

We'd Like to Hear from You!

The News is sent electronically to all District employees on the fourth Monday of the month. If you have news items to suggest, please contact George Medovoy, Editor, at gmedovoy@4cd.net or at 229-1000, Extension 1287.

SPOTLIGHT



Members of the Contra Costa Community College District Police Department: **Top row** (left to right): Parking Officer Don Threet, Police Officer Chuck Olson, Police Officer Ryan Huddleston, Police Officer Bob Bancroft, Police Officer David Oleski, Det. Mike Zocchi, Police Officer Fred Gray, Sgt. Chad Wehrmeister, Police Officer Kyff Carpio, Dispatcher Rhonda Mims; **Second row** (left to right) Dispatcher Flora Gonzalez, Sr. Parking Officer Mike Hottton, Dispatcher Carl Payton, Police Officer Gerarado Espinoza, Cpl. Steve Milano, Officer Bob Bixby (no longer with the department) Sgt. Jose Oliveira, Police Officer Scott Terry, Police Officer Teddy Terstegge, Sr. Parking Officer Vidal Garcia, Parking Officer Mark Kahue; **Bottom row** (left to right) Dispatcher Janine Ornelas, Police Officer Mario Bermudez, Lt. Tom Sharp, Lt. Esther Skeen, Chief Dan Lawrence (no longer with the department), Lt. Paul Lee (no longer with the department), police Officer Dave Sano, Dispatcher Stephanie Reyes.

Esther Skeen: From Officer to Acting Police Chief

Esther Skeen, who was recently appointed to be acting chief of police, oversees a total of about 77 employees who provide police services across the Contra Costa Community College District.

Skeen is a well-known figure in the District with roots in the community, having grown up in Rodeo in West County and graduated from John Swett High School. She enrolled in Contra Costa College, where she graduated in 1976 with an AS in Criminal Justice and Corrections.

It was also at Contra Costa College that her interest in police work first surfaced. While a student, she worked as a security aide, much like today's police aides. And she also made room for sports, playing softball and basketball "I was better at softball than I was at basketball," she recalls with a chuckle. "But they needed the height, so I played. "We didn't have a big team back then, so I actually played a lot because we only had six or seven players, and it takes five to field a team." Skeen says that she "really enjoyed" softball and, in fact, went on to play recreation softball.

DID YOU KNOW?

**The Contra Costa Community College District
Police Department
has 21 sworn officers, 11 non-sworn (parking officers & dispatchers),
and about 45 aides.**

After Contra Costa College, Skeen enrolled in Sacramento State College and Hayward State, taking classes at both schools. From college, in 1977, she began working in police services at UC Berkeley.

"I realized that I was going to get into law enforcement while I was at UC Berkeley," she recalls. "That was my major at Contra Costa. I had taken some basic law classes and really enjoyed them."

The only problem, she remembers, was that in the seventies there did not appear to be much opportunity for women in police services at UC Berkeley.

However, in 1978 there was an opening on the Contra Costa College security force, and she applied and was hired. Skeen worked her way up through the ranks from officer to lieutenant to acting chief.

She spent eight years at CCC, moved to DVC as a supervisor in 1988, and began working at Los Medanos College as a lieutenant in 1996. She also served for a short time as a captain.

Come December of 2006, Skeen is planning to retire. Her goal now is to see a new, permanent chief hired. And what of her plans after retirement? Skeen is looking forward to traveling overseas, with Italy her first destination.

"I want to go to Tuscany and rent a villa," she notes, "stay there for awhile and then move on (to other European destinations)."

Looking back at her career with the District, she remembers some "really great" things, including a child finger printing program at Contra Costa College.

"I remember that to this day," she says, "because we did it in conjunction with the women's center down there...There was a lot of community policing going on in the District."

Another incident that stands out in her mind took place when she was working a double shift at Contra Costa College and noticed a fire in an adjacent apartment complex while on patrol. She went over the fence — "with a fire extinguisher, of course" — to get closer to the apartment complex and called the fire department as flames were billowing out of one of the windows. Richmond and San Pablo fire departments showed up. "We had to get people out of buildings," she recalls. "It was a significant incident, but it was also very rewarding in the sense that no one was hurt, (and) we got everyone out, (including children)." Two of the apartments were completely destroyed, and Skeen was recognized for her efforts in dealing with this incident. There have been many other noteworthy events, but when Skeen summarizes her years here, she says "it's working with all the wonderful people in the District."

Skeen worked her way up through the ranks from officer to lieutenant to acting chief.

"Every place I go," she says, "I feel a sense of family, a sense of support, having been so young when I started here. You know, I feel like I grew up with a lot of the people."

In her spare time, Skeen enjoys photography and has displayed some of her work in her office, including scenes of birds taken at Bodega Bay, where Hitchcock's *The Birds* was filmed.



Esther Skeen
Acting Chief of Police
George Medovoy photo/The News



Chad Wehrmeister
Replaces Skeen

George Medovoy photo/The News

Police Department Transition

As part of a police department transition plan, there have been a number of reassignments.

Sergeant Chad Wehrmeister has filled Esther Skeen's position as Lieutenant at LMC. This is a temporary assignment to cover while Lieutenant Skeen is reassigned.

Corporal Steve Milano moves to sergeant on swing shift, working out of DVC. Sergeant Milano is available to travel on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday but will remain at DVC on Friday and Saturday. This is a temporary assignment to cover while Sergeant Wehrmeister is reassigned.

Lieutenant Sharp will remain at CCC.

Corporal Jose Oliveira has been promoted to Sergeant effective September 1, 2005. Sergeant Oliveira will provide day shift supervision at DVC on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday and will work swing shift at CCC Sunday and Monday.

"I want to go to Tuscany and rent a villa..." Esther Skeen

First 5 Contra Costa to Fund Early Childhood Education Advisors at Our Colleges to Support Transfer to CSU



In an effort to ensure that young children receive high-quality child care, First 5 Contra Costa Children and Families Commission has allocated an additional \$1.4 million over the next three years to help increase education opportunities for a variety of childhood education students, including funds for cohort classes, tutoring and educational advisors at Contra Costa College, Diablo Valley College and Los Medanos College.



New education advisors will be hired this fall at CCC, DVC and LMC to provide support for child development, family life education, and early childhood education students to transfer to a California State University.

"Partnering with Cal State East Bay means students will have access to obtaining a bachelor's degree," said Janice Townsend, an instructor of early childhood education at Los Medanos College.

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— Janice Townsend, early childhood education instructor, Los Medanos College.

"While many students don't continue their education once they receive an Associate's degree, this new program gives students the support necessary to achieve their educational goals."

A \$75,000 grant awarded to California State University, East Bay will fund the creation of a minor in early childhood education by updating existing courses and developing new courses focused on a child's early years.

Currently, no public university in Contra Costa County offers a four-year degree in early childhood education.

"Research shows that teachers with a bachelor's degree (BA) in early childhood education or a related field tend to provide higher-quality child care, but going back to school is difficult for many..." said Dr. Debi Silverman, First 5 Contra Costa's Early Childhood Education Specialist.

"The new programs offer additional support to (students) as they work toward their bachelor's and even higher levels of education. Children learn best in stimulating environments with well-trained, well-prepared teachers."

To find out more about the new programs, call, (925) 335-9991.



DVC's Inclán Releases Her Newest Novel This February

Jessica Barksdale Inclán, instructor in composition, creative writing, mythology and women's literature at Diablo Valley College, has just released her sixth novel, *The Instant When Everything Is Perfect*.

Her first novel, *Her Daughter's Eyes*, was a final nominee for the YALSA Award for the best books of 2001 and best paperbacks for 2001 and has been published in Dutch and Spanish.

Her newest work, to be published in February 2006 by New American Library, is an emotionally resonant tale of two people who find something in each other that they've long denied in themselves.

In Inclán's novel, 42-year-old Mia Alden thinks she has everything. But tragedy shakes her out of her comfort zone when her mother is diagnosed with breast cancer. And while she sits at her mother's bedside, she meets someone whose presence seems to fill a void in her, a void she wasn't even aware existed.

Dr. Robert Groszmann is convinced he's going to spend his life alone. It's an idea that suits him well... until he meets Mia, who makes him question everything. As a reconstructive surgeon, he's helped many women put their lives back together. And despite his compelling feelings about Mia, he doesn't want to make hers fall apart.



Grand Opening Puts Spotlight on New Joint-Use Library, Community Center in San Ramon



The Contra Costa Community College District was well represented at the recent Dougherty Station Grand Opening. Representatives at the new library and community center, which is pictured above, included Governing Board members Sheila Grilli, President, and Vice-President John Nejedly with his family, Chancellor Helen Benjamin, DVC President Mark Edelstein, Cheryl LeMay, Dean of the San Ramon Valley Campus, Claudia Eckelmann, Senior Executive Assistant, DVC President's Office, Cherry Li-Bugg, Senior Dean of Information Technology & Services at Los Medanos College, and Andy Kivel, Technology Information Librarian at DVC. Also present was San Ramon Mayor H. Abram Wilson, who is a newly appointed member of the DVC Foundation.

*By Chrisanne Knox,
Editor, Public Relations Department
Diablo Valley College*

The new library and community center in Dougherty Valley held a grand opening celebration September 24-25 in conjunction with the San Ramon Arts Walk and Festival.

The official ribbon cutting took place Saturday morning. The day featured tours, program demonstrations, games and prizes.

The two state-of-the-art facilities, located on 17011 Bollinger Canyon Road, are part of the cultural, education complex that will eventually include the new San Ramon Valley campus.

The new 11,600-square-foot library has been designed to reflect the needs of the community it serves, said San Ramon librarian Joyce Gunn.

It will feature free wireless access, 44 public computers, a computer lab, small meeting rooms for story time, and a self-check in and out system for books and materials.

The library has been planned as a cooperative joint-use operation with the college, and the adult collection has been selected by both college and public librarians using grants and gift funding as well as the developer's money. In the future, a second library phase to be built by the community college will eventually link with the existing library to expand the facility by 30,000 square feet.