

County officials process application by former partner of Santa Clara

Waste Water executives to reopen exploding facility just outside city

Explosions in 2014 spewed 3-mile toxic cloud over Santa Paula and Ventura, injuring scores of people, including three SP firefighters.

By Peggy Kelly
Santa Paula Times

An application was submitted to the Ventura County Planning Department for a new operator to reopen the notorious Santa Clara Waste Water Treatment plant — the Mission Rock Road facility that exploded into toxic flames almost five years ago.

The applicant, Ri-Nu Environmental Services, had close business ties to the previous owner of the plant and its top executives.

Nine Santa Clara Waste Water employees, as well as the corporate entities of Santa Clara Waste Water, faced a variety

Public comment period open until June 6

The county has announced that the public comment period for the environmental document, called the Mitigated Negative Declaration, for the plant to reopen will last until June 6. The public is encouraged to submit written comments to Franca Rosengren, no later than 5 p.m. on June 6 to the county of Ventura Resource Management Agency, Planning Division, 800 S. Victoria Ave., Ventura 93009, or email comments to Franca.Rosengren@ventura.org. People may access the documents at the Planning Department or log on to <http://vcrma.org/divisions/planning> (see CEQA Environmental Review).

of criminal charges stemming from the Nov. 18, 2014 explosion at the wastewater facility, located west of the city.

More than 50 people were injured either from the initial blast or from exposure to toxic chemicals, including three Santa

Paula firefighters; two were forced into retirement due to their injuries. A city of Santa Paula Public Works employee who later was exposed to the Fire Department's contaminated engine was also harmed and later forced into retirement due to respiratory illness and other effects.

At about 3:45 a.m., a still-unknown chemical blew out the back of a vacuum truck, spewing the substance throughout the area. Although the plant is located in the unincorporated area, Santa Paula Fire Department was first on the scene and told by a company employee that the

Continued to Public comment, Page 2

Isbell Middle School teacher: Teacher of the Year



Isbell Middle School students surround their teacher, Jan-Erik Sand, Wednesday morning after he learned he is the 2019 Ventura County Teacher of the Year.

U.S. Marine from family of educators makes a difference in the classroom

By Dan Diaz
Santa Paula Times

Jan-Erik Sand had no idea what was happening when more than a dozen people, including his family, bosses and media, walked into his Isbell Middle School classroom Wednesday morning with flowers and a plaque, announcing to his delighted students that their teacher is the 2019 Ventura County Teacher of the Year.

Sand was chosen from more than 6,000 teachers in Ventura County.

"I feel like this is a community effort; I have had so much support since my first day here in the district," Sand said. "Our students are blessed with more courses and technology than ever before."

Specializing as a career technical educator, Sand emphasizes design and modeling, automation in robotics, computer science and energy and the environment.

Sand's colleagues say he has a unique combination of subject knowledge and teaching style that makes him a standout



Isbell Middle School teacher Jan-Erik Sand, middle, is cheered by his students after being surprised Wednesday morning in his classroom with the news he is Ventura County Teacher of the Year. He is flanked by Stan Mantooth, Ventura County superintendent of schools, left, and Ed Cora, Santa Paula Unified School District superintendent.

in the classroom, said Ed Cora, Santa Paula Unified School District superintendent. "His enthusiasm of what he does for the students is contagious."

Sand currently teaches an innovative engineering course that uses project-based learning to give students skills and knowledge that will help prepare them for careers in STEM-related fields (science,

technology, engineering and mathematics).

One of Sand's most rewarding moments as a teacher came when he got an unusual request from a student who had been born with a deformed hand. The student asked Sand if he could use the classroom's 3D printer to make a new hand. Sand spent the next six weeks working with the student to design and create a fully functional prosthetic hand that the student now regularly wears to school.

Sand has made it one of his priorities to encourage girls to pursue engineering careers. With many girls losing interest in STEM courses during the transition from middle school to high school, Sand has spearheaded several initiatives to help reverse that trend. These include creating after-school clubs and leading an all-girls engineering team in a competition at Naval Base Ventura County.

As a former Marine de-

Continued to Teacher of the Year, Page 4

SP woman sentenced for grand theft from employer

By Peggy Kelly
Santa Paula Times

A Santa Paula woman was sentenced Monday to 40 months in jail after pleading guilty to felony grand theft and two counts of felony identity theft.

Jessica Paniagua, 40, was sentenced May 6 to 40 months in jail, a sentence she will have to serve at least 16 months of in custody. Upon her release, she will be on supervised release for the balance of her sentence.

In March, Paniagua pled guilty to one count of felony grand theft and two counts of felony identity theft.

According to Senior Deputy District Attorney Howard A. Wise, Paniagua worked for Interstate Striping, a Thousand Oaks-based company that provides striping for parking lots and roadways.

Paniagua "worked as a part-time bookkeeper, affording her access to the company's Quick-Books program," and Wise stated that Paniagua was able to generate 109 "unauthorized checks to herself and others."

"She cashed those checks at two check-cashing locations in Santa Paula" before the thefts were discovered in February.

In addition to her custodial sentence, Wise said Martinez was also ordered to pay restitution of \$108,915 to the victim.

The conviction of Paniagua resulted from an investigation led by the Ventura County Sheriff's Office and prosecution by the District Attorney's Fraud and Technology Crimes Unit.

Salute to Seniors

Don't miss your Wednesday, May 15, edition of the Santa Paula Times, which will include a special "Salute to Senior Citizens" publication.

It is the community's guide to services and activities for seniors and includes the schedule for the Santa Paula Senior Festival to be held on Wednesday, May 22, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Santa Paula Senior Center, 530 W. Main St., Santa Paula..

Learning Ancient history in class has never been this much fun

By Marianne Ratcliff
Santa Paula Times

This is Ancient Civilizations for the history books. Isbell Middle School sixth-grade teacher Jennifer Dobbie received a \$500 scholarship at an awards ceremony Wednesday evening in Oxnard for her innovations in the classrooms.



Jennifer Dobbie

Her students collaborated in teams that then competed in creating multilevel, multi-player video games based on the ancient Hebrews. Students had to research gaming and how people in gaming companies submit their proposals to the gaming companies using software called Storyboard That. They work together on Google Docs recreating the destruction of the temple and giving special powers to historical figures.

Dobbie casts herself as the game developer executive and picks finalists who then add new levels to their games. “The winners get a pizza party, instead of a job,” she quipped.

“I am trying to meet the students where they are,” she said. “When in Rome... I am jumping in with both feet. The thing about being innovative is not being afraid and being willing to fail.”

The veteran teacher of 21 years has been teaching in Santa Paula for 12 years. “I absolutely love my students,”

she said. “They are so great and have so much potential. Santa Paula is a gem. I adore my colleagues. We work together as a team.”

This is not the first or last of Dobbie’s innovative teaching plans, since they are cataloged on the Ventura County Office of Education website by year, and this is her 11th listed project, which can be viewed online at www.vcoe.org.

Dobbie invites the community to see another one of her fun projects at Greek Family Night on May 29 at 6 p.m. in the Isbell Middle School cafeteria. “It is so amazing,” she said. “The kids work so hard on their projects.

Dobbie’s grant is sponsored by SAGE Corwin Publishing, headquartered in Thousand Oaks.

Teachers from throughout Ventura County are being honored with grants for developing innovative lessons for their students. At the ceremony, the Ventura County Office of Education presented 14 IMPACT II grants to 23 teachers from nine schools in seven local districts.

The grants are funded by local businesses and organizations that wish to promote unique and creative teaching practices.

The winners were selected by judging teams composed of educators and community members.

The winning entries cover a variety of subject matters, including the environment, civics and psychology.

Detailed lesson plans prepared by each of the grant winners will soon be posted online at <https://www.vcoe.org/Impactii> for use by other teachers in Ventura County and beyond.

Other grant recipients were from Anacapa Middle School, Pacific High School,

‘The winners get a pizza party, instead of a job.’

— Jennifer Dobbie

Camarillo Academy of Progressive Education, Colina Middle School, Monte Vista Middle School, Ventura Charter School, Blackstock Jr. High, Thousand Oaks High

IMPACT II is a curriculum-sharing and recognition program for educators in kindergarten through grade 12 in all subject areas. Since 1993, Ventura County educators have received \$388,500 in sponsor-funded grants.

Educators submit grant proposals about classroom-tested curricula they have developed. A committee of educators, school administrators and business partners select the most unique, innovative and ready-to-share ideas to receive the sponsored grants.

The Ventura County Office of Education provides a broad array of fiscal, training and technology support services to local school districts, helping to maintain and improve lifelong educational opportunities for children, educators and community members. VCOE also operates schools that serve students with severe disabilities and behavioral issues, provides career education courses, and coordinates countywide academic competitions including Mock Trial and the Ventura County Science Fair. Learn more at: www.vcoe.org.



Photo by Dan Diaz

Ventura County Teacher of the Year Jan-Erik Sand, stands with his father, Dr. Jon Sand, also an educator. He is holding a book, “The Key to Read,” written by his grandmother, a second-grade teacher and illustrated by his aunt. He said he keeps the book close by as inspiration.

Teacher of the Year, Continued from Page 1

played overseas in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, Sand draws on his military experience to help support teachers who are new to the field. “Teaching, like serving in the military, can no doubt be quite challenging at times,” he said. “When I mentor junior teachers, I often find myself referencing a favorite poster on my classroom wall by multibillionaire Art Williams. It reads, ‘I’m not telling you it’s easy — I’m telling you it’s going to be worth it.’”

Teacher of the Year candidates are nominated by their district, school or professional organization and a panel of educators selects the winner based on the candidate’s essay, experience and an introductory letter from a sponsor.

Started in 1973, this award is in its 46th year and this is the first time a Santa Paula middle-school teacher has been named Ventura County Teacher of the Year.

Dignitaries on hand to honor Sand included Stan Mantooth, Ventura County superintendent of schools; Antonio Castro, Ventura County Office of Education associate superintendent for Educational Services; Ed Cora, Santa Paula Unified School District superintendent; Ron Briggs, Isbell Middle School principal; Christine Schieferle, SPUSD assistant superintendent for Educational Services; Andrea Rubin Ventura County Office of Education; John Tarkany, coordinator of Student Competitions; Adam Gratt, educational technician; SPUSD school board members Michelle Kolbeck and Jeri Mead; and Todd McWherter, president of the

Santa Paula Federation of Teachers.

Finishing off the guest list were the three people beaming in the room with pride, Sand’s mother, Noreen Sand, father Dr. Jon Sand, and Sand’s wife, Melina Sand.

Sand said his dad, who was standing with him, is his role model: “My dad is an amazing teacher. I love having him a phone call away.”

Sand then pulled out a special yellow and white book with a photo of a green-clad elf with green hair holding a key, called “The Key to Read.” “This is really emotional for me,” Sand said as he explained: “My grandmother was a teacher as well. She was the author of a book, ‘The Key to Read.’ My aunt was the artist who drew all of these elves who teach children to read. I keep this as an inspiration. It’s taken a lot to get here, a lot of sleepless nights. It’s always worth it.”

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