



*Bonnie M. Dumanis*



# *On the Record*

San Diego County District Attorney

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(619) 531 - 4040

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CONSUMER PROTECTION  
DAY EVENT  
JANUARY 29TH 2005

The District Attorney's Office, in conjunction with County Supervisor Pam Slater-Price, is pleased to invite you to the first annual Consumer Protection Day Saturday, January 29th at the Town and Country Resort Hotel in Mission Valley.

Everything is FREE!

This is an event you can't afford to miss. There will be free parking, free admission and free food and entertainment! We believe San Diegans need to be warned about the latest scams and we want to help you learn to protect yourself from fraud. That's why we will also be presenting two panels; the morning panel will consist of local T.V. consumer reporters talking about scams they've uncovered while the afternoon panel will feature experts in consumer protection.

Call Today To Reserve A Spot!

**1 800-82-SHARP (827-4277)**  
Monday thru Friday between  
8:00 am - 6:00 pm  
See you there!



"Operation Veracruz" Targets  
Coastal Cocaine Dealers  
In San Diego

San Diego District Attorney Bonnie M. Dumanis joined DEA Special Agent in Charge John S. Fernandes, San Diego Police Chief William Lansdowne, Assistant Sheriff Bill Gore and other local leaders of law enforcement to announce the end of a 24-month investigation dubbed "Operation Veracruz". The



Galo Montoya-Acosta, the ringleader of this group

investigation targeted a prolific cocaine trafficking organization that distributed drugs in the coastal communities of Pacific Beach, Point Loma, Ocean Beach,

Operation Veracruz - continued

La Jolla, Del Mar, and Encinitas. This criminal organization was comprised of Mexican nationals, with the higher level members being almost exclusively from the small town of Nautla, Vera Cruz, Mexico (population of 2,900 people), that has been operating in the San Diego area for more than a decade.

Their activities not only have brought drugs to local communities, but also violence. Over 100 Nautlans have been arrested in San Diego County for drug-related violations, and at least 2 individuals from Nautla with ties to drug trafficking have been murdered here in San Diego in recent years. Those homicides remain unsolved.

During the operation, dozens of suspects, to include a dentist, school district employee, and a San Diego City worker, were arrested, and kilogram quantities of cocaine, along with drug money, vehicles and weapons, were seized.

"The dismantlement of this group of drug dealers at the hands of law enforcement will have a significant positive impact in our communities and should serve as a signal to their customers to seek treatment, get clean, or face the consequences," said John S. Fernandes, the Special Agent in Charge of the DEA San Diego Field Division.

"Our Narcotics Division, working in collaboration with Federal, County, and local law enforcement, will vigorously investigate and prosecute the distributors and users of illegal drugs, and we will use all technology at our disposal to do so," said District Attorney Bonnie M. Dumanis.

## DISTRICT ATTORNEY HOLDS TOWN HALL MEETINGS IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

San Diego District Attorney Bonnie M. Dumanis held several Community Town Hall meetings throughout the county in 2004. At each of these events, DA Dumanis, law enforcement leaders and local public safety representatives were available to answer questions. The meetings also served as a venue to learn about the concerns of different communities.

County Supervisor Dianne Jacob, DA Dumanis, Assistant Sheriff Bill Gore and Alpine Fire Chief Larry Kinard participated in our most recent community meeting in Alpine. This was the first ever "public safety" meeting in Alpine, which featured not only county leaders, but also representatives from Code Enforcement, the California Highway Patrol, the US Border Patrol, State Parole Department and the County's Animal Services.

All of our community meetings serve as an open forum for residents to get the latest public safety information from those providing the services. If you would like to have a town hall meeting in your community, please contact our office at (619) 531-3790.



Diversity is an important aspect of every community and San Diego is no different. We have a very rich blend of ethnicity and we at the Office of the District Attorney have decided to take advantage of it.

Last year, DA Dumanis created the first Community Advisory Board in the history of the office. This board is comprised of more than a dozen recognized community leaders from nearly every region of our county. The purpose of the board is to serve as the "eyes and ears" of the DA's office so that we can better serve those communities with regard to public safety issues.

During each meeting, the Board gets a chance to learn a little bit about selected divisions within the office. At the last Advisory Board meeting, members heard from Deputy District Attorney David Rubin who heads up the Hate Crimes Unit. These brief presentations give members an overview of our specialized units and their importance.

For more info about the Community Advisory Board visit our website:

[www.sandiegoda.com](http://www.sandiegoda.com)

### Identity Theft

Identity Theft is one of the fastest growing crimes. Our Economic Crimes Division suggests the following tips to protect your identity:

- Promptly remove delivered mail from your mailbox
- Never give personal info over the telephone (SSN, DOB and/or credit card numbers)
- Always ask for your credit card receipts after transactions
- Shred unwanted pre-approved credit card applications
- Report all lost or stolen credit cards immediately

The District Attorney's Office is part of a multi-jurisdictional task force called CATCH, Computer And Technology Crime High Tech Response Team. This is a specially trained unit that concentrates on tracking down criminals who steal other people's identity.

For more information on ID Theft visit:

**[www.sandiegoda.com](http://www.sandiegoda.com)**

### Internet Auction Fraud

Shopping online is convenient and you can find great bargains. Although most sites are legitimate you can also get ripped off. Another high-tech crime trend is Internet Auction Fraud. This is where a person bids on an item online at a auction site. They win the bid and send in their cold hard cash. Unfortunately, sometimes, they never receive the item or they are sent a cheaper version. The San Diego District Attorney's office is working to crack down on this cyber crime, but consumers need to know Internet Auction Fraud is completely preventable. Here are a few tips to protect yourself:

- Use a credit card
- Use reputable escrow accounts
- Make sure you know where you are sending your money
- Make sure you know where the seller is located

If you believe you have been a victim of Internet Auction Fraud file a report at [www.ifccfbi.gov](http://www.ifccfbi.gov)

This web site is maintained by the Internet Fraud Complaint Center in connection with the FBI and the National White Collar Crime Center.

### Spam Scam

Consumers should be on the alert for more sophisticated "spoof" e-mails that trick unwary and unsuspecting Internet users into giving personal information that can be used to drain bank accounts, fraudulently get credit cards and commit other crimes.

The scam is commonly called "brand spoofing" or "phishing" because the spam mail sends users familiar or legitimate-sounding names of companies to gain personal information. This scam capitalizes on names that are close to the real one. Here are some basic rules to consider:

- When in doubt, throw the e-mail out.
- Don't trust e-mail headers. They can be faked.
- Never trust the link in an e-mail message. Scam artists are getting sophisticated and are able to have their web site mirror a legitimate business web site.
- Don't trust e-mail messages on the status of your account. Always go directly to the company's web site.

# DA's Case Files

*In the past couple of months, we have had some very good results in the courtroom. The following is just a snapshot of some of our more serious cases and the final results;*



## **Thad Jesperson,**

a former second grade teacher at Toler Elementary School in Bay Park, was convicted of all seven counts of child molestation. He had been charged with molesting several of his young female students. Jesperson faces 25 years to life when he is sentenced.

## **Wes Allen Thomas,**

a 41-year-old, one-armed transient, has been found guilty of first degree murder in connection with the stabbing death of a homeless man. The two apparently had been arguing over some whiskey. John Robert Denmark, 43, was found covered with cardboard beneath the elevated trolley tracks in the San Diego River channel at Hazard Center Drive. Thomas faces a life sentence for the murder.

## **Marcos Mendiola**

has been sentenced to life in prison without parole for shooting to death a Union-Tribune newspaper deliveryman. Mendiola shot 46-year-old Antonio Pagayon in the back as he begged for his life at the Meadowbrook apartment complex in Bay Terraces last year.

## **Robert Nonay Endita,**

35, an ex-con has been sentenced to 59 years to life in prison for a vicious attack against a woman as she cleaned a hotel room in Chula Vista last April. The attack took place at the Traveler's Inn and Suites on Woodlawn Avenue. Endita already had a 1991 conviction for raping a woman at knifepoint in a San Diego apartment.

## **Thomas & Linda Hardy,**

the ex-owners of a Vista herbal store, have been ordered to pay \$35,601 to 69 customers who purchased herbal "compounds" instead of 100 percent herbal products. The Herbalist store was located at 977 S. Santa Fe Ave. in Vista. The owners had been selling items as "100 percent herbal", which actually contained over-the-counter drugs marketed under the names Tylenol, Motrin, Benadryl and Unisom. The Hardys were also found to have been diagnosing and treating individuals for sicknesses, which can only be done by a licensed medical doctor.

## **James Estrella,**

45, a former San Diego police officer, has pleaded guilty to four counts of receiving stolen property. Estrella bought thousands of dollars of stolen property from thieves in San Diego and resold it on eBay while working as a San Diego Police officer. Even, Estrella's wife was in on the illegal business action. She ended up pleading guilty to a misdemeanor count of receiving stolen property. Estrella faces two years in custody when he's sentenced.

## **Georgianne Arneson,**

a 48 year old Vista woman, was sentenced to two years in prison for criminally neglecting her elderly mother. Arneson's mother, 83 year old Beverly Weeks, was found covered with bedsores. She died at a hospital a short time later. Arneson's lawyer had told the jury that his client was a good person who tried her best to care for her mother whose health was deteriorating.

**For more information about these cases and others check out the DA's web site:**

**[www.sandiegoda.com](http://www.sandiegoda.com)**