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CTA takes over L.B. union

Labor: State teachers union will oversee operations at conflict-ridden Teachers Association of Long Beach.

By Kevin Butler
Staff writer

LONG BEACH — The California Teachers Association on Thursday assumed control of the contentious Long Beach teachers union and will oversee the day-to-day operations while trying to restore order at the

organization, the association announced Thursday. In an effort to restore the stability and a "democratic process" at the conflict-ridden chapter, the CTA board of directors voted to place the Teachers Association of Long Beach in "trusteeship," under the supervision of former CTA



Day Kerr McVarish

President Barbara E. Kerr according to a CTA statement. The move marks the first time in 28 years that the California parent union has taken over one of its chapters, Kerr said. A rift at the chapter has pitted the union's President Michael Day and Execu-

the Director Scott McVarish against a group of nine members of the TALB board of directors which is seeking McVarish's ouster. The controversy began in June, when a majority of the 16-member TALB board voted to fire McVarish, who some board members allege has mismanaged union finances and acted inappropriately. McVarish has denied any wrongdoing. Shortly after the board's vote, the Representative Council — a decision-making

What happened?

- The California Teachers Association is assuming control over the Teachers Association of Long Beach following disputes over union leadership.

What's next?

- CTA President Barbara Kerr, acting as trustee, will be responsible for supervising TALB employees and officers.
- TALB's board of directors and the Representative Council will act as advisers.
- Kerr and five CTA board members in the next 20 days will hold at least one hearing with TALB members in Long Beach to listen to their concerns. The dates and details of the meetings have not yet been decided.

PLEASE SEE TALB / A8

Are they America's next great rock band?

Media: L.B.'s Fifi Larue takes its shot at TV fame and a possible record deal tonight on newest 'Idol' spinoff.

By Phillip Zonkel
Staff writer

Fifi Larue is the "Gothic Killer Clown of Rock 'N' Roll" and his band, also called Fifi Larue, is a motley crew. They appear in black garb and ghastly white faces, except for one member whose face is devil red.

The Long Beach band might be familiar to gothic rock enthusiasts who've seen them perform at the Key Club or Whisky a Go Go on the Sunset Strip, but tonight millions of Americans will see them in action as they compete on "The Next Great American Band," an "American Idol" spinoff that premieres from 8 to 10 tonight.

Where: FOX 11

Behind the makeup, the quintet is John Simich (Fifi Larue), 44, of Long Beach; bass guitarist Andy Ungos (Andy Monic), 43, of Long Beach; drummer Bruce Burkett (El Diablo), 34, of Torrance; keyboardist Aaron Karza (Cameron Mrokse), 37, of Duarte; and guitarist Billy Blaze (Billy Wesson), 41, of Hawthorne.

Like "American Idol," the series' initial audition episodes show the judges (Goo Goo Dolls lead singer Johnny Rzeznik, percussionist-singer Sheila E and "Australian Idol" judge Ian Dickson) narrowing the field of 60 hopefuls to 10 semifinalists, who will then perform in front of a live audience in Los Angeles. Viewers call in and vote for their favorites after each show.

The season finale has the last three groups competing to secure a recording contract. Simich won't say whether or not Fifi Larue advances past.

PLEASE SEE BAND / A8



Fifi Larue of Long Beach is one of the bands being featured on the show "The Next Great American Band," airing today on Fox. Band members from left are Cameron Mrokse as Aaron Karza; back, Bruce Burkett as El Diablo; right, Billy Wesson as Billy Blaze; bottom, Andy Ungos as Andy Monic; center, John Simich as Fifi Larue.

SWAT team member likely killed by officer

Rialto: Sergio Carrera Jr., 29, fatally injured in drug search.

By Stacia Glenn and Jason Pesick
Staff writers

RIALTO — A 29-year-old member of the Rialto Police Department's SWAT team was fatally shot Thursday morning while serving a narcofile search warrant at an apartment.

Officer Sergio Carrera Jr., a husband and father of two young children, appears to have been shot by another officer at an apartment at 113 W. Cascade Drive.

Both Rialto and Colton SWAT teams, accompanied by Drug Enforcement Administration and Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms officials, set out to serve multiple felony narcotics warrants in the

PLEASE SEE SWAT / A8



Carrera

TODAY ONLINE PRESSTELEGRAM.COM

16 MILES BLOG
Cal State Long Beach student Sierra Brown's project on human-powered commuting.

SCARY STORY CONTEST
Go online to read the entries to our Halloween Scary Story and Drawing Contest. Remember, you have until Oct. 22 to enter.



TOP VIEWS

1. News: Critic speaks against HSUS
2. News: He's safe and sound
3. News: Carson resident is killed in fire

Today's question:

online POLL
Do you agree with the California Teachers Association taking over of Long Beach?



PLEASE SEE TV / A11

Rabbit ears twitching over upcoming digital conversion

By Sue Doyle
Staff writer

One in five Americans who still fiddle with rabbit ears to get better TV picture quality will be blown away by the digital revolution — and most of them don't even know it yet. While still more than a year off, the national switch to digital from analog transmissions is the biggest change in

TV transmission standards since the birth of color broadcasting in 1953. Most Americans won't even notice when the analog signal is cut on Feb. 17, 2009, because they already have digital sets or cable or satellite service. But converter boxes for analog sets will go on sale soon, along with a marketing blitz from cable and satellite companies and TV manufacturers, all hoping to capitalize on consumer confusion.

"This is going to be the most amazing blindside in American history," said Tracy Western, CEO of the Center for Governmental Studies, a Los Angeles-based nonpartisan research organization. "It's like a tsunami that's coming in 2009, and we know it's coming but nobody is paying attention."

In fact, nearly two-thirds of Americans have no idea about the upcoming

change, according to a survey for the Association of Public Television Stations. The congressional mandate replaces analog, a technology used for TV since its start in the 1930s that transmits signals by airwaves. The change to digital will improve picture and sound quality from analog.

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C7 People	A21
Bridge	B1
Business	A18 Sports
C1 L.A.COM	
Classified	
C4 Comics	28
C7 Dear Abby	26
Crossword	
A16 Horoscope	30
Editorial	
A18 Puzzles	31
Nation/World	
A14 TV	24

TODAY'S WEATHER

Plenty of sunshine

L.B.: High 81 / low 60
Inlands: High 83 / low 53

Air quality: L.B.: Good
Inlands: Moderate

A21 A21

PASSAGES
Stars Joey Bishop, Deborah Kerr die

Comedian was last surviving member of the "Rat Pack"; actress gained fame in "From Here to Eternity" and "The King and I"

A14, A15



COMING TOMORROW
University by the Sea turns back time

CSULB arts and education festival Oct. 28 features a one-day opening of the 1927 Jergins Tunnel under Ocean Boulevard, where classic films will be shown.

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BAND: Newest 'reality' TV show for fame

CONTINUED FROM A1

the first round, but the band already has gotten mileage from being promoted on the show's Web site (www.americanidol.com) and in TV advertisements. And in Entertainment Weekly's Oct. 19 issue, a "Next Great American Band" TV highlight features a photo of Fifi Larue.

The group auditioned for the series in a desert outside of Las Vegas in scorching heat on Aug. 20, almost three months after Simich submitted material.

He saw announcements on "American Idol" and MySpace that producers wanted bands to submit a DVD or VHS tape of a live performance for an upcoming reality show similar to "American Idol."

More than 7,000 bands sent material for consideration.

In July, a producer with the show called Simich and said the band might be used. A couple of weeks later, Fifi Larue was invited to audition, Simich says.

All band members had to sign a series of legal documents, including an extensive background check and a contract granting the producers all legal and commercial rights to the bands.

The bands were housed at Montelago Village Resort in Henderson, Nev., about 17 miles outside of Las Vegas.

The day before auditions, executive producer Nigel Lythgoe congratulated the bands on reaching his point, but told them that the show's producers were not looking for the best musicians. They were looking for someone to mold.

During auditions, bands had to perform two songs, an original and a cover. On the show, Fifi Larue sing "Gothic Killer Clown,"



Scott Smeltzer / Press-Telegram

The band Fifi Larue, of Long Beach, will compete on "The Next Great American Band," an "American Idol" spinoff show on Fox.

which is on the band's self-titled debut CD. It's available at the band's Web site (www.fifilarue.com), and MySpace page (www.myspace.com/fifilarue) and F.Y.E. stores in Lake-

wood, Downey and other locations.

Fifi Larue isn't Simich's first attempt at rock.

From 1983-1990, he was drummer Fifi Robin in Dizzy Bitch, a glam band that played the Sunset Strip. Bored with being a drummer, Simich took a hiatus from performing until he formed Fifi Larue in 1999.

Simich, who was influenced by such favorites as KISS and Alice Cooper, purposefully gave his

band a theatrical flavor.

"I want folks to be entertained," he says.

One of his biggest fans is his 82-year-old mother, Lilia Kelly, who lives with him near the Craftsman Village area of Long Beach, near downtown.

Simich is his mother's caregiver, driving her anywhere she needs to go and monitoring her heart rate and blood pressure.

"At first, I didn't like his music. It was too noisy," says Kelly, who listens to Nat King Cole, Placido Domingo and Augustin Lara. "But I got used to it.

"Everybody has the right to choose what they want to do," she

says.

Apart from his "Gothic Killer Clown of Rock 'N' Roll" moniker, Simich works as a self-employed licensed painting contractor.

He's been painting since 1986 and hopes "The Next Great American Band" will give him a chance to put down his brush.

"All I want to do is not be a painter anymore," says Simich, who has asthma. "Painting is work. Jumping on stage and performing and dressing like a clown is fun. There aren't painting groupies."

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