



Smith, Dodd pick colleges; nix pros

Page 11

# Neighbors

July 6, 1989

Serving West Sacramento, Broderick, Bryte, Southport and Clarksburg

Vol. 3, No 26



## Summer sweep

Six-year-old Aaron Melendez, left, and brother Jonathan, 4, do some yard work in front of their home on Alabama Avenue near 16th Street. Jonathan was more proficient using his hands on the leaves, while Aaron found a rake to his liking.

Susie Gow  
Neighbors

## Prostitution arrests cap heavy crime month

By Patty Henetz  
Neighbors staff writer

Ending a month marked by a succession of serious crimes, West Sacramento police netted 26 people in a sweep of prostitutes and their customers from the city's downtown.

Three teams of two officers arrested 10 prostitutes in various locations in the downtown area Friday night. A fourth team composed of female decoys and arresting officers apprehended 16 men who were cited on solicitation charges and then released, unless they had outstanding warrants or other charges filed against them, said Sgt. Ray Hensley.

Eleven of the 16 men arrested or cited were from cities other than West Sacramento; one had been arrested twice in

the past six years on suspicion of rape in West Sacramento and Sacramento, Hensley said.

The sweep had been planned for at least three weeks. "Even with the heavy workload and a lot of other stuff going on, (prostitution sweep operations) are a high priority in this community," Hensley said, adding that serious crimes such as drug use, robbery and theft are associated with prostitution.

"Given that, and given the fact that the community is tired of the prostitutes, we went ahead and ran the operation despite the heavy workload," Hensley said.

The police and the department's staff have been putting in long hours in order to clear a caseload resulting from a June that saw two mysterious deaths, a homicide, two major theft cases and an arrest in a trailer bombing.

The police are still looking for suspects — and

victims — in the thefts, as well as one of the suspected murderers. Along with the coroners in two counties they are trying, with little success, to find the families of two of the people who died.

The number of serious cases under investigation "is somewhat unusual," said Lt. Ron Moore, head of the department's investigations division. "Just since March, we've had more murders than we had in the whole time since the police department started (in 1987). I'm getting tired. Everyone is."

Since the beginning of the year, there have been six murders, including a hit-and-run accident, two stabbings, an ax bludgeoning, a shooting and a drowning.

Investigating those, and many other serious crimes,

See Crime, Page 7

### Inside

The Yolo County Fair is one of the few free fairs around. See Page 3.

Calendar .....	14
Classified .....	15
People .....	2
Police/Fire Log .....	10
Sports .....	11-13

## Yolo County wheat fire threat growing

By Patty Henetz  
Neighbors staff writer

Spring rains may have broken the state's drought cycle, but they have also increased the potential of a bad fire year by delaying the Yolo County wheat crop harvest and causing grasses to grow when they ordinarily would be dying back.

Woodland Fire Chief John Buchanan, who also serves as the county's fire coordinator, said last week that most of the

grass fires in Yolo County since summer's onset have actually been grain fires.

"Because of the late rains, we have had a number of grain fires," Buchanan said.

Because grain fires are particularly difficult to extinguish, he added, "It always concerns me when we have standing grain on the Fourth of July. Those are the ones that can get a firefighter injured. I've been saying this for a while — one of these days we're going to pay dues for allowing fireworks in Northern California."

The late rains caused a growth spurt in the so-called lighter fuels, or grasses, said California Department of Forestry spokeswoman Diane Saunders.

The type of grasses that grow in Yolo County are lighter and therefore more volatile than grasses elsewhere in the state, Saunders said. Now, those grasses are dying, forming a mat of tinder just waiting for an errant spark from fireworks, a

See Threat, Page 7

# Threat

Continued from Page 1

carelessly tossed cigarette, an improperly operated vehicle, a campfire, burning trash or an arsonist — all considered by officials to be the cause of 95 percent of the state's wildfires.

According to a survey recently completed by the CDF, the "fuel moisture" index of those grasses is as low as it was last time this year, when the fire potential was considered "very volatile," Saunders said.

Between June 20 and June 28, 60 grass fires flared across the county, Buchanan said. Fifteen of those fires were severe enough that firefighters had to call in other agencies to help bring the blazes under control, he said.

# Crime

Continued from Page 1

means a lot of work for a few people in a small city that only recently established its own police department.

Because of these homicides and other major crimes occurring within the past four weeks, the department's detectives have had to set aside more mundane investigations, Moore said.

"We're just prioritizing," Moore said. "But that's an everyday thing. We can't get detectives to many burglaries, and none to (investigate) misdemeanors."

The first of the major cases occurred on June 6, when police surrounded a camper truck parked on Riverbank Road near Golden State Middle School after getting reports that a man thought to be armed and violent was inside.

Attempts to get the man out of the truck were unsuccessful, so the police fired a tear gas canister into the truck's window. When the police approached the truck, they found they had been staking out a dead man, Craig Allen Rich, 29, an ex-convict paroled only 12 days earlier. He had stolen the truck three days earlier from an acquaintance in Riverbank, police

Yolo County fire "strike teams" — made up of five engines carrying three or four firefighters each, plus one chief officer — have also been called four times this fire season, twice in Solano County and twice in Yolo. "We never do that this early in the season," Buchanan said.

The biggest Yolo County fire of the season so far has been the May 31 grass fire on Road 89 west of Road 31 in Winters, caused by downed power lines. Buchanan said that three strike teams were called out to control that blaze, which burned 970 acres that caused an estimated \$25,000 in damage to buildings.

High winds that accompanied the opening days of summer pushed small but tenacious fires into stubbled fields in

Brooks, Winters and Madison, according to data supplied by Buchanan and the CDF. Car accidents and spontaneous combustion in a pile of almond trimmings have been blamed for some of the larger county fires, Saunders said.

The winds kept fire crews hopping on the first day of summer, said West Sacramento firefighter John Dorris. The engine companies were frequently unable to return to the station houses before being receiving another call, he said.

Mel Murray, Davis Fire Department division chief, said that so far this season, Davis fires have been small fires. Murray said that there isn't much brush in the 55 square miles of the Davis district, and what brush there is is concentrated in the Putah Creek area. "That's where the real problem

is," he said.

County firefighters have been aided by the unseasonably cool June weather, Buchanan said, adding that the wheat crop should be completely in soon after the Independence Day holiday. However, he cautioned, fires can still start in the stubble.

Saunders said that the state is advocating its "defensible space" program, where people clear firebreaks, 30 feet to 100 feet wide, around buildings to give the firefighters room to move.

It is definitely to a property owner's advantage to comply with the guidelines, available through state and local fire agencies, Saunders said, as firefighters are more likely to destroy a structure they can get to more easily than those surrounded by obstructions and brush.

said.

Moore said Rich appears to have died from a drug overdose. Homicide has been all but ruled out, he said, but added that Rich's body showed signs of having been dragged near the time of his death.

The police will seek the arrest of an unnamed suspect on manslaughter charges. "We have some leads," Moore said. "We know an individual was with (Rich) within two hours of the truck being parked (near the school)."

The action seemed to slow for a couple of weeks, but detectives along with the Yolo County Sheriffs and the state Highway Patrol were investigating local businessman Don Throne, arrested on June 20 on suspicion of possessing more than \$250,000 worth of property stolen from construction businesses and construction sites. West Sacramento police seized approximately \$20,000 worth of goods from Throne's West Capitol Avenue business, Moore said. County sheriffs have seized some 275 items worth approximately \$250,000 from Throne's farm on Highway 16, including 48 backhoe buckets worth up to \$1,600 each and a pipe threader worth approxi-

mately \$3,000, said sheriff's Det. Harvey Coleman.

On June 23, still more stolen goods — two pickup truck loads of items such as expensive running shoes, televisions, cosmetics and appliances that Moore said appeared to have been taken from a retail store — were recovered from a residence on Jones Circle after police went there in search of a suspect in another crime.

The next day, a Saturday night brawl under the I Street bridge turned murderous. A witness to the June 24 fight told police that a man described as a 38-year-old drifter tried to escape the beating he was suffering at the hands of two others by running into the Sacramento River. He escaped — but he drowned.

Police arrested one man that night, William Lee Clark, 28, a transient, and charged him with murder. They are looking for Joseph Neil Schmelza, so they can charge him with murder, too. Moore said Schmelza is 25 years old, 5-foot-8, 150 pounds, blond and bearded. The suspect may be traveling with a 36-year-old woman and a boy about 14 years old, Moore said.

The name of the man who died

in the river will not be released in the near future because he appears to have had no family, said a Sacramento County coroner's office spokesman.

Two days after the river murder, still another body washed up near the I Street bridge, Moore said. There is no evidence yet to assume the man met with foul play; rather, Moore said, he probably drowned after wading into the Sacramento. The Yolo County coroner will not release the man's name until his next-of-kin can be found. So far, the coroner's attempts to do so have been unsuccessful.

One major investigation that began earlier in the year seems to have been resolved with the June 28 arrest of Lance Allen Douglas, 18, of Hanford. Douglas has been charged with attempted murder in

connection with the bombing of a trailer on the 1300 block of Sacramento Avenue on April 1 and is being held at county jail on \$100,000 bail.

One of the two people living in a trailer in the 1300 block of Sacramento Avenue told police that she was awakened early in the morning of April 1 when she heard the sound of breaking glass followed by a hissing noise. She ran into her mother's room, then heard more glass breaking, but told police she never heard the bomb detonate.

It did explode, however, sending pipe fragments into the trailer walls but causing no injuries. State police and members of the county arson and bomb squad assisted the West Sacramento police in the investigation.

## Exchange group seeks host families for Japanese students

ASPECT, the American Study Program for Education and Cultural Training, a non-profit organization based in San Francisco, is placing a group of 25 Japanese exchange students in Sacramento homes this summer.

The students will arrive the third

week of July and stay approximately three weeks with host families in the Sacramento area.

ASPECT is dedicated to the development and implementation of affordable student exchange programs for young people around the world.

During their stay, the students will attend classes to learn about American customs and culture and practice conversational English.

Interested families are asked to call the program's Sacramento-area coordinator, Lauren Raskin at 364-1140.

# Drug

Continued from Page 3

"That was a little bit of a surprise," Stoebel said.

Asked about syringes, 1.4 percent of eighth-graders, 3.3 percent of the 10th-graders and 1.8 percent of the 12th-graders said they had used a needle or syringe to inject drugs.

One drug has become more prevalent. The use of LSD or acid has increased among teenagers, the survey says, with 11.1 percent of seniors saying they tried LSD, up from 9.4 percent in 1987.

The decline of drug use in the county survey is reflected in other surveys across the country, Stoebel said. An annual University of Michigan poll has found drug and alcohol use to be declining over the last 10 years.

But a decline in drug use has occurred mainly among members of the middle class, while substance abuse has stayed high among poorer, less-educated populations, Stoebel said.

According to Linda Fox, director of Diogenes Services Youth Services for Yolo County, it's now acceptable in high school to steer

clear of alcohol and other drugs.

"A trend is hitting, that being sober and straight is cool," Fox said. "It's a fad, but at least it's a good one."

Fox described drug use as a form of "self-abandonment," in which users avoid personal problems or emotions and numb themselves through intoxication.

"They are getting away from their feelings and getting away from themselves," Fox said. "Rather than dealing with life with what you have inside you, the tendency is to grab at something outside yourself."

Sutter Street Merchants Association, Inc. PRESENTS

## PIONEERS DAY STREET FAIRE BAR BQ & DANCE

Saturday - July 8<sup>th</sup>

### MINI MARKET - STREET FAIRE

Savings throughout Sutter Street  
11 AM - 5 PM

### COLOMA - FOLSOM WAGON TRAIN

Arrives approx. 11:30 AM



### ENTERTAINMENT

Gunfight and Stunt Show  
12 PM - 1:30 PM - 3 PM - 4:30 PM

### STEAK BAR BQ

#### New York Steak Salad-Beans-Roll

\$10.50 per adult  
Advance ticket price  
(\$12.00 at the door)

\$2.50 child's  
Hamburger Dinner

\$25.00 per family  
Advance ticket price  
(\$27.50 at the door).  
Includes 2 Adult Steak  
Dinners, Hamburger  
Dinner for under 15 years

INCLUDES Admission to the Dance  
Depot - Chamber of Commerce Grounds  
6 PM - 9 PM

### DANCE-LIBATIONS

Available

Music by the CALIFORNIA QUICK STEP BAND  
8 PM - 12 AM

Advance Tickets Available at Participating Merchants  
or Send Check or Money Order to:  
Sutter Street Merchants Association, Inc.  
Post Office Box 515, Folsom, California 95630

Dress in  
WESTERN  
ATTIRE.