



COUNTY OF MONTEREY

CAO Weekly Report

In This Edition:

- > Probation honored for fundraising
- > Election issues explained
- > Public Works honored for work during Soberanes Fire

SPECIALREPORT



Cristal Sanchez (second from left) is pictured with other top law enforcement agency fundraisers and a Special Olympics athlete.

County Notes

- > Keep your pets safe during bad weather with tips from [Monterey County Animal Services](#).

Probation a Top Fundraiser for Special Olympics

The Probation Department is becoming known for more than its law enforcement efforts. This time, the department nabbed an award for fundraising for Special Olympics.

The department takes part in the annual Special Olympics Law Enforcement Torch Run which comes through Monterey County. This event calls attention to the Special Olympics program and raises money to support the games.



The department's efforts are spearheaded by Cristal Sanchez, Probation Services Manager of the Adult Field Unit. She has done such an amazing job coordinating the run and fundraising that the department was included in the list of top 20 law enforcement agency fundraisers for Northern California.

At this year's torch run kick-off conference last week, Sanchez accepted an award for the department, naming it as the 4th highest law enforcement fundraising agency in Northern California. Sanchez, who raised \$8,914 for Probation's donation to the cause, is dedicated to the Special Olympics program.

Sanchez at the Special Olympics Summer games.



"I am on the Executive Committee for the Law Enforcement Torch Run and the coordinator of events for our county," says Sanchez. "I have participated with the Special Olympics for eight years. I attend the Summer Games every year and hand out medals to the athletes after their events."

Probation Deputy Chief Todd Keating carries the torch during last year's run (left). Runners make their way through town (right).

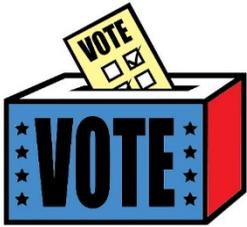
Watch for probation officers and other law enforcement participants to run again for Special Olympics this summer. The annual torch run will be on June 13th.



Registrar Discusses Election Issues in the News

Last month, a discussion of election issues, specifically voter fraud, made national headlines. Could such a situation happen in Monterey County?

During the flurry of interest this topic created, County Registrar of Voters Claudio Valenzuela responded to questions about voter fraud and other election issues to residents and the news media. If these issues concern you, read on. Below is a complete email interview Valenzuela had with a local reporter about voter fraud and how the Elections Department safeguards the integrity of the vote.



Q. Has anyone produced any evidence of voter fraud in Monterey County in the November 2016 election or previous elections since you've been the registrar?

A. We have not had a report of voter fraud in connection with an election. We have had a few instances of alleged voter registration fraud, in those cases we have submitted the information to the Secretary of State's fraud investigation division as well as to the Monterey County District Attorney.

Q. How does the elections office verify voter eligibility? Similarly, how does someone prove they're a real person, their age, their place or residence, or their citizenship when filling out a registration form?

A. In order to register to vote, one must complete an affidavit of registration which is signed under penalty of perjury, stating that the person is eligible to register. Penal provisions related to voter registration fraud and voter fraud include imprisonment. Then voter information is entered into a statewide database. The State looks to this information to validate the registration, including a driver's license or state identification number or the last four digits of a social security number.

Other information that is verified in the database are death and felon records. We receive monthly reports of decedents from the County Health Department and believe it or not, we monitor local obituaries.

Voter information is again verified during the voting process, including but not limited to the verification of signatures on vote by mail envelopes, the statement of the voter's name and address at the polls, the identification requirement for those registrants who failed to provide identification on the registration card and the provisional ballot process. This provides voting opportunities while maintaining the integrity of the vote.

Q. Do the voter registration forms require a social security or driver's license number?

A. Yes, the affidavit of registration does request this information.

Q. Has your office looked at the Monterey County voter rolls to determine how many may not be eligible to vote, either because of age, citizenship, residence or felony status? If so, what was the result?

A. Voter maintenance is an ongoing effort. The checks and balances begin the moment the voter submits the affidavit of registration. All elections officials work to meet federal and state regulations. We work with partner agencies which provide information to the Secretary of State and local election offices to properly update voter records in the statewide database. Those agencies include the superior courts, DMV, state and local health departments, the United States Post Office and elections offices in other states among others.

Federal and state laws require communication with voters once they register and when they move. This communication includes forwardable and non-forwardable mailings with response required.

There is a great deal of uncertainty about elections among the public fueled in part by the inherent differences in elections by states and even to a certain extent counties when considering voting systems. This is evident in the questions we receive from people who have never worked with the myriad of regulations in processing registration cards and voters. We welcome those who seek to gain a better understanding of elections.

What we hear most often from those who take the time to learn more about the process is, “I had no idea.” People don’t realize we are professionals who work year-round, even when it is not Election Day; that we follow state and federal laws that govern our numerous processes and procedures; and that we are not an investigative or law enforcement agency.

The checks and balances discussed here, in conjunction with numerous others that are difficult to boiled down to a few sentences, are built into the system and work to provide added safeguards to the processes: voter registration and voting.



Public Works Recognized for Soberanes Fire Efforts

Seems like so long ago now, but before flooding issues began wreaking havoc in our area, there was fire, the Soberanes Fire. In fact, it is damage from that massive blaze that is the culprit of a lot of our current day headaches, particularly for the hardworking staff of RMA-Public Works.

Two Public Works employees, Shawn Atkins and Enrique Saavedra, have been singled out by the Transportation Agency for Monterey County (TAMC) to receive one of its Excellence Awards for their work during the Soberanes Fire. The awards were given last week during the TAMC Board meeting in Salinas.

For anyone who does not remember, the Soberanes blaze lasted from July 22nd to October 13th and burned 132,000 acres. RMA-Public Works was a key part of county emergency efforts, as areas of Big Sur were hard hit.



(l-r) TAMC Executive Director Debbie Hale, Enrique Saavedra and TAMC Board member Alejandro Chavez.



Among Public Works many tasks during the Soberanes Fire, here crews clear land to create a base camp for firefighters south of Carmel.



(l-r) TAMC Executive Director Debbie Hale, Shawn Atkins and TAMC Board member Alejandro Chavez.

Both men are grateful for the awards but credit the entire Public Works Department for helping firefighters' efforts and safeguarding the community.

"During the fire emergency, we had to repair washed out road banks and clear debris slides. Some of the damage to county roads was caused by the heavy firefighting vehicles," explains Saavedra. "Every road had to be inspected after it was cleared by the firefighters, county workers had to examine miles of roads for safety hazards before they could be opened to the public."

In addition to the Soberanes Fire, the Chimney Fire which reached into south Monterey County, near Lake Nacimiento, compounding the county workload.

"The Transportation Excellence Award is for going above and beyond what is expected of the job," said Theresa Wright, TAMC Outreach Coordinator.

Congratulations Enrique, Shawn and the entire Public Works team.