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## INVESTIGATION: REHAB RIVIERA, PART 2

# DETERMINED TO DETOX, SO WHY DID THEY DIE?

Care called into question at some ‘nonmedical’ Southern California facilities



COURTESY OF THE MANIACE FAMILY

Matthew Maniace on his 19th birthday in 2015, the last birthday his family got to spend with him.

By Teri Sforza » tsforza@scng.com » @terisforza on Twitter

This is the beginning of your beautiful new life!

So began a contract for Above It All Treatment Center, a drug rehabilitation facility in Lake Arrowhead where, in February, Matthew Maniace signed himself in for detox.

He was a red-headed, freckle-faced sweetheart-turned-tough guy. His Facebook page showed both sides: photos of puppies licking his face and of his new neck tattoo (part moth, part skull).

Maniace was also an inveterate drug user, with a preference for heroin and alcohol. At 20, he'd been to rehab in at least three states. He was hoping the trip to California — to a licensed center described by a friend of Maniace's as the “best rehab in America” — would help him seize his elusive prize: long-term sobriety.

What Maniace might not have known when he signed the admission form is that Above It All is what California regulators call a “nonmedical” facility, which means it is not overseen by doctors. About one-third of California's 1,800-plus licensed rehabs provide nonmedical detox. Many wouldn't be allowed to open in other

REHAB » PAGE 12



MINDY SCAHUER — STAFF FILE PHOTO

Since 2013, at least three clients have died at Above It All Treatment Center: Matthew Maniace, 20; Terri Darling, 52; and James Dugas, 25.

## THE SERIES

Earlier this year, the Southern California News Group published Rehab Riviera, a three-part investigation about fraud, bad medicine and the victims in the region's booming drug and alcohol recovery industry. Since then, we have looked deeper, finding problems in three specific areas of the rehab business. Here's what we'll bring you over the next three days:

**TODAY | Death in Detox:** Hundreds of rehab centers in California offer “nonmedical detox,” meaning people can try to break their drug addiction without medical care. It's a loophole so risky that many other states won't allow it.

**MONDAY | Urine Inc.:** In California, even someone convicted of fraud or drug dealing or medical malpractice can make money in rehab, often through the vertical integration of insurance payments for urine testing. Our rules are lax, but prosecutors are watching.

**TUESDAY | Welcome Homeless:** At least part of Southern California's homeless boom seems to be fueled by the region's 1,100 rehab centers. Some woo out-of-state addicts with free, one-way trips, only to kick them to the streets after their insurance runs out.

## THOMAS FIRE

# Santa Barbara a ‘ghost town’

Montecito residents flee from growing flames

By Robert Jablon  
and Chris Carlson  
The Associated Press

**MONTECITO »** Residents piled into cars and fled on Saturday, turning downtown Santa Barbara into “a ghost town” as surging winds drove one of the biggest fires in California's history toward the city and the nearby wealthy enclave of Montecito.

The mandatory evacuations around Montecito and neighboring Summerland came as winds that had eased a day earlier roared back at around 30 mph, with gusts to about 60 mph. Firefighters sprayed water onto hot spots sparked by wind-blown embers. Firefighters also drove to the historic San Ysidro Ranch in yellow firetrucks as heavy smoke rose from the coastal hills, blotting out the blue skies.

FIRE » PAGE 6

## WASHINGTON STATE

# Opioids add to city's struggle with homeless

By Phuong Le  
The Associated Press

**EVERETT, WASH. »** This is the lesson that the working-class city of Everett has learned: It takes a community to rescue the hard-core homeless.

It takes teams of outreach workers building relationships with men and women struggling with addiction or untreated mental illness, prodding them to get help.

It takes police and other agencies, working together to provide for their needs.

Everett, hard-hit by the opioid epidemic, is trying an array of strategies to tackle homelessness, addiction, untreated mental illness and other problems on its streets.

For starters, the city put together a team that would track the 25 most costly and vulnerable cases and hover over each one individually until he or she was in treatment or housing.

“It was when everything else seems to have failed,” said Hil Kaman, who left his job prosecuting the homeless about a year-and-a-half ago and took up the challenge of finding solutions as the city's public health and safety director.

Officials also are pushing new permanent supportive housing and sending social workers out with police officers.

HOMELESS » PAGE 5

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SEEN AT THE SCENE

# Guests enjoy playtime at Sunset Sip benefit

More than \$135,000 was raised at the seventh annual Sunset Sip on Nov. 11 at the Hotel Maya to foster mental health awareness and raise funds for The Guidance Center, a nonprofit child and family mental health service provider headquartered in Long Beach with clinics in San Pedro and Compton.

Among the 230 people attending were Mayor Robert Garcia and Police Chief Robert Luna. Mayor Garcia helped kick off the night's festivities by thanking guests for supporting the center and all the organization does to help young people and families in Long Beach thrive. Chief Luna also thanked guests for their generosity, empathy and support of Long Beach through the center, and expressed his excitement for the growing partnership with the Long Beach Police Department.

Throughout the night, guests were invited to "nurture their inner child" and experience the healing power of play through various immersive play therapy experiences. While enjoying unlimited wine tastings and bidding on silent auction items, guests had the opportunity to participate in play therapy exhibits hosted by the center's therapists: exploring emotions Jenga, dress-up photo booth, and sand tray.

During the program, Nathan Swaringen, clinical therapist at the center and developer of "It's About T.I.M.E." (Trauma-Informed Movement in Education) program, shared how important play is for all ages and invited guests to continue to nurture their inner child at their tables by bringing to life figurines they selected before sitting down.



**Shirley Wild**  
Columnist



Long Beach Mayor Robert Garcia welcomes Sunset Sip 2017 guests along with Eric Adler, chairman of The Guidance Center's board of directors, and Tim Sailor, board member and Sunset Sip event committee chairman.



COURTESY PHOTO

San Pedro Peninsula Cancer Guild event Chairwoman Yvonne Bogdanovich, left, Dr. Heinz-Joseph Lenz, and guild President Jan Moore at the Long Beach Hyatt Regency on Nov. 5.

Maritza Zeljak's student volunteers from Harbor College and the Assistens to the raffle and bake sale staff was a bonus.

Seen at the Scene: San Pedro Peninsula Cancer Guild Founder Josephine Nizetich with her daughter Josetta, Jeanine Shearing, Patty Shearing, Maria Shearing, Pam Furman, Bobbie Carlson, Guild founding members Norma Marich, Donna Moller, Mary Ann Jankovich, and Libby Cigliano. Seen shopping in the boutique were speaker, Dr. Lenz, USC Cancer Center Director Dr. Stephen and Robin Gruber with daughters Ellen and Megan.

### Fine Arts Affiliates

Forty-two members and friends of Fine Arts Affiliates sailed by Catalina Express to Avalon on Oct. 31. Docents from the Catalina Museum led small groups through the various spectacular Chihuly glass exhibits in the afternoon. The Pavilion Hotel hosted a wine and cheese party at cocktail hour and in the evening they were treated to an evening viewing of the beautiful Chihuly collection lit for extra drama and a completely different art experience.

The following day the

group was given a behind the scenes docent tour of the Catalina Casino. Many members remembered ballroom dancing at the Casino to big bands such as Tommy Dorsey or Woody Herman. During its 52-year lifetime Fine Arts Affiliates has given over \$657 thousand in scholarships to students in each of the CSULB College of the Arts departments: Art, Dance, Design, Theatre Arts, Film and Electronic Arts and the Cole Conservatory of Music.

Seen at the Scene: Tour organizers Erlene Minton and Tom with Elaine Marks, Carolee Windsor, Marsha Jeffer, Marguerite Lyon, John Britton and Gary and Christy Roeber.

*News of social events with charitable purposes may be sent to Shirley Wild at [spwild@verizon.net](mailto:spwild@verizon.net) or by fax to 562-594-9668. Please include a contact phone number. Send high-resolution jpeg photos, by attachment, to [spwild@verizon.net](mailto:spwild@verizon.net) and include group name and identification of individuals from left. Call Shirley at 562-594-9468 for more information. Please check the website for coverage of additional events: [www.presstelegram.com/social](http://www.presstelegram.com/social).*

The true star of the evening was 10-year-old former client, Mia, who during the program shared the story of her journey to positive mental health through treatment at the center and support from her mother and school.

Seen at the Scene: CEO Patricia Costales, Caren and Eric Adler, Alex and Linda Bellehumeur, Nancy and Steve Colman, Paul Gleason and Marianne Messina, Chris and Larry Lahlhere of The Cherese Mari Lahlhere Foundation, Former Councilmember Steven and Kantonja Neal, Tim Sailor and Kevin Howard, Jennifer Sanders, Kurt Schneider, Moe and Debbie Shahbani, Betsy Snare and Ed Walters, Kimberly and Boon Wee.

### Cancer guild

On Nov. 5, the San Pedro Peninsula Cancer Guild held its annual fundraiser, An Affaire to Remember, at the Long Beach Hyatt Regency. The

popular luncheon, professional fashion show and boutique drew a crowd of 600 attendees who shopped with enthusiasm among the 22 vendors.

During the luncheon, they were treated to the song stylings of the all-male USC a Capella Choir, The Trojan Men. The audience was agog with the handsome lads and their equally fine voices. There were sparkles galore, glitter, glamour, in the stunning dresses and gorgeous suit ensembles that were designed by Margi Kent. The lively fashion show was enhanced by selections from Edwards-Lowell furs, which in one instance an Afghan dog matched the color of the fur. Despite wearing 6-inch heels, the models were graceful as well as beautiful, and the addition of the handsome male models, as always, spiced up the runway.

Guest speaker, Dr. Heinz-Joseph Lenz gave

his annual update on cancer research advances, ending with his determination that they are even closer in the near future, to finding not just a cure, but a vaccine against all cancers.

Overseeing the day were this year's event chair, Yvonne Bogdanovich and Guild president, Jan Moore. Baked goods chair, Olympia Harris' booth of fresh member-baked treats has been a successful part of the Guild event for many years. Where else can you get the popular Croatian treat, Hrstule? The table centerpieces of modern metal Christmas trees were coordinated by member MaryAnn Viculin, and everyone vied for the chance to win one in a special raffle. Close to \$100,000 was raised as part of the Guild's annual donation to the USC Comprehensive Cancer Center. The addition of member

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