

COACHELLA VALLEY

CSU Palm Desert nonprofit launches website campaign

Sherry Barkas
Palm Springs Desert Sun
USA TODAY NETWORK

Priority One Coachella Valley, a nonprofit organization started last year by the city of Palm Desert to continue its efforts to make the local Cal State San Bernardino satellite campus an independent college, has launched a website and social media campaign.

The website includes a petition the organization is hoping people will sign urging state legislators and Gov. Gavin Newsom to make Palm Desert the site of the next CSU campus and opportunity to sign up to receive updates about the effort.

It also includes statements from local students and business owners on what they see as a need for a full four-year university in the Coachella Valley and the impact it would have on the local economy.

“A four-year independent California State University in the Coachella Valley would open up the door to so many opportunities for me and other local residents,” Monserrath Zamora, a senior at Coachella Valley High School, writes in her post on the website.

“My top choice for college has always been California State University, Northridge, but the university is too far from the Coachella Valley and I prefer to remain local. I wish the Coachella Valley had a university that offered a real college experience with sports, sororities and fraternities, and a full array of courses,” Zamora added.

Priority One Coachella Valley was launched by city officials following a February 2020 visit from an inspection committee that visited CSU Palm Desert as well as four other sites through-



The satellite campus. CRYSTAL CHATHAM, THE DESERT SUN

out the state – Stockton/Stanislaus County, Concord, Chula Vista and San Mateo County – being considered for the next Cal State campus.

Palm Desert fared well in the consultants’ study and came out as one of the top two sites, including Stockton, officials have said.

The California State University, San Bernardino at Palm Desert satellite campus is one of two public four-year universities with a presence in the valley, and its capacity and range of degrees are limited.

Situated off Cook Street, the satellite university was built on land donated to the state by the city with the understanding it would one day be a standalone campus.

Opened in 1986, the satellite campus

has three academic buildings and a 300-seat theater and infrastructure in place for complete build-out – much of it funded by philanthropic dollars, another advantage for Palm Desert given that it could help meet the more than \$100 million needed for construction of a full campus, the 2020 site study found.

The Coachella Valley’s only community college – College of the Desert – and a University of California at Riverside satellite campus are also located in Palm Desert.

The closest independent four-year campuses to the Coachella Valley – University of Redlands, a private university, and CSU San Bernardino’s

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\$1M grant for youth cannabis education

City News Service

The city of Palm Springs and the Boys and Girls Club of Palm Springs together received a \$1 million state grant to be used to implement a youth education program that will focus on the individual and systemic impacts of cannabis legalization, the city announced Monday.

The California Board of State and Community Corrections awarded the city and the Boys and Girls Club the Cannabis Youth Education Grant, and the city will serve as the lead public agency in implementing the program.

“Over the course of the next three years, we will be turning our Health and Wellness Center into a cannabis learning facility,” said Margaret Keung, executive director of the Boys and Girls Club. “Our goal is to educate students on the impact cannabis has on development and to prevent cannabis misuse among teens and preteens in a city that has seen a significant growth in cannabis businesses.”

The program will be used to “develop resources to address adolescent cannabis offenses; decrease cannabis use among youth ages 12-18 and increase youth and adult connections to build resiliency and provide dedicated public safety personnel to assist with cannabis enforcement,” according to a city statement.

In addition, a citywide youth substance use and intervention program will be created, and the Boys and Girls Club will serve as the location for youth substance abuse education and prevention classes.

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The average California homeowner saves at least 20% on their monthly electrical costs by switching to solar.

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Any solar system installed by December 31st, 2022 receives a 26% federal tax credit. It will drop to 22% in 2023 and is set to end in 2024

The Federal Tax Credit Schedule from 2021 to 2024

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Candles and crosses are placed as a memorial Monday for three children who were killed in the Reseda section of Los Angeles. RICHARD VOGEL/AP

Coroner identifies 3 children killed; mother held on bond

Stefanie Dazio
ASSOCIATED PRESS

LOS ANGELES – Authorities identified the three young children who were killed in a gruesome slaying in Los Angeles over the weekend. Their mother is the suspect in their deaths and was being held in a central California jail on Monday.

The autopsies of 3-year-old Joanna Denton Carrillo, her 2-year-old brother, Terry, and 6-month-old sister, Sierra, were pending on Monday, coroner’s records said.

The children’s grandmother returned home from work Saturday morning and found their bodies in their apartment in the San Fernando Valley neighborhood of Reseda.

Police have not disclosed a motive or how the children were killed. The Los



Carrillo

Angeles Times reported that the children’s father, Erik Denton, said he’d been in a custody battle with Carrillo after she began acting mentally unstable. He had sought custody on March 1 and petitioned the court for a mental health evaluation of Carrillo. Another hearing in the case was scheduled for Wednesday.

Denton said he tried to get local authorities to intervene, but “in L.A. they wouldn’t help. The LAPD would not get involved,” he told the newspaper.

He said Carrillo was supposed to turn over the kids to him on Sunday.

The children’s mother, Liliana Carrillo, was arrested in the Ponderosa area of Tulare County, about 200 miles north of Los Angeles, on Saturday.

Authorities said police initially received reports that Carrillo was driving her car and heading north on Interstate 5 when she got in an altercation in the Bakersfield area. She abandoned her car and carjacked another vehicle, police said.

She is being held on \$60,000 bail in the Tulare County jail on second-degree robbery charges, records said. It was not immediately clear if she had an attorney who could speak on her behalf.

The Los Angeles County District Attorney’s Office did not immediately respond to a query about whether she would be extradited.

The Los Angeles Police Department’s Juvenile Division is handling the case and a police captain, Chris Waters, did not immediately return an emailed request for comment Monday morning.

Trial begins for felon accused in bar shooting

City News Service

MURRIETA – A reputed gang member fired eight gunshots inside a Cathedral City bar nearly four years ago, severely injuring a man whom he and his friends viewed as an “outsider,” a prosecutor told jurors Monday, while a defense attorney denied the gang connection but admitted his client opened fire that night, striking the victim accidentally.

Thomas Zaragoza, 39, of Desert Hot Springs, is charged with one count each of attempted murder, assault with a gun, assault on a person causing great bodily injury and criminal street gang activity. He also faces several gun- and gang-related sentence-enhancing allegations. He faces a maximum life sentence if convicted as charged.

Zaragoza is accused of shooting Mike Avila after an argument erupted at what was then The Block Sports Bar & Grill at Ramon Road and Date Palm Drive on July 26, 2017. The business is now known as Henry’s Sports Bar & Grill.

Testimony began Monday in Zaragoza’s trial at the Southwest Justice Center in Murrieta immediately after a jury was impaneled. The proceedings are expected to last up to two weeks.

Zaragoza was arrested along with three other men: Andrew Monroy, 26, and Carlos Rodriguez, 29, both Cathedral City residents; and Ricky Ceballos, 28, of Desert Hot Springs. Those three men have pleaded guilty in the case.

A trial brief prepared by Deputy District Attorney Jenna Barsamian alleges Zaragoza’s three friends got into an argument with the victim at the bar before it escalated into a fight about 11 p.m. One of the men allegedly swung twice at the victim, but failed to connect with either blow.

Barsamian alleged all four men are members of the same criminal street gang based in Cathedral City, and that the argument erupted because the men viewed the victim and his wife as “outsiders.”

According to the prosecution, Avila grabbed a pool cue to defend himself. Avila was at the bar celebrating his wife’s birthday that night, according to the victim’s family.

Avila could be heard telling the suspects before the shooting, “Hey, I don’t even know who you are. I just want to leave,” according to court papers.

Both the defense and prosecution agree that a basic set of facts then occurred – a shooting happened inside the bar, eight bullets were fired and Zaragoza fired the shots. However, both contend Avila was shot under drastically different circumstances.

Kathuria argued that the defendant and his friends descended on the bar that night to celebrate a new construction job the defendant landed that day. Zaragoza was outside the bar smoking a cigarette with his then-girlfriend when he re-entered the bar, saw his three friends engaged in a fight, and pulled out a handgun in an attempt to scare the victim, his attorney said.

The victim then grabbed for the gun, and it went off during the struggle, accidentally. The defendant also fired several additional gunshots towards a wall in an attempt to scare the victim, his attorney said.

Kathuria argued that only one gunshot actually struck the victim, and that it entered the victim’s hand before continuing into his abdomen.

“The case is about a bar fight that went bad,” Kathuria said during his opening statement.

The prosecution, however, contends that witnesses say Avila entered the bar, pulled out a gun and fired on the victim from close range. Another man was also shot in the foot sometime that evening, according to court papers.

Barsamian alleged the victim was struck with two gunshots, one of which was fired while he was running away.

The four men were arrested two days after the shooting at a Banning gas station.

The handgun used in the shooting was never recovered, Barsamian said.

According to his family, Avila underwent multiple surgeries and was hospitalized for several months in the intensive care unit following the shooting.

Monroy, Rodriguez and Ceballos agreed to a deal with prosecutors in exchange for several charges being dropped in January 2020. The three men pleaded guilty to assault causing great bodily and admitted to a gang-related sentence-enhancing allegations and were each sentenced to eight years in state prison.

Nonprofit

Continued from Page 3A

home campus in San Bernardino — are at least 40 miles away, a drive many can’t make, officials have said.

Having a local independent CSU campus would mean a greater ability to serve historically under-represented minorities, low-income and first-generation students than the other proposed locations where other campuses are close by, officials have said.

Keeping the momentum going

While a new independent campus was a priority of Gov. Gavin Newsom when he took office, the pandemic and its hit on the economy pushed any

plans for a new CSU campus, which would cost an estimated \$100 million to build, well into the future, if at all.

Palm Desert, however, wanted to keep the momentum in Sacramento going and started Priority One Coachella Valley, seeding the nonprofit with \$150,000 followed by a \$30,000 donation from the Greater Palm Springs Convention & Visitors Bureau.

A seven-member board was appointed, headed by Joe Wallace, Coachella Valley Economic Partnership CEO, and including Palm Desert Councilmembers Sabby Jonathan and Jan Harnik and City Manager Todd Hileman.

The nonprofit is based at the CVEP office in Palm Springs and run independently of the city.

Early on, the board hired a consultant, contracting with Greg Hayes, vice

president of the Sacramento office of Seattle-based consulting and PR firm, Strategies 360.

His job is to keep Palm Desert and the Coachella Valley in the forefront of minds of lawmakers in Sacramento who may ultimately decide where a new campus will go.

In a February update, Hayes told Palm Desert City Council members that a new CSU campus would likely be hybrid, offering in-person and virtual learning options.

City Council members said the Palm Desert campus has an advantage there as well, having been a hybrid campus for many students even before the pandemic forced the expansion of virtual learning. State legislators who represent the Coachella Valley have also come out in support of Palm Desert as the next independent campus.

“The Coachella Valley is rich in many things, but a four-year college is not one of them. Access to higher education is a big challenge for our communities,” Assemblymember Chad Mayes, I-Rancho Mirage, said in the Priority One Coachella Valley press release. “We welcome the community-based effort to help bring a four-year university here,” Mayes said.

In its press release, Priority One Coachella Valley also announced the creation of a new 28-member advisory committee which includes business leaders, elected officials from each of the valley’s nine cities, tribes, state legislators and other nonprofit organizations, including the YMCA and The Living Desert.

Priority One Coachella Valley updates also can be found on the nonprofit’s newly launched Facebook page.

The launching of the Priority One Coachella Valley website, social media campaign and advisory committee are key steps in showing the decision-makers in Sacramento all the passion and enthusiasm behind the proposed project, Hayes said.

Desert Sun reporter Sherry Barkas covers the cities of La Quinta, Indian Wells, Rancho Mirage and Palm Desert. She can be reached at sherry.barkas@thedesertsun.com. Follow her on Twitter @TDSsherryBarkas.



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