business, but she needed training: how to design the right product, how to understand the local and international market needs, how to build lasting relationships with buyers. Aid to Artisans provided these skills through product development, design and marketing training, and helped teach Flotea that she didn't need to sell tie-dyed garments for \$0.05. Instead, she formed her own textile and embroidery business that flourishes today, Marvelous Batiks. Before Flotea met Aid to Artisans, she was producing 200 pieces and earning about \$10. Now, Marvelous Batiks produces 2,000-3,000 pieces a month for buyers all over

the world including those in India, the U.S. and Japan. Flotea is earning \$100,000 a year. For the first time, Macy's came to Tanzania to source from her store. About 40% of her business is export and next year, her dream is for 50% of her sales to be international.

With the money she earned, Flotea bought her first computer. Right now, her shop has three Desktops. "I'm a fast learner with the Internet, and I would memorize color schemes and sizes in my sleep. I wanted to learn everything I could," she said. Flotea was the first winner of a Women Entrepreneurs in Textile in Tanzania Award presented by the Ministry of Industry and Trade. Her mind is always working. She's aware of the importance of "eco" in the marketplace and may someday create products out of the plastic bags she sees floating around her streets. By spreading the word about the market potential in recycled products, she hopes to help improve the environment in Tanzania, while bringing income to her community.

Perhaps most importantly, Flotea sees major changes in her life. She opened up a bank account for the first time and started saving her own money.

"I don't come back to beg my husband so much. I came into freedom, which I never thought was there for women like me," she said.

Flotea's courage was contagious. All four of her daughters work at Marvelous Batiks and are women business leaders in their own right. One is starting a designer cake business, one is pursuing a college education in marketing, another works in the hotel industry. Flotea believes her achievements are really her community's achievements. She frequently holds meetings to bring other women together. She has already "convinced" universities to educate women about the income potential of craft. She hopes she can reach out to women in rural regions of Tanzania, where life is even harder because they suffer from "hopelessness."

"My daughters have seen my awards, my life. They have seen the changes that come from working hard. They look at me and say Mama, we really are blessed. And I tell them, you're right, remember, nobody will come and help you unless you help yourself."

HEALTH & SCIENCE



SMOKING >>> W.H.O. SAYS USING HOOKAHS IS AS RISKY AS CIGARETTES >>> PG 2D



Support for men with MS

Local MSfits group founded for males suffering from disease

BY JOANNA F. SMILEY
(SPECIAL TO THE SUN)

Four years ago, Kurt Clodfelter's legs gave out while he was mincing onions in his restaurant. Next thing he knew, the room swallowed him up and — smack — his 230-pound body hit the floor. Three months later, he learned why: he had relapsing/remitting multiple sclerosis — a well-known diagnosis but one long considered, in his words, “a chick’s disease” because it strikes three women for every man it devastates. The degenerative neurological condition, which affects 400,000 Americans and up to 2.5 million worldwide, can produce a wide variety of symptoms. They include loss of strength, numbness, vision problems, tremors and depression. Victims may look and feel fine one day, but be virtually incapacitated the next. MS took its toll on Clodfelter, a 26-year-old Severna Park resident who attended the Culinary Institute

SUPPORT AND INFORMATION

- The first meeting of MSfits will be held at 7 p.m. Monday at the Columbian Center, 335 Ritchie Highway, Severna Park. For information, call 443-618-9018.
- For information on multiple sclerosis, go to the National Multiple Sclerosis Society Web site at nationalmssociety.org. Links to local chapters are on the home page.

of America, once worked as a strip club bouncer and now manages the wine section at a spirit and catering business in Arnold. “I hate to say it, but there’s an expectation in society on men that we’re strong enough, big enough to do anything,” he says. “There’s times when my left leg is dragging, when I don’t look that strong. I had to give up my career as a chef because of the uncer-

tainty of the disease.” He also worried about the aftermath of the treatment, which resulted in two bouts of optic neuritis that cost him the vision in each eye for up to six months. He worried about the ultimate effects of the disease on his new marriage — including his sex life. And he worried about maintaining his self-confidence. “I still want to be that macho guy; a man’s man,” he says. “The type of guy that you always looked at in a room and asked for help fixing something.” That’s when he started doing his research and noticed a giant hole in the Maryland MS support group network — there were no signs of meetings geared solely to men. “Why isn’t there a group out there just for me?” he asked his wife, Kristi, a cosmetologist he married shortly before he was diagnosed. So seven months ago, he decided to create his own MS support group — called the “MSfits.” “We’re the frequently forgotten minority,” he says (Please see MS, 6D).

(From Page 1D)

of how he came up with the group’s name.

The MSfits will hold its first support group meeting for Maryland men battling MS on Monday at the Columbian Center in Severna Park, where he expects to have a fully stocked bar.

“Yes, it’s stereotypical that guys get together and need a beer, but at the same time, to foster the fellowship it wouldn’t hurt,” Clodfelter says.

Derrick Jeanmarie, 41, also sees a good reason to keep in touch with other men with MS. He was diagnosed in 2002 when he checked himself into a hospital one morning after bumping his head and snapping his neck on his way home from work.

“They found lesions in my brain,” says the 6-foot, 2-inch, 230-pound uniformed Secret Service officer from Hughesville.

The first few years after Jeanmarie’s diagnosis were a tough time. Like Clodfelter, he developed optic neuritis. His short-term memory started to fade, his legs wobbled without warning and he says his wife noticed that he was depressed.

The Air Force veteran, former boxer and active long-distance runner longed for the days when he had full control over his body. “My wife tells me I have a sense of denial about my MS,” he says.

Although he frequents the gym and works night shifts at the White House, Jeanmarie has noticed he can’t run like he used to. “I would think that mentally there’s things I still have to deal with,” he says.

Ed Duggan, 61, an institutional research analyst at Goucher College, has been dealing with MS for decades. Forty years ago, at his Army physical, he was diagnosed with a rapidly progressing form of the disease. “If it weren’t for the MS, I would’ve been drafted,” he says, joking.

In 1997, Duggan’s MS got the best of his legs, and he now uses a wheelchair. Ironically, he says, his life gets better by the day — with his set of wheels, Duggan is now able to sail, play sports and he



Kurt Clodfelter was diagnosed with relapsing/remitting multiple sclerosis four years ago. After finding no support group in Maryland for men with MS — which strikes three times as many women as men — Clodfelter founded MSfits to fill the void.

JED KIRSCHBAUM (SUN PHOTOGRAPHER)

even plans to start a “competitive MS Olympics team.”

“I only wish I had [a wheelchair] when I was bringing up my kids,” he says. “There were a lot of things I couldn’t do with them. Not being able to play basketball with my son was a big thing for me.”

“Unfortunately, men do fall into certain stereotypes. You want to be able to be a husband, a father, support your family. Obviously, women can do that, too. But still, it was difficult.”

Amanda Culler Glenn, marketing director for the National MS Society Maryland Chapter, says she immediately recognized the value of the MSfits.

“Kurt approached the society

and felt like males needed a specific forum to discuss the kinds of issues that men living with MS may face. The types of issues discussed and the ways that topics are presented can be unique for men,” she says.

According to Glenn, about 1,650 men battle the illness in Maryland, but they’ve never been organized. “In the three or four years since I was diagnosed, I hadn’t met another guy in the state of Maryland with MS, but he’s out there,” Clodfelter says. “That means he’s not getting the support and I’m not getting the support we need.”

At meetings, Clodfelter plans to address many of the vulnerability issues men with MS face, includ-

ing the “ever-present possibility” of losing control of the bowels, and how to deal with “the embarrassment of telling your wife.”

“MS is a great disease in many respects — numbness and paralysis and virtually no pain — but it affects everyone differently. You’ve got to own it. That’s what I want to drive home in my group,” he says.

He takes a strong stance on political issues that affect medical conditions, including funding of embryonic stem-cell research — which the General Assembly approved this year. He hopes that the MSfits will raise awareness and continue to bring these debates to the legislative level.

Public awareness of men bat-

tling MS has gotten a boost lately from two celebrities — talk show host Montel Williams and country singer Clay Walker — both of whom live with the disease.

Walker, a heartthrob with four platinum albums and two Billboard Country Music Singles chart toppers, had a “somber diagnosis” in 1996 when he learned he had relapsing/remitting MS.

“I was playing basketball in Calgary, Alberta, which coincidentally has one of the highest incidences of MS,” Walker said in a phone interview. “I had never even heard of MS. I thought it was muscular dystrophy.”

He said he couldn’t feel his fingers for eight weeks and was “devastated by the news,” along with

the possibility that he might never be able to hold a guitar pick again.

Thanks to daily therapy with Copaxone, a drug that can effectively treat nonrapidly progressing forms of MS, he says his numbness and facial spasms have stopped.

In 2003, he went public with a Web site called Band Against MS (bandagainstms.org), an endeavor that he says is as important as his music. The site includes tips from leading MS researchers, muscle-targeting recommendations from physical therapists and dietitians and “hero stories” intended to help “average joes” manage the illness.

“There are as many as seven or nine types of MS,” he says. “Forty percent of people don’t get treated. If I can help, then my MS has been for a good cause.”

Like Clodfelter, Walker worries that too many people assume MS is still a woman’s disease. “The mental side is crucial for men. (MS) takes away your self-esteem and confidence. I thought for awhile people wouldn’t be able to book me,” he says.

Thanks to his medication, Walker has been able to regain normality in his life. He tours several months a year and released his 13th studio album in April.

Others are doing the same. As long as he doesn’t work extended hours, Jeanmarie still spends most of his evenings guarding the White House. In Towson, Duggan calls his wheelchair “the liberator” and looks forward to week-ends of sailing adventures.

On a typical afternoon, Clodfelter says he lifts more than a dozen 45-pound cans of wine. He takes so many steps at work that he estimates he’s walking between three and five miles a day.

In the back of his mind, however, he knows the symptoms could resurface at any moment. So he looks forward to a future in which hundreds of Maryland men stricken with MS can meet for a beer, a laugh and maybe even a manly hug.

That, he says, is what the MSfits are all about.

'They need our help'

Couple answers moral call to assist migrant workers

By Joanna Seifley | joanna@dtnews.net

Monica Velasquez spent a recent Sunday scooping canned peaches into Styrofoam bowls. She lined up bottles of Gatorade and placed them in plastic bags on a white folding table. She read *El Latino* newspaper out loud.

Monica and her husband Victor, both 26, of Escondido, drove out to a dirt road in Carlsbad and provided bare necessities to illegal immigrants. They are the only two Latino volunteers amid a slew of church groups and activists from a migrant outreach project.

Victor, who was born in Oaxaca, Mexico, crossed into the United States. At 20, he joined the Marine Corps and became an American citizen. Monica is a full-time student at Cal State San Marcos.

Despite the heated debate surrounding immigration issues in the U.S., the couple refuses to turn a blind eye.

"All these guys know is work, work, work," said Victor, handing out a clean rag to a man in a hooded sweatshirt. "I can identify with them, as a Mexican-American. I know how hard it must be to be them right now."

Many of the migrants are men between 18 and 30; a few are over 40. Most began working when they were 13 years old. More than half are married with wives and children in Mexico to whom they speak twice a month, if they're lucky.

"I tell the older guys they should be retired by now," Monica said with a laugh.

In Spanish, she shouted, "Does anyone want any more peaches? Last call



Monica Velasquez, 26, of Escondido, volunteers to help migrant farmworkers every Sunday with her husband, Victor.

North County's burgeoning Latino population

Carlsbad — 13 percent (12,275 of 95,146 residents)
Escondido — 42 percent (59,866 of 141,350)
Oceanside — 33 percent (57,823 of 175,085)
San Marcos — 38 percent (27,612 of 73,054)
Vista — 41 percent (39,050 of 94,109)

Source: SANDAG 2005 demographics report



The workers live in the fields without electricity or running water.

for peaches." The men hurried over to her. Their eating options during the week are either food trucks or quick trips to a convenience store.

"These guys don't have sunscreen, that's why their skin is so cracked. They don't even have eyeglasses or the simple stuff that we take for granted," Monica said. "They get embarrassed sometimes because I'm a woman, but I try to ask them if

they need toiletry necessities, like shaving cream."

Most of the men live under plastic tarps without electricity or running water. They work in the flower and strawberry fields in Carlsbad, earning in one day what they say would be a week's pay in Mexico. They send most of their wages to their families south

Help A4 >

Help

>From A1

of the border.

Miguel Logaria, who has been a migrant farmworker in North County since 1985, considers himself lucky because his employer allows him to sleep in a spare trailer.

"The hardest part is being away from my family. They don't think much of it, of my absence, because they know it's a necessity," Logaria said in Spanish through Monica.

Miguel Lopez, a migrant worker in his mid-20s, squatted on a pile of dirt. He shoveled peaches into his parched mouth and told Monica that sometimes he wonders what his family is doing back in Mexico.

"There are just so few jobs in my country, so little money," he said, his eyes blank and focused on rubbing his calloused hands.

Monica nodded. "I gave these guys my cell number just in case immigration evicts them and they can't get into a shelter," she said.

Both Monica and Victor believe that the rest of the North County Latino community needs to "step up."

"The thing is, it's all Caucasian Americans out here helping these guys," said Victor.



On Sundays, each migrant worker receives a 2 1/2-gallon container of water brought by volunteers. The water will need to last seven days.

"It's kind of embarrassing. We Latinos should be helping our own people."

Monica attributes the lack of Latino volunteers to low income levels in North County. She wonders, too, if there is a certain level of competition among those Latinos who have "made it" in the U.S. and those who are illegal immigrants.

Rigo Reyes is the border operation director for Los Niños, a nonprofit founded in 1974 that provides community development along the Mexican/U.S. border. Los Niños brings education and food to about 50,000 people a year residing in Mexico so they won't feel compelled to cross the border.

"In a sense, we do what volunteers in Carlsbad are doing but just in Mexico," he said.

Maria Balman is a real estate agent and member of the Escondido Chamber of Commerce. She is the "only real contact the chamber has with the Mexican population in Escondido," according to Les Abshire, chairman of the board. Balman was born in Mexico but has been living in the U.S. for more than half a century.

She is "appalled" that politicians are using immigration to push their various political agendas; right now "America is a wonderful, kind country but is behaving un-Christian-ly," she said.

"I do see some positive," she said while eating lunch with her daughter, who is studying political science at the Uni-



Miguel Logaria, a migrant worker, has been living a transient life in the U.S. since 1985. He sleeps in a trailer provided by his employer and sees his family in Mexico a few times a year.

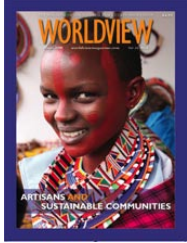
versity of California Berkeley. "We are seeing awareness in students and young people. The schools and churches in Escondido have shown a lot of interest in helping the Hispanic community learn English. A lot of what my real estate office

focuses on is helping Hispanic people buy homes."

Jill Weigt, an assistant professor of sociology at Cal State San Marcos, has been teaching a course called Families in Poverty for the past four years. This semester she had 38 students in her class, a third of whom she said were Latino.

"Monica was one of three or four of my students who chose to help with the migrant worker project," she said. "She is a very energetic and engaged student. This was a real-world experience for her that she really related to."

"We're volunteers, we're just poor students," Monica said. "It's not that they're immigrants, it's that they're human beings. They need our help."



A GROWN SYNERGY

Aid to Artisans Teams up With Peace Corps Volunteers to Show the World that Craft Means Business

by Joanna Smiley

When Lisa Smith arrived in Boujad, Morocco two years ago as a Peace Corps Volunteer, a group of women weavers welcomed her into their homes.

Lisa quickly learned that home, in Moroccan culture, meant more than blocks of concrete shelter. It signified family, friendship, and a communal approach to life that seemed all too unfamiliar back home in the U.S.

In her first week as a PCV, the women brought Lisa into their day-to-day lives. She joined them for afternoon meals. She started learning how to weave carpets. She began speaking in Arabic, their native tongue.

As the days went by, she realized these artisans were not only talented weavers, but equally skilled multi-taskers who smoothly juggled work, socializing, and parental roles. She saw how important it was that they weave from home—it allowed them to watch their young children play on the dusty roads right outside their doors.

Lisa soon became an informed and passionate advocate of artisans. She felt privileged to be among women who were under acknowledged and underpaid masters of handmade craft.

Though these artisans were immensely skilled weavers, Lisa, who was fresh out of The Wharton School of Business, learned where her help was needed most—business training. The women had only very basic literacy and arithmetic skills, as most of them attended school up to the 6th grade.

“I worked to transfer many of my business skills to the group’s project coordinator. He knew Moroccan culture, how to get things done there and also was a great product designer, but he lacked basic business skills, such as accounting, setting up a balance sheet, marketing, and expectations of foreign buyers. With the women, I worked on pricing and costing of their products, making products to specification and on time so that we could accept custom orders, and sharing larger orders amongst themselves to increase efficiency,” Lisa said.

As part of her Peace Corps training, Lisa participated in a two-day workshop with Aid to Artisans (ATA), which had a project in another area of Morocco. For anyone who is unfamiliar with ATA, the 32 year-old international nonprofit creates economic opportunities for artisans around the world by helping them to build sustainable businesses inspired by their handmade traditions. ATA has a long history of working with Peace Corps Volunteers in dozens of countries.

While Lisa had a great deal of economics knowledge from her academic experience, ATA staff brought real world Moroccan examples into the classroom, giving practical tools for teaching artisans business skills despite potential language and education gaps. They showed the volunteers how to conduct pricing and costing workshops, explained many of the principals involved in exporting crafts, and provided training materials that could be used on site.

“ATA’s workshop was great. Later in training I also had the chance to visit another volunteer’s site whose artisans were working directly with ATA on a project, and I was extremely impressed by what I saw,” Lisa said.

A previous PCV in Lisa’s town had already been teaching the women that their carpet designs could be versatile. For example, they could transform their material into a handbag with an added zipper. Their traditions could be maintained yet enhanced with product innovation that would appeal to an export market, thus bringing artisans the lasting income they deserved. This type of product development training is exactly what ATA strives to teach the artisans it works with.

Perhaps most importantly in the course of her project, Lisa watched first hand as the weavers began to realize their talents could translate into income-generating craft businesses. She saw them gain pride and confidence in the economic viability of their crafts, another critical mission at ATA.

When Lisa began looking at jobs after her service ended, she knew she wanted to continue using her business degree to help people like the weavers. She also knew she had been inspired by ATA and the sustainable incomes she had seen the organization bring to artisans in the

field. She perused through various job postings before spotting a marketing coordinator opening at ATA's home office in Hartford. The rest was history. She relocated to Connecticut and officially joined the ATA team.

"It's great for us to hire Peace Corps Volunteers," said Mary Cockram, Director of Programs at ATA who first interviewed Lisa over Skype. "They have an understanding and sympathy of challenges, conditions of artisans, and life in other countries. I give a second look if a job applicant is a PCV."

PEACE CORPS CONNECTIONS RUN DEEP AT ATA

Lorraine Johnson, ATA's Regional Director in Africa, is a former PCV in Liberia. She has lived in Africa for nearly 16 years and has authored two books: *Who We Are: Voices from Mozambique* and *We Are People: Voice from Mozambique*.

ATA's Small Grants program, which provides up to \$1,500 to eligible artisan groups in need of immediate help, relies heavily on PCV recommendations.

"Their vetting is invaluable. They can monitor grants, spending and fill out grantee follow-up information. We always feel better about awarding small grants when a PCV has vetted the group. Out of 40 small grants ATA awarded this year, 14 came from PCV recommendations, which is a large increase from previous years," said Joanne Heard who manages ATA's Small Grants program. She also noted that another advantage to working with PCVs on small grants is that they see artisans' needs first hand.

Last year, a PCV pleading for a small grant to assist artisans in Ifrane, Morocco wrote Joanne a heartfelt recommendation letter. She described a bus ride she took with a handicapped artisan, capturing details that only somebody working in country could see. The PCV wrote how "one undeveloped leg in a brace" didn't stop that artisan from traveling nearly 10 hours in a day, negotiating all of the necessary details she needed to bring income to her community.

With the help of this recommendation letter, these artisans were awarded a small grant.

ATA's own president, David O'Connor, is a former Volunteer and former Peace Corps Country Director. He spent nearly six years overseeing operations in China, Nepal, and Moldova and has a keen understanding of the invaluable synergy between ATA and Peace Corps.

"We are working with Peace Corps Volunteers in several of our projects right now from Mali to El Salvador," David said. "PCVs are fantastic. They live right in the communities and are critical resources for us."

Since Peace Corps' founding in 1961, nearly 200,000 PCVs have completed service. Many of the Volunteers have MBAs, law degrees, and a variety of other academic qualifications. Others have real life experience running retail businesses, web sites or successful start-ups. And yet others come from professional pottery backgrounds, are renowned photographers, or artists. This colorful mix of life experience is another asset when working with and understanding artisans, who themselves are creative entrepreneurs.

In the future, David hopes that ATA can offer more PCV workshops in business training. He hopes that as PCVs are on the ground working with artisans, they can show them that the craft sector, with proper business training and product development, is a major engine of economic growth. In fact, craft constitutes the second largest sector of rural employment after agriculture in the developing world.

According to the Peace Corps, in 2007 at least 15% of current PCVs were working in business development, many within the artisan sector.

As ATA and Peace Corps continue to expand their operations in regions across the globe, the possibilities for continued collaboration are limitless. ATA invites PCVs around the world to join its mission—change the world with the power of handmade.

Joanna Smiley is Communications Manager for Aid to Artisans. For more information about Aid to Artisans, please visit www.aidtoartisans.org.

Aid to Artisans Launches First Distance Learning Training Program in Iraq

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WEST HARTFORD, CT, MARCH 19, 2009—On March 10 and 11, Aid to Artisans (ATA) became the first organization to lead a virtual business training out of the three-month old U.S. Embassy in Baghdad.

Through webcams, Adobe Connect Pro technology and an Arabic translator provided by the U.S. State Department, ATA staff in West Hartford, CT virtually trained 9 Iraqi entrepreneurs who are working with as many as 100 artisans. Several of these participants were women war widows with children to feed, making it even more critical that they learn how to earn lasting income.

ATA's trainings focused on costing and pricing, how to develop products so they can sell to global consumers, how to tell consumers compelling stories that include details about Iraqi traditions and one key skill: how to use the Internet for businesses. Under Saddam's rule, many Iraqis were forbidden to access IP addresses.

"It is difficult for women as they do not know what their future holds. Historically, there is a constant pain, war, continuous war, sanctions which affected women's lives," says Halima Faraj, a training participant whose husband was killed last year.

Telside L. Manson, Public Diplomacy Officer with the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Baghdad, applauds the training for taking bold steps towards assisting Iraqi women by teaching them employable skills.

"The response from the women was clear as they scribbled notes, asked for website references, and profusely thanked the trainers at the conclusion of the event. With this success, the PRT hopes to conduct similar trainings in the future," she says.

ATA is currently the only organization in its sector working to launch distance learning initiatives so that it can increase its scale and impact within the global artisan community.

"ATA is in the process of launching a Virtual University that will offer all of our training modules online in up to 8 languages to artisans anywhere in the world. Using the resources of the Internet allows us to help craftspeople in countries we may not work in, and is especially beneficial in war afflicted regions such as Iraq," says David O'Connor, ATA President.

About Aid to Artisans: ATA teaches skills to low income artisans around the world through its Market Readiness Program, design mentoring and global market links- efforts which have leveraged nearly \$230 million in retail sales over the past 10 years and raised the incomes of artisans in more than 40 countries. For more information, please visit www.aidtoartisans.org

Dear Joe Smith:

Today, I have a story to tell you.

It's a story of how the global economic crisis travels from our streets to the 78 poorest countries in the world, half of which are in Africa.

A few years ago, Aid to Artisans brought business training, design mentoring and access to new markets to one of the most gifted artisans from this region.

But when we first met this man, even his talents could not save him from mounting poverty. He was sinking into a bottomless pit of depression, wandering streets and earning minimal income selling his small crafts outside of local stores. He was on the brink of giving up on life and most importantly, on himself.

Together with a local organization, we lifted this man out of despair. **Through Aid to Artisans' business training, our global market links and collaboration with a world-renowned design consultant, this man turned his life into an entrepreneurial success story.** Over the course of two years, he produced a product line so innovative it landed in more than a dozen magazines. He received so many orders he had to hire a staff of 10 to fill them. He moved into a beautiful workshop and soon earned an award for best product design.

Sadly, last month **this man learned that just when he thought his life couldn't get any better, it got worse.**

He received disastrous news that his biggest importer in the U.S. might be having financial troubles. He calculated that if he didn't receive the money from them he had been expecting, the shop he worked so hard to build may need to shut down. The men and women who relied on him for their sole means of income would be out of work. He realized that the business dream he had been living could turn into a nightmare.

The truth is that without your continued support for our projects, **many of the 18,000 artisans we helped just this year alone might be back to square one.** While many of us are coping with our own economic issues, figuring out where to cut back, the artisans that we serve don't have that luxury. This crisis is affecting their very livelihoods and their ability to have the basic necessities—things we take for granted.

I'm proud to tell you that even with the grim financial news, Aid to Artisans has been awarded several major new contracts in Haiti, Ethiopia, Lesotho and Senegal this year, and we have seen remarkable achievements in our current programs. **We are committed to serving artisans, assisting them to build their businesses and getting them on the road to self-reliance. But we can't do this without your support.**

This holiday season, we invite you to join us in celebrating a new spirit of global awareness and rekindled hope as we continue to reach out to talented artisan communities around the world who need our resources now more than ever.

At a time when U.S. retail sales are expected to languish; we will be revitalizing the market by introducing innovative, handmade products that enable consumers to support fair trade, cultural diversity and environmentally sustainable handcrafts. A recent study finds that 70 percent of American consumers say they are more likely to support companies that are mindful of their impact on the environment and society.

If you are considering a planned gift to ATA, or if you would like to apportion your gift over several installments, please contact our Director of Development to make the necessary arrangements.

Your generous, tax-deductible donation to ATA can make a significant and lasting difference in the lives of individual artisans. Your support enables us to strengthen the craft enterprises that are so critical to the economic vitality of communities around the globe.

On behalf of all the artisans we serve, I want to thank you in advance for your generosity and for helping us spread the word about this vital mission.

We wish you and your family a very joyful holiday season, and good health and prosperity in the New Year.

P.S. No matter how dismal the economic crisis becomes, we will continue to be the lifeline for artisans around the world—but know that we can't do it without you.

Aram Sharambeyan—Entrepreneur Launched Craft Business in Crippling Economic Times.

What can he teach us?

It was 1993 in the snow-capped mountains of Armenia, and Aram Sharambeyan had no electricity, no heat, no supermarket and very little water.

“The conditions, I couldn’t imagine anything worse for export production,” says the now 30-year veteran in Armenian craft.

In the aftermath of dramatic political and economic turmoil following the collapse of the Soviet Union, many Armenians including doctors, teachers, and engineers were left with nothing.

Craft, which had always been an outlet of creative expression in Armenian culture, became an economic safety net. Aram and his sister Anush, seized the opportunity to co-found the Sharan Craft Center, one of Armenia’s first major craft foundations. They soon began to hire people.

“These were not employees in the regular sense, they were teachers, doctors, you name it. **They needed work, and in every family you can find somebody who is doing something with their hands.** This was not only income for them, but also an ability to get out of their home. It was so difficult, people were locked in a shell. They had no reason to keep themselves alive,” says Aram, noting that at least 30-40 of these original hires are still working in his business today.

Reflecting upon the difficult financial times the world faces at present,

Aram noted, “In any conditions like these, you need determination. We really didn’t even think about business, we just did what we had to do.”

Indeed, Aram did everything he could to make money from his crafts. He was the only person on the road driving straight through a snowstorm in the middle of the night from Karabagh to Yerevan to make sure he

Aid to Artisans

delivered an order of carved wooden spoons. His office was his car, the only warm place he could find to conduct business. He stored his raw materials in his trunk and drove them around the city. Eventually, he purchased his first laptop and recharged the battery in his car.

Aram had the business instincts, drive and skills to bravely face one of the most devastating economic times in Armenian history. But, what he lacked was the business training and product development insight that would enable him to export to the global marketplace.

Enter, Aid to Artisans.

In 1995, Aid to Artisans' (ATA) former president, Clare Brett Smith, made a trip to Armenia and met Aram. She saw potential in the beautifully carved wood and knit products. So did Save the Children Foundation, who eventually helped fund, along with USAID, ATA's two-year project aimed at helping Aram and hundreds of other Armenian craftspeople build sustainable businesses.

After just one year of working with ATA consultants, Aram quickly employed 150 people to fill his first major order: Neiman Marcus wanted to source placemats, napkins and napkin rings. To ensure he had enough raw materials, Aram drove around the city redistributing 25-inch strands of thread to his embroiders.

"Aram is one of the best business people I know. He's a problem solver and he always found a solution, often without even letting the buyer know and always without complaints. He is a very perceptive business person. He would see an opportunity, analyze it and then find a path to achieve it. He became a vital consultant on other ATA projects in Bosnia, Macedonia, and Kyrgyzstan once our work in Armenia ended," says Karen Gibbs, a long-time ATA consultant who led the team that helped Aram with business training and product development.

Even though Aram has always been able to find talent, quality, and raw materials, he says "ATA connected us to three designers who showed us how to sell on a much larger scale, how to adapt our skills and traditions to the American market."

Aram remembers designing a shiny silk pillow case in a mix of sizes. ATA consultants explained that all he needed to do was change the pillows to fit a standard size, and they would sell much better.

"This kind of simple thing made a huge difference in sales," he says.

Aram also remembers attending his first trade show with ATA in 1993 at the world-renowned New York International Gift Fair. For more than a decade, ATA has been bringing artisans like Aram to the show with the goal of connecting these talented craftspeople to some of the world's largest buyers.

Aram still describes his experience at the trade show as a "5-day MBA." Prior to the show, he says he didn't even know what "invoice" meant. He had never heard of words like "minimum order."

"It was my first time in America, talking to buyers in the ATA booth that I had never dreamed of meeting," he says.

By the last day, he ended up selling nearly \$2,400 worth of products.

Aid to Artisans

Perhaps most importantly, Aram's continued success brought changes to his employees back in Armenia. From 1993-2000, he says that his artisans were earning as much as or more than the average Armenian, and not only was this more income, but it was stable income.

Even today he says, "Armenian government employees earn up to \$150 a month. Our artisans usually can do \$200 or more a month, and our woodworkers earn up to \$1,000 a month."

Although he began working in craft as a jewelry designer at 16, Aram never imagined he would earn a lasting living from his "extra income" hobby.

"Our business is sustainable still today. Even after the project, ATA is still putting us in touch with interested buyers. They tell people, there is a producer in Armenia you should get in touch with," says Aram.

In 2006, Aram started to encounter difficult financial times when many of the U.S. stores he sourced to were devastated by the Hurricanes. Although the current financial crisis is hurting his business right now, he thinks about a few key tactics that have helped him stay afloat:

- He's living in the same apartment he's been in since 1973.
- He still drives a second hand car.
- He buys his yarn from an exporter in Athens who hasn't raised prices in 14 years.
- He's honest with his employees when orders are slow and money might be tight.
- He's open to change—wedding items and cat/dog clothing lines will be new areas of focus in the months ahead.
- For more than 10 years, he's successfully been arranging sales online to buyers he's never met. And he still sources to companies ATA connected him to including Melange, a U.S. based importer.

"Today, sales are slow, but the interest is still there. We just have to adjust to the market requirements. This has always been our strength, that we are flexible, we could employ up to 600 people, and shrink that down to 200 when orders weren't big, and survive," Aram says with a smile.

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"I just love the way wood is. As you stain it, you see the true nature of it. The colors come out."

— MATTHEW DOMICZEK



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WINSTED WOODCARVER Matthew Domiczek made this kitchen table and chairs. He found the time after being laid off from his job.

AT WORK

A SILVER LINING MADE OF WOOD

POST-LAYOFF, WINSTED MAN IS CARVING OUT A NICHE FOR HIMSELF

By **JOANNA SMILEY**
Special to The Courant

Hope gleams from the dark corners of their 114-year-old Winsted home as Matthew

Domiczek gazes at the wooden napkin holder he carved for his wife, Anna, and baby Konrad giggles.

It has been more than six months since the Domiczeks' last paycheck, which makes them numbers in the state's soaring unemployment statistics.

But the couple, who each emigrated from southern Poland, ignore that kind of news. Matthew's layoff from a local trucking company, says Anna, led him back to "his true artistic expression."

He swung open their rickety basement door and started carving. Anna's so proud, her eyes tear up as she describes her love for watching him cut shapes in thick pieces of pine.

Above their tiny kitchen entrance, a dark wood sign hanging from a rusted nail reads: "Welcome to our Cabin." Just a few feet inside stands Matthew's pride and joy, an alpine-style dark wood kitchen table set he spent two weeks making right after his layoff and recently sold for \$360 on Craigslist. Majestic, medieval, mountainous-looking, it shines with the raw skill of untrained hands.

Matthew and wood are sort of similar: His 6-foot-3 frame, scruffy brown hair and plaid shirt exude a layer of rustic that blends into the backdrop of mountain paintings and wood carvings coloring the Domiczeks'

walls. Most of their snug house is crammed with small pieces Matthew built: a toy chest, coat rack, shelves and wall hangings carved into mountain scenes.

"I've always loved that wood is nature. I've loved the mountains since I was a little kid," Matthew, 37, says. "I just love the way wood is. As you stain it, you see the true nature of it. The colors come out."

He glides his hand across the smooth brown coffee table he built, then pauses.

"My mother lives in Poland," he says. "She was, and still is, at 76, a gifted artist. When I was a young child, she was always painting and I was always drawing, studying the way things were created and shaped. I think that's where I learned. I guess it's

CARVER, C7

MOMMY MINUTE

Before A Store, Go To A Tag Sale



REBECCA STEWART
rstewart@fox61.com

One man's trash is another man's treasure.

No one knows that better than my neighbor, Kasey.

It's tag-sale season, and she is a mother on a mission.

Tag sales are a great way for parents on a budget to stock up on toys or clothes.

"I look forward to Saturdays," she says. "People pay so much money for new items. And you can get such great bargains if you just look around."

She maps out her stops the night before and arms herself with information. She knows prices; she isn't afraid to bargain; she keeps a running list of what she needs; and she keeps her eyes open for anything useful.

Kasey has a whole lot of company.

The Los Angeles Times reports garage sale listings on Craigslist are up 80 percent over last year.

At The Courant, tag sale classified ads were up about 5 percent, but that has slowed with all the recent rain.

Everyone knows tag sales are a great way to clear the clutter. But it's also a great way to make some quick cash. Then there's the rush of finding what you never knew you wanted at bargain prices.

Like the slightly used Kettler tricycle. New, it costs about \$200. Kasey paid \$14.

A \$45 Home Depot toy workbench? She paid \$10.

Being her neighbor has its perks. A few weeks ago, she pulled up to our driveway, opened her trunk and pulled out the slide I'd been looking for.

It was marked \$4. She bargained and got it for \$3.

Her advice? Plan and go early. "The good stuff goes quickly," she says. "You never know what you're going to find. That's why I love it."

It's the spirit that turns every weekend into an adventure, into the search for treasure.

>> Rebecca Stewart, weekend anchor at WTIC, Channel 61, each week chronicles the challenges of work and motherhood. Read her blog at www.fox61.com/news/blogs.

AT WORK Q&A

Profanity At The Office: How Far Is Too Far?

Wire Reports

Q: I have been hearing shouted profanity about all manner of things, from work situations to uncooperative computers, as well as people who are not within earshot being called names. We know it is completely unprofessional and that there is an anger-management problem, but is it a hostile work environment issue?

A: Profanity often is cited as a component of a hostile work environment. Because of the environmental degradation that results when profanity is pervasive, epithets based on sex, race, religion and other personal characteristics protected by law seem to have

a way of gaining acceptance.

The law does not dictate what is appropriate or professional in the workplace. It merely deems a narrow subset of behaviors so despicable and pernicious that a victim should have the opportunity to seek damages.

Your workplace can be disrespectful, degrading and positively hostile, but the conduct is not illegal unless you can make a connection between that hostility and a category protected under law. In your case, if the profanity that you are hearing is accompanied by sexual, racial or other epithets, even if they are not directed at you, then the conditions could create a bona fide hostile work environment claim.

If you supervise this employee, you should

address his or her conduct at once. If you have only the pleasure of working alongside this individual, report the behavior to your human resources department or some other person designated under your organization's anti-harassment policy.

Employment lawyers have long seized upon this distinction to mount what is commonly known as the "equal opportunity harasser defense." The reasoning is simple: As long as everyone in the workplace is treated in an equally reprehensible manner without regard to their protected characteristics, then the law has not been broken.

Q: Last year, I left my full-time job as a graphic designer. I have decided to semi-retire

and would like a part-time position with flexible hours. I am 53. How should I state my preferences to potential employers?

A: To avoid inappropriate and uncomfortable interviews, target only those work situations that match your desired lifestyle.

For graphic designers, one alternative to a "payroll position" is temporary or contract work. The freedom to accept or reject assignments can provide a great deal of flexibility.

When talking with interviewers, be sure to avoid any comments that might be interpreted as "I don't want to work very hard." That's a surefire way to get screened out.

CTLIVING

CHEVROLET THEATER

The Fray Serves Up Dual Styles

Denver-Based Band Performs With Jack's Mannequin In Wallingford

By LEAH IGDALSKY
Special To The Courant

The Fray is experiencing an identity crisis. In its Saturday performance at the Chevrolet Theater in Wallingford, the piano-rock band displayed two sometimes conflicting styles — anthemic rock in the grain of U2 or Coldplay interspersed in intimate, emotional, piano-centered songs.

The Denver-based quartet began with its first major hit, "Over My Head (Cable Car)," surrounded by a semi-circle of flashing, multicolored lights and two additional instrumentalists.

Drummer Ben Wysocki grinned throughout the tune, as lead singer Isaac Slade worked the stage, asserting himself as the band's front man and showman. By "She Is," another song from 2005's "How To Save A Life," Slade was standing, sitting and interacting with the

crowd, although his voice was behind the band throughout the song's opening, as he caught his breath and laughed. Some feedback issues also accompanied the beginning of "She Is." Still, Slade's mid-range voice, at times both milky and scratchy, carried the song.

"Say When," off the band's latest self-titled record, featured shredding guitar breaks, electric keyboard and dramatic, kneeling delivery from Slade, who then moved to the piano on "How To Save A Life," the moody tune of "Grey's Anatomy" fame. The two songs highlighted the dichotomy of The Fray's live performance "How To Save A Life" was sensitive and raw, and the band tried to replicate the feel of a smaller, more intimate performance. "Say When," on the other hand, yearned for an arena.

"We Build Then We Break" deviated from both usual patterns, featuring a boppy sound with a pop-punk edge, similar to that of opening act Jack's Mannequin. At times, the

thrashing guitars were reminiscent of Muse. Rhythm guitarist Joe King took over vocals on "Ungodly Hour," singing in a voice similar to Slade's.

Jack's Mannequin, the project of Andrew McMahon, lead singer of Something Corporate, a punk band from California, opened the show with a one-hour set of alternative pop. McMahon spent the performance writing and bopping with passion as he sang and played piano. He began the band's second song, "Bloodshot," by climbing on and jumping off his piano, and stood on its keys during the song's climax. Jack's Mannequin's tunes featured guitar, bass and drums, but McMahon's vocals and piano were the heart of the music.

Richard Swift, a California-based singer and instrumentalist, was slated to open. He missed the show because his van broke down en route, according to Jack's Mannequin.

STAYING PUT

Tips To Keep Your Name Off Layoff List

By LIZ REYER
Minneapolis Star Tribune

Q: I like the company I work for and am happy to have my job but suspect that more layoffs are coming. How can I cut the chances that I'll be on that list?

A: Take ownership of your career and let your higher-ups know your value.

The Inner Game

First, focus on the assets you bring to the company. Many of us are too humble about what we're good at, so in the privacy of your own mind, list your abilities and accomplishments. Consider how your advocates would describe your strengths. Likewise, notice and address shortcomings that may be holding you back.

Next, consider what you enjoy doing. Identify the tasks and responsibilities that fit you best, and analyze why you like them. Here's an example: If you relish leading strategy teams aimed at landing new accounts, get specific about what, in particular, you like. Is it being in charge, working with groups, brainstorming ideas or implementing the plan? Drill down until you understand the aspects that get you really jazzed about doing your job.

Now look around the company, looking for roles that would fit for you. Also, look for gaps. Every company has problems, and you may have the right skills to offer a solution. If this is your vision, develop a concept to pitch. Even if it isn't acted on, your initiative will get attention, in a positive way.

As you get ready to build your visibility, watch for barriers that could interfere. These may be internal, such as nervousness, or external, such as a rigid hierarchy that limits your access to people. Take the time to plan how you'll deal with these barriers.

The Outer Game

Having a compelling story about the contributions you could make is only half the battle; you'll need to get in front of the right people.

Start by selecting the right people to approach. In a smaller firm, you may want to go right to the top, talking with the owner. In a large company, you may want to target the next level of division executives, choosing those who are flexible in managing change and solving problems. Be aware of company performance, and be careful about areas that may be more vulnerable in the near term.

Plan the conversation, but don't script it. Know the messages you want to send and what you'd like to learn. Focus more on listening than on talking so that you can understand the company's vision for the future and ways you can contribute. Match your tone to the company culture and the individual's style. If the leaders are very direct and value initiative, you can be bolder than if there's a more reticent culture.

Then ask! Request time on their schedules; don't wait for them to come to you. After you talk, follow up with some written thoughts or a link to an article that is relevant to an idea they mentioned.

The Last Word

Under any circumstances, it's a good idea to take an active role in your career advancement. Now more than ever, it can make the difference in keeping you out of the job market.

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OBITUARIES

PINTAVALLE, John "Bill"



John "Bill" Pintavalle, 89, of East Hartford, passed away on Friday, (June 19, 2009). He was a proud U. S. Army veteran of World War II and served with distinction with the 43rd Division, Company G, 169th Infantry. While stationed in the Pacific he had been stationed on Guadalcanal, New Guinea and Luzon in the Philippines. He was awarded the Purple Heart with four battle stars and was honorably discharged as a Staff Sergeant. He had retired from Pratt & Whitney Aircraft of East Hartford after 32 years of dedicated service. He is survived by his four sons; Donald of Manchester, Richard of Enfield, and Gary and Brian both of East Hartford. He also leaves his two sisters; Gloria Hudack of Windsor and Gaylene Sudano of Hartford. He also leaves his six grandchildren and three great grandchildren.

Relatives and friends are respectfully invited to gather at the Newkirk & Whitney Funeral Home, 318 Burnside Ave. East Hartford on Wednesday, June 24 at 9 a.m. for the procession to St. Rose Church, 33 Church St. East Hartford, where a Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated at 10 a.m. The interment will follow with full Military Honors in the Veterans Memorial Field of the Silver Lane Cemetery, East Hartford. Mr. Pintavalle's family will receive callers at the funeral home on Tuesday, 2-4 and 7-9 p.m. Memorial donations may be made in his memory to the V.F.W. Dept. of CT P.O. Box 429, Rocky Hill, CT 06067-0429.

REID, Mary L.



Mary L. Reid, 70, of Manchester died on Saturday (June 20, 2009) at Fox Hill Nursing Center in Vernon. She was the widow of James Reid. Born in Manchester, she was the daughter of the late Joseph and Helen (Zavack) Mokulis. Mary is survived by her sons Michael of Manchester, Mark of Tampa, FL, Mitchell of East Hampton, and Matthew of Vernon; her grandchildren Elizabeth, Aiden and Kevin; her sister Jane Toomey; and several nieces and nephews. She was also predeceased by her brother Robert Mokulis.

Funeral Services will be held on Wednesday, June 24 at 11:30 a.m. from the John F. Tierney Funeral Home, 219 West Center St., Manchester with a Mass of Christian Burial 12 p.m. at the Church of the Assumption 27 Adams Street South, Manchester. Burial will be private and at the convenience of the family. Family and friends may call at the funeral home on Tuesday, 5-8 p.m. Memorial donations may be made to a charity of the donor's choice. For online condolences please visit www.tierneyfuneralhome.com

SCENTI, Corrine



Corrine Scenti, 87, beloved wife for 63 years of the late Michael Scenti, died Saturday, (June 20, 2009) in Wethersfield surrounded by her loving family. She is now at peace with the love of her life, her husband Mike. Born in New Britain, daughter of the late Walter and Rosalie (Warren) Curtin, Corrine lived in Hartford prior to moving to Wethersfield 54 years ago. She was a graduate of Mt. St. Joseph Academy in West Hartford, a member of Corpus Christi Church and served as the first president of the Corpus Christi Women's Club. She was also a member of the Elm Tree Women's Garden Club and the Portland Women's Golf Club. Corrine is survived by three cherished sons; Michael Scenti and his wife Shawn of Melbourne Beach, FL, Gary Scenti and his wife Gloria of Windsor, CA and John Scenti and his wife Lisa of Milford, MA; six grandchildren; Michael John, Lindsey, Christopher, Nicholas, Shael and Shea Scenti. Corrine also leaves her nephew Biagio Ciotto and his wife Jean of Wethersfield.

Funeral will be Thursday June 25th beginning at 9 a.m. from the D'Esopo Funeral Chapel, 277 Folly Brook Blvd., Wethersfield followed by a Mass of Christian Burial at 10 a.m. at Corpus Christi Church, Wethersfield. Burial will be in Village Cemetery, Wethersfield. Calling hours will be Wednesday from 5 to 8 p.m. at the funeral home in Wethersfield. Memorial contributions may be made in Corrine's memory to Vitas Innovative Hospice Care, Charitable Trust, 255 Pitkin Street, East Hartford, CT 06108. For on-line expressions of sympathy please visit: www.desopo.com

IN MEMORIAM

JOHN B. SILVESTRI
6/22/1924 - 12/7/1995
Our special friend
Happy Birthday
Love, G.G.

GEORGE CLARK LEWIS

6/22/1924 - 7/16/2004
Happy Birthday Beloved husband, four long years have passed since you've said good-bye. Now you and our beloved Joi have joined hands in the Secret Garden with the beautiful wild flowers that you love. I will always be on our beach waiting to see you.
Your Loving Wife, Gloria

Everyone leaves a legacy. Celebrate an extraordinary life by creating an enduring Life Story on Legacy.com with biography, photos, eulogies, letters and cherished mementoes.

For more information, visit the obituary section on courant.com to share memories of loved ones.

JOB HUNTING

How To Impress Job Recruiters

By DIANE STAFFORD
McClatchy Newspapers

The U.S. Department of Labor reported this month that job seekers outnumber reported job openings by about 5 to 1. That helps explain job hunters' protracted searches.

Competition for available jobs is fierce. With so many applicants, employers have the luxury to wait for the perfect candidate.

Here are ways to appear "perfect" for your target job:

- » Apply only for the positions for which you can make the case that you're a good fit. You'll just depress yourself and get no responses by applying for longer-shot jobs.
- » Tailor your resume for the published requirements. Show how

your professional experience dovetails with the job.

» If you're trying to change industries, translate industry jargon or titles to make it clear how your skills and experience are transferable.

» Research compensation structures in the industry and company so that you don't price yourself out of consideration or appear "overqualified."

» Augment your resume with a cover letter or attachment offering a strong sales, marketing, quality or productivity improvement idea.

» Give names and correct contact information for references who you know will say positive things about you. Keep your references updated so that they don't say, "know Mary really wants to work as an events planner" when you've applied for a public relations job.

» If you're stuck with an online application system, answer every question.

Can you do all this and still not get a response? Sure. Remember the 5-to-1 ratio. But doing these things should improve your odds of a follow-up.

Carver

CONTINUED FROM C1

always stayed with me even when I wasn't carving."

Matthew barely fits down the staircase leading to his 150-square-foot basement workspace, where black garbage bags are stapled to the ceilings so dust doesn't fall.

"The wood on this railing is so old. It has too much history," he says, smiling as he touches the surface.

When he feels like taking a break from drilling or sanding, Matthew sinks into an old camping chair lined with a faded American flag. He watches shows like "Three's Company," recalling his youth, when he learned English by watching the series.

Matthew already has his next project. Wiktorina Anderson, a family friend, has hired him to rebuild damaged cabinets in her New Britain home.

"I think he should pursue a

woodworking career now," she says. "I especially like his style of the dining room set he made. It reminds me of the story 'Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs.' It also reminds me of the mountains of Southern Poland. It surprises me that he still has the vision of that style in his head, because he came to the U.S. as a little kid."

Jim Mueller, vice president of the Connecticut Woodcarvers Association, which has about 60 members throughout the state, says he has seen an increase in people who have lost their jobs turning to woodworking.

But Mueller, who has been a woodworker most of his life, has a full-time job.

"I'm always impressed with raw talent, but it's very hard to do for a living," he says. "Most projects take 100 hours and you can't make enough money for something that you spend two weeks making. People don't realize how much time it takes. They love it, they want it for their homes or walls, but they don't want to pay the big bucks, now with the economy and even before now."

CONSUMER WATCHDOG

Do you feel ripped off?

George Gombossy is on your side.

Read the "Watchdog" column every Friday & Sunday and watch for "Today's Bite" throughout the week.

Have an issue that you want George to look into? Contact him at watchdog@courant.com

DILBERT BY SCOTT ADAMS



ALMANAC: JUNE 22, 173RD DAY OF 2009

There are 192 days left in the year.

Today's highlight in history: In 1945, the World War II battle for Okinawa ended with an Allied victory; some 13,000 Americans and 90,000 Japanese soldiers, plus 130,000 civilians, were killed in the nearly three-month campaign.

On this date: In 1940, during World War II, Adolf Hitler gained a stunning victory as France was forced to sign an armistice eight days after German forces overran Paris.

» In 1944, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, more popularly known as the "GI Bill of Rights."

» In 1977, John N. Mitchell became the first former U.S. attorney general to go to prison as he began serving a sentence for his role in the Watergate cover-up. (He was released 19 months later.)

— Associated Press