

## BRIEFS

Grossman celebrates  
25 years with  
firehouse reunion

About 400 guests including firefighters, plastic surgeons, burn patients and their families gathered December 1 for the 25th anniversary of the Grossman Burn Center at Fire Station 88 in Sherman Oaks.

"We both provide a service we hope no one ever needs," San Fernando Valley division Fire Chief Scott Moltram said at the annual Celebration of Life event, which aimed to reunite burn patients with their caregivers before the holidays. The Sepulveda Boulevard fire station has hosted the event for the past seven years.

Burn survivor Yolanda Hawkins recalled her own experience as a patient. "It's not just the burn survivor, it's everyone in the family that suffers," she said. "It's good to reunite with doctors and nurses in camaraderie - it provides encouragement."

Hawkins, who was burned in a cooking accident when she was three years old, has volunteered at the burn center since 2001. Although she suffered burns on her face, neck, arms and back, Hawkins said events like this help her cope. "I go away rejuvenated," she stated.



Dr. Richard Grossman.

Dr. Richard Grossman, founder of the Sherman Oaks burn center, stood at the back of the fire house chatting with patients who approached him.

"It makes me feel great - they come to show me how good they're feeling," Grossman said. The event grew out of hospitals' burn survivor groups with help from nurses, doctors and non-profit foundations. It has grown bigger every year and everyone offers their help, he added.

"That's my head doctor over there doing the cooking," Grossman said, pointing to Dr. Peter Miao in a nearby kitchen wearing a white apron.

Congressman Brad Sherman and City Councilmember Wendy Greuel also attended the event.

"It's nice to see the smiles on their faces when they see nurses that helped them," station Captain R.J. Kilpatrick said.

The Circle of Care Foundation primarily sponsored the event. Elizabeth Rice Grossman, a burn survivor herself and chair of the organization, is married to Dr. Richard Grossman, whom she said she met about 30 years ago as a patient.

—Darya Riyahi



## NEWS

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der - an event he called a "battle for survival" and which was one of the first serious episodes against the North Vietnamese. Moore recounted a heartbreaking moment losing a sergeant who died in his arms, a young man next to whom he buried his wife at Fort Benning Cemetery in Georgia, and where he hopes to lay, "the sooner the better," he joked.

The award was presented between two Operation Gratitude volunteer shifts, for which locals gathered to prepare care packages for shipment to deployed men and women in military service. Volunteer groups included the West San Fernando Valley CVS stores, Boy Scout troops 22 and 139, and the American Legion.

Congressman Brad Sherman of District 27 presented Moore with a flag that was flown over the United States Capitol, along with its certificate of authenticity. Moore said he would fly it proudly on holidays at his home in Auburn, Alabama. \*

New DOT manager  
urges alternative  
commutes at ENC

BY PARIMAL M. ROHIT

A large crowd gathered November 28 at the Encino Community Center as Rita Robinson, General Manager of the Los Angeles Department of Transportation (DOT), spoke at the Encino Neighborhood Council's monthly meeting.

Addressing an audience of nearly 400 attendees about traffic congestion in the San Fernando Valley, Robinson stated that gridlock will not go away immediately, but there are improvement measures commuters can take in order to alleviate traffic congestion in the long run.

"We are traffic," said Robinson. "I wish I had a magic wand to make it go away. But there are ways we can come together and solve these problems."

Robinson did not talk about "smart growth," but instead about each commuter being proactive about his or her driving habits. She asked the audience to think of creative ways they can change their approach to driving, such as taking the subway or bus. "All of us have to ask ourselves, 'what am I willing to do to make this better?'"

She also mentioned improvement measures taken by the



JIM BARTON

## Lighting the Tree at the Galleria

The Sherman Oaks Galleria celebrated the holiday season with the lighting of the Christmas Tree. Revelers included Councilmember Wendy Greuel and other community members who partook in the festivities. (L-R) Actress Maria Canals, Sherman Oaks Galleria General Manager Katherine DeFevre, Santa Claus and Councilmember Wendy Greuel.

DOT, such as changing parking patterns on major streets to open additional lanes, adopting interchangeable lanes, and synchronizing city street signals.

"If this continues to percolate the way it is, our kids will have it bad," Robinson added.

The general manager stressed that the change would not be immediate, but with patience, improvement would gradually occur. "There will not be instant solutions. It will not happen overnight. But will there be improvements day-to-day? That's the way I see it happening.

"It will take a change in mentality. We cannot stay the same, yet expect change. We have to make the effort to change."

The November board meeting was the final general meeting of the Encino Neighborhood Council this year. All in attendance were treated to In-N-Out burgers prior to the meeting.

The council will resume its general meeting schedule in 2008, continuing to meet the fourth Wednesday of each month. \*



PAMELA TURSKI

Department of Transportation General Manager Rita Robinson.

Autism expert  
launches new  
support book at  
Barnes & Noble

BY PAMELA TURSKI

A large and receptive audience gathered at Barnes and Noble Encino on November 27 to hear Barbara Firestone, PhD, discuss her new book, *Autism Heroes: Portraits of Families Meeting the Challenge*.

Widely recognized for her leadership in the field, Dr. Firestone is Vice Chair of the California Legislative Blue Ribbon Commission on Autism. At state and national levels, she actively promotes autism awareness, early identification and intervention and the expansion of education and treatment opportunities for children, adolescents and young adults.

Firestone is the founder and CEO of The Help Group, the largest and most comprehensive non-profit organization in the U.S. serving children with autism spectrum disorders and other special needs. 800 members staff the group, which currently serves 5,000 children on four campuses and six day schools with education, research, treatment and training programs, as well as a summer camp.

"It all started with one of those 'aha!' moments," recalled Firestone. "I was a freshman in college, and, like most students,

didn't have a clue what I was going to pursue."

While taking a required speech communications course, she visited a state institution on a class field trip. Each student was assigned to spend one hour with a child, and Firestone spent her hour with Timmy.

"There was no spoken communication and much unusual behavior, such as rocking and finger flicking. To me, it appeared as if he was locked in a world of his own. There was nothing I could do to cause him to connect with me."

Firestone said she was struck by the child's experience of being institutionalized and how severe his condition must have been for his parents to place him there. When she was leaving, a staff member explained that the boy had autism.

"Our professor wanted us to understand how important communication is to the human experience and how profound it is when a child cannot communicate. She wanted us to understand what a precious gift communication is," Firestone said.

"That was when I went into speech pathology. I called my parents and told them I knew what I wanted to do - to help children with special needs."

Firestone pursued a PhD in Communication Disorders and went on to the University of Southern California to become a Fellow in Special Education.

In 1975 Firestone took a position as Executive Director of the Speech and Hearing Center in Van Nuys. "We began with four children; now there are 1,300 in the day school. It was quite a gift to me and quite a revelation to me to work with these children. I was struck by the commitment and tenacity of the parents, who left no stone unturned to find help for their kids," she said.

"I wrote this book now because autism had lived in the dark ages for too long. In 1970, we didn't know it was a brain-based disorder. Psychologists said poor parent-child bonding was at fault. At the same time new information was emerging on the neurobiological basis and applied behavioral analysis. In 1981, Asperger's Syndrome was explained. The turning point in writing this book was seeing all these changes emerge over the past decade."

When the concept of early intervention came to the fore, Firestone opened a preschool. "It

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## Spotlight

BY JESSICA MACKINDER

**Flashlaser Aesthetics** (17401 Ventura Blvd, 2nd Level), a comprehensive medical spa with a full line of services in Encino, is offering new patients their first Mini Body Sculpting Treatment for free (\$400 Value)



Dwight Hiscox, MD, of Flashlaser.

throughout December. Owner **Dwight Hiscox, MD**, who completed medical school at 22, combines art, medicine and science in his innovative and non-surgical treatments. Other products and procedures include Botox, laser hair removal, skin tightening and acne resolution. Call (818) 205-1280 to make an appointment.

Free entertainment, food, arts and crafts, gift vendors and real snow are among the festive highlights scheduled for the **Winter Solstice Family Festival** Saturday, December 15 from 11-3pm at Lake Balboa. The City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks invite families to this multicultural event that unites the diverse segments of our communities by sharing traditions. Also, don't miss a special appearance by a holiday icon, who will be arriving by boat.

The longest running indoor swap meet in Los Angeles will be closing its doors on December 30. For almost 25 years the **Valley Indoor Swap Meet** in Woodland Hills (6701 Variel Ave.) has been a mainstay for bargain hunting shoppers. Over 500 stores under one roof offered weekly savings on everything from jewelry to video games. The property has been sold to developers who have plans to build apartment units. [IndoorSwap.com](http://IndoorSwap.com)



Angela Stanislowski, Director of VEDC.

The **Valley Economic Development Center (VEDC)** has named **Angela Stanislowski** Director of its Lending Division and Eugene Pasechnik has been named SBA Manager. Stanislowski previously served as RLF Portfolio Manager for VEDC's Lending Division while Pasechnik held the position of Loan Officer. VEDC provides services to small business owners, entrepreneurs and members of the communities. [VEDC.org](http://VEDC.org).

Give a unique holiday gift that keeps on giving with a membership to the **Dog Lovers Wine Club**. All proceeds will benefit **The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animal Los Angeles (spcaLA)**. Each month, the boutique winery selects a special dog to be featured and illustrated on the bottles of the premium wine and includes inspirational stories of triumph. Now through January 15, anyone who signs up for a wine club membership at [dogloverswineclub.com](http://dogloverswineclub.com) will receive their first shipment for \$2. Now that's something to bark about!

Email [Jessica@suncommunitynewspapers.com](mailto:Jessica@suncommunitynewspapers.com) to submit *Spotlight* suggestions.



Dr. Barbara Firestone, Vice Chair of the California Legislative Blue Ribbon Commission on Autism and author of *Autism Heroes: Portraits of Families Meeting the Challenge*, signed copies of her book at the Encino Barnes & Noble.

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was remarkable to see the gains these young children were able to make. Evidence-based best practices showed remarkable results," she said.

After meeting with hundreds of parents, Firestone knew she wanted the book to be in their voices.

"I spoke to parents from all walks of life, with kids of all ages who have all types of autism. They know the joys and challenges, what an incredibly isolating and frightening experience it can be to receive this diagnosis. Many go into denial, and most experience emotions that range from guilt to anger to shame.

"The purpose of the book is to be of ser-

vice and support to other families. There is joy and triumph and transcendence when they feel supported on this journey." ✨

*All royalties from the sale of Autism Heroes: Portraits of Families Meeting the Challenge will benefit The Help Group.*

### Correction:

In last week's issue, David Levinson's title was incorrect. He is the Executive Director and Founder of Big Sunday, not the Associate Director as written.

## technology triumphs

### Memory Enhancement



BY GEOFFREY NEIL

It wasn't quite buyer's remorse I read on Joe's face. He seemed more perplexed than remorseful. He had purchased a top-of-the-line desktop computer and after

only a few hours of use, he called to tell me it was slower than his old computer.

Joe asked me to stop by for a look. When I arrived, he had become even more agitated about his slow, new computer. His expression was like that of a car enthusiast who bought a Ferrari, started the engine for the first time and heard the light, tinny sound of four-cylinders under the hood.

Joe handed me the ad for the computer. I wasn't surprised. The components were good quality, the package included a monitor and a printer and the price was fantastic. His new computer lacked a primary feature for good performance: enough memory (RAM).

Adding memory to a computer is not only one of the most effective ways to improve its performance, but it has become one of the most inexpensive and simple ways.

Once, computer memory was expensive. In the early 90s I remember visiting several computer retailers who blamed some fire in a RAM factory overseas for the \$100 plus price they wanted to charge me for a modest 64-megabyte memory upgrade. Now you can buy a gigabyte (1,000 megabytes) of memory for as little as \$30.

Installing memory can seem scary. You have to open up your computer case for some tech surgery that intimidates the technically un-inclined. Installation isn't difficult if you are gentle with the delicate components inside and follow instructions for the adding memory into the correct slot.

Buying the correct memory for your computer model is critical. During a couple of moments when I lacked better judgment, I scavenged memory from one computer and inserted it into another without checking it. One time the computer refused to start. The other time I smelled plastic melting before I cut the power off and ran to open a window.

I don't take those risks anymore; there's no need. If you are looking to improve your computer's speed by adding more memory, there are a few web sites that can help you make an accurate choice. My favorite is [www.crucial.com](http://www.crucial.com). If you visit their site with Internet Explorer, you can run a tool that will scan your computer, tell you what memory it has, how many additional slots are available for more memory and recommend which memory module(s) you should purchase Easy.

I took Joe to the site, scanned his computer and within five minutes he had placed an order that doubled his computer's memory for about sixty bucks. I saw him a few weeks later after he successfully installed it on his own. His computer's performance now matched the excitement of its ad. Joe was thankful for the tip and seemed relieved—smiling like his Ferrari sounded right.

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dollars and sense

## Identifying our City's needs

BY LAURA N. CHICK

As City Controller, my ability to perform audits of any City function or Department is a powerful tool in providing greater transparency and accountability to the people of Los Angeles. There are those, however, especially in City Hall, who have taken me to task for only pointing out the problems. Actually, audits always enumerate the things that are being performed correctly, but an audit's real value is in identifying areas that need improvement and putting forth recommendations.

I want to share with you some of the areas I am currently scrutinizing:

### Managing the City's Risk

Later this month I will be releasing an audit of the City-wide risk management functions. The City of Los Angeles has paid out \$100 million in liability claims during the last three years. We as a City must do a better job in protecting taxpayer dollars by identifying areas where we can prevent or reduce liabilities. Most importantly, when we do identify areas of risk, we must take immediate action to remedy the weaknesses.

My audits often serve as early warning lights, identifying issues of concern. One notable example is my January 2006 audit of the Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD). My report showed a culture of discrimination, harassment and hazing, as well as an ineffective and unfair discipline system. Unfortunately, change in the LAFD, since my audit's release, has been slow at best.

### Police Civilianization

Our City has struggled for many years to find ways to put more police officers on our streets. In February I will release an audit which looks at ways the LAPD can better utilize civilian employees. Many functions including some administrative tasks are currently performed by sworn officers taking them away from patrolling our streets and neighborhoods.

### Police Headquarters

The City is building a new downtown LAPD headquarters which was originally estimated to cost \$297 million. With the projected costs now soaring to an amazing \$437 million, we have begun a real-time look at how the City is monitoring and overseeing this massive project as its being built. The public deserves to know how and why this project has become so costly.

### Quimby Funds

It is no secret that Los Angeles suffers from a lack of open space and recreational areas. In 1975 the California Legislature passed the Quimby Act which requires developers to set aside land or pay fees for parks and recreational facilities.

Our City has \$77 million in Quimby funds, sitting, unspent, without a citywide plan on how to use these funds to leverage other needed resources and create more and better parks.

I am currently auditing the Quimby funds for downtown, which has seen a recent explosion in development. This report will be an important window in how we can better utilize these precious dollars in delivering the kind of parks system Los Angeles deserves. ✨

Laura N. Chick is the Controller for the City of Los Angeles.

## Police BLOTTER

Incidents Reported: November 9-15, 2007

Burglary	Theft From Vehicle
160XX Royal Oak Rd. 11-10-07 1:00 p.m.	54XX Nestle Ave. 11-11-07 1:00 p.m.

Information compiled from LAPD website:  
[www.lapd.org/crimemap](http://www.lapd.org/crimemap)