

P TO THE TASK



JUAN REYES — MONTEREY HERALD

Middle School sixth grader Cindy Fernandez, right, practices dance moves with Cresta McIntosh, who is the MPUSD

element of educational services. McIntosh participated in the "Shadow a Student Challenge" by following around Fernandez the school day.

SD administrators take 'Shadow a Student Challenge'

But that was after McIntosh was having flashbacks of playing the flute during Fernandez's band class. Then it was followed by another class where Fernandez talked about her upcoming project on why she wants to be an immigration attorney.

After that it was the unexpected dance class where Fernandez taught McIntosh some new dance moves and even participated in the limbo dance. Next up was lunch where McIntosh joined with Fernandez and her friends, Kalista Ramirez and Valeria Campos. There, McIntosh listened to what the students had to say about their experience at Los Arboles.

McIntosh said the opportunity to see a school day from a student's perspective was quite the experience for her.

"We go into this work for students as educators," McIntosh said. "But, we're really interested in making sure that we're listening to our students and leveraging their voice. And what better way than to have empathy and compassion for our students' experiences than actually shadowing them and being a student for a day?"

Fernandez said she liked the

idea of having McIntosh follow her around because of the support they gave each other getting through the day.

"I was able to help her and she was able to help me as a partner does," Fernandez said. "I was able to see her as a kid as well. I really made her believe that she was like me, as a kid."

Fernandez said it's important for the administrators to see what it's like to be a student nowadays.

"We have lots of opportunities in life," she said. "Some take advantage of it and some others try hard to accomplish something that would take them further on down to a pathway."

McIntosh said she listened to Fernandez and several other students talk about what it is they'd like to see get done to make a better learning environment.

Fernandez said they were talking about how the students want to get rid of the lockers and books and replace them with tablets or laptops.

"We can probably throw those things out and put in our computer and do the homework in there," Fernandez said. "It's much easier for us to have a computer in our hands and do

the work on a computer. Today, we have the technology."

There were a total of 23 participants for this year's "Shadow a Student Challenge." Los Arboles principal Stephanie Herrera has participated in all three years since the challenge was put in place.

Herrera spent the first year at Marina High because she said she wanted the opportunity to learn about what the experience was like for students who came from Los Arboles. She spent the next two years at Seaside Middle School.

"I just think that youth voice is so important and so powerful. And that's really what should be driving the decision making at the school sites, especially," Herrera said. "The opportunity is humbling and it also, I think, makes us better leaders because we can learn from the students what their experiences are like and nobody knows their experience better than they do."

Last year was Herrera's first year as principal and she said she spent most of the time seeing what she could do to make changes. She tried to meet some of the students' demands like

SHADOW » PAGE 4

SEXUAL ASSAULT

Looking for 'compassionate' volunteers to counsel victims

Monterey County Rape Crisis Center provides variety of services.

By Nicoletta Lanese

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MONTEREY COUNTY » After assisting 706 survivors of sexual violence and 271 of their loved ones last year, the Monterey County Rape Crisis Center is looking for "compassionate" volunteers to join its team of sexual assault counselors.

"There has been a steady stream of volunteers that are willing to come and do this work for free, and it's not the easiest volunteer work — this is hard," said Clare Mounsee, the center's executive director of the last 31 years. "This is a subject that a lot of people still don't want to talk about, so kudos to the volunteers that do their part."

Victims of sexual violence may face lingering injuries, sexually-transmitted diseases or unwanted pregnancies. But beyond the physical harm stemming from their assault, survivors face a torrent of psychological and emotional challenges according to the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network, the largest non-profit anti-sexual assault organization in the United States.

Victims are at high-risk of developing depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, substance abuse or eating disorders, and many are driven to self-harm or suicide. Meanwhile, survivors' friends and families play witness to this devastating aftermath, and sometimes the assault itself, and suffer emotional hardship themselves.

Survivors and their loved ones often struggle to share their stories. They may be overcome by shame, or simply don't know what to do or who to turn to.

That's where the Rape Crisis Center comes in.

The Monterey County Rape Crisis Center supports sexual assault survivors and their loved ones by outlining their options and connecting them to the resources they need. They monitor a 24-hour crisis line (which can be reached at 831-375-4357 or 831-424-4357), offer counseling programs, and advocate for survivors throughout the legal process should they choose to report their assault. Should survivors require services beyond the bounds of the center, such as psychiatric treatment or housing, the Crisis Center connects them to local services.

At its core, the center provides survivors a listener who will hear their stories in confidence and support, Mounsee stressed.

VOLUNTEERS » PAGE 4

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effect on the bottom line. The Feb. 14 massacre at a Florida high school set off a response from businesses unlike any previous mass shooting.

Major corporations, including MetLife, Hertz Delta Air Lines, have cut ties to the National Rifle Association. Walmart, Kroger, L.L. Bean and Dick's Sporting Goods announced they will no longer sell guns anyone under 21. Dick's banned the sale of assault rifles, a step Walmart took in 2015. And D CEO went even further calling for tougher laws.

Those actions amount to an act of defiance against the NRA and its allies in Washington who have vehemently opposed any ban AR-15s and other semi-automatic weapons or a hit age limit for gun purchases. "What we are seeing is a real shift," said N Chakravorti, executive director of strategy at brand consulting firm Lander. "I think right now companies are acting in the government because they are seeing that changes are too slow."

Still, business leaders are not exactly leading charge for the stricter laws. Their actions can be seen as a response to protests by students who survived shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School and to growing calls by consumers for boycotts against companies that do business with the NRA or gun manufacturers.

And their decisions do represent much of a s

FRENCH EMBASSY Extremist in Burkina

By Brähima Ouadracou
The Associated Press

OUAGADOUGOU, BURKINA FASO » Islamic extremists opened fire on the French Embassy and army headquarters in separatist quarters in Burkina Faso's capital Friday, killing at least seven soldiers, while the militants were a government official.

More than 90 people were wounded in the attack.

Witnesses at state health department said they were fears that the toll could rise.

Gunfire and explosions subsided by midday. Victims fled offices near the violence, and copiers were seen at the embassy.

Witnesses at state health department said they were fears that the toll could rise.

The neighborhood houses other embassy prime minister's office

abandoning almost 200 years of formal neutrality.

2013

Vice President Joe Biden led civil rights leaders and national political figures in a ceremonial crossing of a Selma, Alabama, bridge where voting rights marchers were beaten by law enforcement officers in 1965.

Birthdays

Movie director George Miller is 73. Radio personality Ira Glass is 59. Olympic track and field gold medalist Jackie Joyner-Kersey is 56. Actress Jessica Biel is 36.

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miles (201 kilometers) east of Los Angeles.

Inside, blankets were strewn everywhere and chairs were used to try to hold up the tarp ceiling. A makeshift kitchen was littered with empty bottles with cans of corn, peas and soup stacked on wooden shelves. Several holes on the property were filled with feces, officials said.

The children didn't appear to have any obvious injuries and showed no outward signs of malnutrition but were undergoing medical evaluations, Bachman said.

"It was apparent they had not bathed in days," she said. "There was no running water, no electricity, no bathroom facilities."

Shadow

FROM PAGE 2

more freedom to express themselves in their clothing.

The school implemented the "Dress for Your Success" program and Herrera said she looks it as a way of students having conversations about clothing as opposed to talking about the strict rules restricting it.

And another big demand was allowing students to use cellphones during the break periods. Herrera said she looked at the pros and cons of allowing cellphone usage. But, it was another

said during the brief court appearance.

The children were not enrolled in public school and deputies are still investigating whether they were considered enrolled in a home-school, but there was no evidence they were being educated, Bachman said.

Deputies believe the family lost their home at some point and has been living on the dirt lot for about four years, Bachman said. Initially, the whole family was living in the trailer and they later built the plywood dwelling, she said.

Temperatures in the desert community regularly reach over 100 degrees during the summer and can drop well below freezing during very windy winter nights.

"It was a difficult decision for maybe just the adults because it wasn't what our norm was and it wasn't maybe what our experience was when we went to school," said Herrera about changing the rules. "Navigating that has been challenging but ultimately the adults here on our campus really care about kids. What they think and what their experience has been like here."

Juan Reyes can be reached at (831) 726-4360

Volunteers

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The non-profit is primarily funded by federal and state grants, mostly derived from the Violence Against Women Act and the Victims of Crime Act, but its lifeblood is supplied by volunteers. A large portion of the volunteer staff is made up of women between the ages of 20 and 40. Given that nine of every 10 rape victims are female, these women know what is at stake.

Applications to join the center as a sexual assault counselor are now open. They will be accepted until Wednesday and can be found at www.mntryrapcrt.org. The 47-hour training for new volunteers will begin on March 17 and conclude on April 17. Volunteers must be 18 and over, and bilingual volunteers are needed and encouraged to apply. Those interested can call the Crisis Center's Mon-

KABC-TV VIA

An aerial photo from video shows a ramshackle structure where authorities say a couple, their three children and dozens of cats were living in filthy conditions in unincorporated Joshua Tree in Southern California's Mojave Desert on Thursday.

ter nights. "They range from 20-30 degrees at night or even lower depending on the wind chill," Bachman said.

"The temperatures were very cold and they were basically living outdoors. There was no indoors for them."

Investigators do not believe the children were being held captive, like another family — who lived about 60 miles (96.56 kilo-



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Los Aboles Middle School sixth grader Cindy Fernandez, left, and her friend Kalista Ramirez, right, hang out with Cresta McIntosh, who is the MPUUSD superintendent of educational services during their lunch period. McIntosh participated in the "Shadow a Student Challenge" by following around Fernandez throughout the school day.

Staff members and volunteers take their call, ask if they are safe or require medical attention, then proceed to identify and address their needs.

If a victim's assault took place recently, the Crisis Center can discuss their options for reporting and connect them to a hospital if they choose to get a Sexual Assault Forensic Examination (SAFE), sometimes known as a "rape kit." If a victim calls the police first, California law requires that the center be contacted so the victim has access to an advocate.

The Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner and Crisis Center advocate arrive on the scene at the same time, to spare the victim the pain of repeating their story, Mounteer explained. Survivors and their significant others benefit from the Crisis Center standing in to provide information, help them communicate with law enforcement and medical staff, and generally provide a calming presence in the midst of a traumatic situation, said Mounteer.

"People are quite fearful. If I make this report, what's going to happen? If I go to the hospital, what's the exam going to be like?"

Mounteer said, "We can allay those fears and explain what's happening." The center's new volunteers will be trained to perform this service with the help of community members who also

meters) east of Joshua Tree — that made international headlines earlier this year when officials said they had rescued their 13 children.

David and Louise Turpin have pleaded not guilty to torture, abuse and other charges. Prosecutors in neighboring Riverside County said the Turpins tortured their children keeping them chained to their beds and so malnourished their growth was stunted.

interface with survivors of sexual assault, including police officers, district attorneys and forensic nurse examiners.

Crisis Center volunteers accompanied 88 survivors to their SAFE examinations last year. Those survivors chose to report and in a timely manner, before evidence was lost. Mounteer noted, since the Crisis Center extended this service 88 times within a 12-month window, that means a promptly-reported sexual assault took place in Monterey County more than once a week.

But according to Mounteer, rates of reporting are estimated to only be between 15 and 30 percent. If the number of rapes reported in Monterey County is high, the number that go unreported might be staggering.

"I think that we are in an area that is known for its tourist attractions and its beauty, and people don't like to talk about think about stuff like that happening here," said Mounteer. "Most of these cases are between people who know each other, and that can happen anywhere."

"When you think that over 900 people in Monterey County sought emotional help over this in the last year, that's significant." To learn more about MCRCC's services or how to get involved, visit <http://www.mntryrapcrt.org/>.

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