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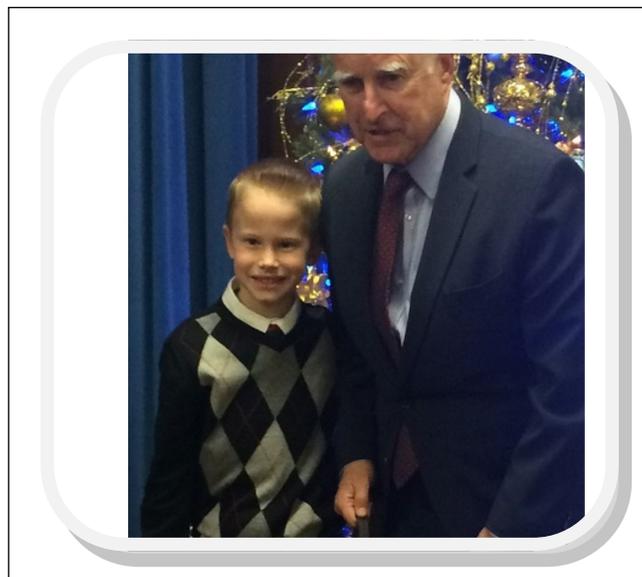
# Sonora youth chosen to light Christmas tree at state capitol

A nine-year-old Sonora youth was chosen by Valley Mountain Regional Center to assist Gov. Jerry Brown in the annual lighting of the capitol Christmas tree.

Jeffrey James “J.J.” Paris was named to help the governor and first lady light the capitol Christmas tree and hang a special handmade ornament. J.J. represents more than 290,000 individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities who receive services and supports from the state developmental centers and 21 non-profit regional centers. This was the 33rd year that a child with an intellectual and/or developmental disability participated in the tradition.

“J.J. is a terrific young boy who is very active in and out of school, including Cub Scouts, Kung Fu, golf, First Tee, 4-H and the school band. And, most importantly, he and his great family are also very active in the community” said Santi Rogers, Director of DDS.

J.J. was born in Modesto to parents Jeff and Maren. His siblings are Sonny (sister, age 13) and Austin (brother, age 7). J.J. was diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) at age two and



J.J. and Governor Jerry Brown in Sacramento

with Tourette syndrome this year, yet has persevered with humor and tenacity. When J.J. began showing signs of ASD, he was referred to VMRC for evaluation, and was formally diagnosed with ASD and received Early Start services.

J.J. loves attending Curtis Creek

Elementary School in Sonora where he is a fourth-grader in Liz Burr’s classroom.

The Christmas tree at the state capitol is decorated with 10,000 ultra-low wattage LED lights and 900 ornaments which were created by persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

## Micro-Business Fair a delight for shoppers

VMRC’s annual Micro-Business Fair was held on Dec.4 to the delight of many holiday shoppers.

The Microbusiness Fair concept was created in collaboration with Area Board 6. One of the goals of the fair is to provide an opportunity for consumers to explore their marketing and customer service skills and potentially turn their hobbies into small businesses

VMRC has sponsored the Microbusiness Fair for the past six (6) years. Every year has been an overwhelming success with lots of positive feedback from the vendors and attendees. The fair has inspired even younger consumers to begin exploring their potential employment/business opportunities.



Annabelle Avila, the fair’s youngest vendor

## News Briefs

### Thoughts for Inland

VMRC sends condolences to all affected in the Dec. 2 shooting massacre at Inland Regional Center (IRC). The shooting was deemed to be a terrorist attack, occurring in the center's conference room which had been rented out to a San Bernardino County agency. IRC offices will not re-open until January. However, administrative and case management services will continue, utilizing local office space and additional equipment.

### Fishing license change

The CA Department of Fish & Game has changed the process for requesting first time fishing licenses. The change takes effect on Jan. 1, 2016. The new application will require that VMRC provide a letter certifying the applicant is developmentally disabled. The applications will be mailed directly to the Sacramento office.

### DS biobank established

A biobank is being established specifically to collect and manage blood samples from people with Down Syndrome.

Housed at Nationwide Children's Hospital in Columbus, Ohio, the biobank will offer researchers a centralized source to study Down syndrome and other conditions common in those with the developmental disorder.

### YLF applications available

Applications are available for the 2016 Youth Leadership Forum for Students with Disabilities (YLF). The 2016 YLF will occur July 23-29, 2016 in Sacramento. Applications due 1/15/16.

<http://dor.ca.gov/vlf/>

# VMRC staff continues to deliver

## Stockton Children's Team continues its tradition of donating for the holidays

The Know Names Children's team located in VMRC's Stockton office identified several families in need of donations during the holidays, hoping to make the season bright.

All VMRC staff donated items based on family need or individual preferences.



The team wrapped all gifts and delivered them to the family homes with Santa Claus on December 11th.

This is an annual tradition that began nearly 15 years ago.



## CVTC COOKING CLASS HEATS IT UP

### Garlic & Chorizo Burrito Recipe

#### Ingredients:

- 1 clove fresh garlic- minced and 3 fresh green onions- chopped (from CVTC garden)
- 3 russet potatoes-cubed
- 8 ounces of cheese
- 4 eggs
- 1 roll chorizo
- 3 Tbsp vegetable oil

#### Steps:

- Wash the potatoes, cut into small cubes
- Cook potatoes in the 3 tablespoons of oil until soft, drain
- Fry the chorizo for approximately 8 minutes until cooked, drain
- Add potatoes, garlic, eggs, pepper and green onions to the chorizo mixture. Stir until the eggs are cooked. Sprinkle the cheese over the mixture.
- Pour ¼ of the mixture into heated tortillas and roll.



# KEVIN'S JOURNEY— FROM CLIENT TO STAFF

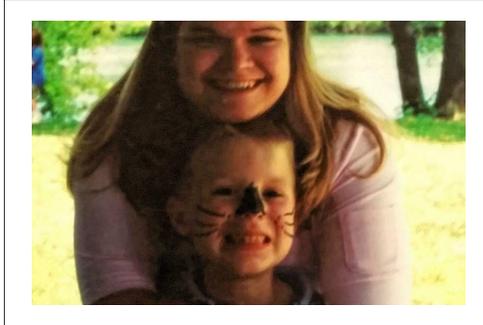
Kevin Winchell was 3 years old when he began EIBT services with Central Valley Autism Project (CVAP).

He remembers stacking blocks with his behavior interventionists while sitting at the little green table in his bedroom. Kevin also remembers going on community outings with them to restaurants such as Denny's, which is still one of his favorites.

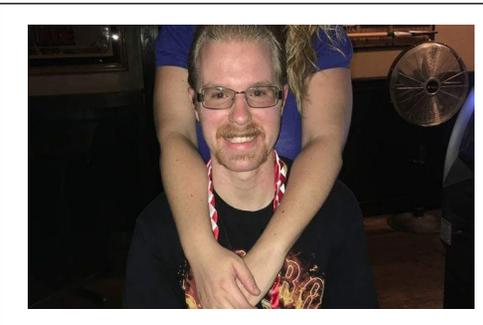
He also remembers Mila (Executive Director, CVAP) and Katherine (Regional Director, CVAP) sitting around his family's coffee table with his behavior interventionist team for weekly meetings.

Kevin is now 22 years old. He graduated from Lodi High School in 2012 and worked at Mc Donald's for four years. He left Mc Donald's feeling unhappy and discouraged over lack of advancement opportunities.

Upon encouragement from Tara Sisemore, Kevin's mom contacted Mila and Katherine about employment with CVAP. CVAP welcomed Kevin with open arms in December, 2014. According to Katherine Miller, CVAP Regional Director, Kevin has received training in Applied Behavior Analysis and the Lovaas instructional methodology as a Behavior Interventionist. He conducts generalization checks with the children and performs general assistant duties throughout CVAP's clinics. Most importantly, Kevin assists in CVAP's Adult Opportunities program and has been instrumental in helping to facilitate client participation and discussion within each of CVAP's adult course offerings.



**Kevin—Then**



**Kevin—Now**

He works in CVAP's Stockton and Modesto clinics. Katherine says, "he is a ray of sunshine and a breath of fresh air". One of Kevin's EIBT behavior interventionists, Kelli Bosworth, remained in contact with him across the years and they now work together, side by side, as colleagues.

## Safeway commends Ramirez

Anthony Ramirez works at Safeway on Country Club in Stockton. He is not only competitively employed, but also attends Delta College. He resides in a California MENTOR home.

He recently received a commendation letter from Safeway management citing a customer survey, naming Anthony as providing great customer service. He was thanked for all of his efforts on the job and his personal interactions, making for loyal Safeway customers. According to Anthony, he helps with bagging, carrying out, carts, sweeping, and



**Anthony Ramirez**

placing returned items in the correct place. He says, "What I like the most is that I work with nice people every day because they are always helping me be a better worker and they have become my friends. I also enjoy meeting new people every day and I have a great manager". His commendation was signed by Safeway's VP of Retail Operations and 7 District Managers.

## Happenings...

- January 15, 2016: Ninth Annual Anti-Violence Symposium, 7:30-1:30pm at San Joaquin County Office of Education, Wentworth Ed Center. Contact Adriana Cortes-Solorio-(209)468-9079
- January 19, 2016: The Birds, the Bees and Your Special Needs Child, at San Joaquin County Office of Education, 6:30 to 8:30 p.m., 2707 Transworld Drive, Stockton. Register @ [www.frcn.org](mailto:www.frcn.org)
- January 20, 2016: TransGen, VMRC Board Room, A New Day for Day Services. Speaker—Sara Murphy. Register at [neil.fromm@scdd.ca.gov](mailto:neil.fromm@scdd.ca.gov)
- January 21, 2016 Financial and Estate Planning for Families of Children with Special Needs, Modesto City Schools, Modesto, Register @ [www.frcn.org](http://www.frcn.org)
- February 2, 2016: Autism trainings at SJCOE—8:30 – 10:30—Incredible 5-Point Scale; 10:45-12:45—Cognitive Behavior Intervention; 1:45-3:45—Antecedent Based Intervention. Contact is Patti Farhat (209)468-4928
- March 22, 2016 - Financial and Estate Planning for Families of Children with Special Needs, San Joaquin County Office of Education, SELPA, Stockton, Register @ [www.frcn.org](http://www.frcn.org)
- 2016 Choices Conference—"Choices...From I Can't to I Can", Friday, April 8, 2016 at SJCOE. Micro-businesses interested, contact Marigene Tacan-Regan at (209)473-6930
- March 25, 2016: SLS Network Seminar and Bed Bug Awareness. Quail Lakes Baptist Church, Stockton.
- June 23, 2016: Conservatorship for Your Adult Child with Special Needs, San Joaquin County Office of Education. Register @ [www.frcn.org](http://www.frcn.org)

## Why Immunize?

Why immunize our children? Sometimes we are confused by the messages in the media. First we are assured that, thanks to vaccines, some diseases are almost gone from the U.S. But we are also warned to immunize our children, ourselves as adults, and the elderly.

## Diseases are becoming rare due to vaccinations.

It's true, some diseases (like polio and diphtheria) are becoming very rare in the U.S. Of course, they are becoming rare largely because we have been vaccinating against them. But it is still reasonable to ask whether it's really worthwhile to keep vaccinating. It's much like bailing out a boat with a slow leak. When we started bailing, the boat was filled with water. But we have been bailing fast and hard, and now it is almost dry. We could say, "Good. The boat is dry now, so we can throw away the bucket and relax." But the leak hasn't stopped. Before long we'd notice a little water seeping in, and soon it might be back up to the same level as when we started.

# VMRC Holiday Boutique Creations a Hit

VMRC employees started their holiday shopping early at the annual Holiday Boutique held in the Cohen Board Room on December 2nd.

Unique gifts handcrafted by VMRC employees were on display for sale. Items included home décor, artwork, baked goods, succulent plantings, jewelry, and holiday crafts.

This event has become an annual kickoff for the holidays and was well attended by staff.



*Photos—*

*Christmas Tree handmade by Denise Clements; Gourmet Cupcakes made by Mary Sheehan*

## Mary's recipe for Black-Bottomed Cupcakes

### Beat together:

- 8 oz cream cheese
- 1 egg
- 1/3 cup sugar
- 1/8 tsp salt
- 6 oz chocolate chips

Set aside.

### Sift together:

- 1 1/2 cup flour
- 1/4 cup cocoa
- 1 tsp salt

### Add:

- 1 cup sugar
- 1 cup water
- 1/3 cup oil
- 1 tsp vanilla
- 1 tbsp. vinegar

Beat well.

Heat oven to 350 degrees. Line tins with paper liners. Fill cupcake cup about 1/2 full with chocolate batter. Add a heaping tbsp. of white batter. Bake for 30-35 minutes. Makes 18.



# FIRST ANNUAL DOWN SYNDROME CONFERENCE HELD IN STOCKTON

*Local Event Aimed to Bring New Educational Techniques to Help Children Reach Full Potential*

Dignity Health with St. Joseph's Medical Center sponsored the first annual conference focused on best practices for educating children with Down syndrome, in partnership with The Brighter-side of Down Syndrome (TBODS) of San Joaquin County and Family Resource Network. The conference was held at the Uni-

versity of the Pacific in Stockton, CA on Thursday, September 17 and Friday, September 18, 2015.

The two-day event, attended by 300, was aimed at those in San Joaquin County and the surrounding areas. Dr. Kathleen Feeley, PhD, BCBA, spoke at the conference as a specialist in Down Syndrome and inclusive education. She is an Assoc. Professor at Long Island University in New York and is the Founding Director of the Center for Community Inclusion (CCI).



—Photo of Dr. Kathleen Feeley at conference



## Apple Offers Disability Apps

Apple is highlighting a growing number of apps catering to individuals with special needs with a featured special education section in its App Store.

The section titled “[Special Education](#)” launched in October includes 72 applications for the iPhone and 13 applications for the iPad in 10 categories ranging from communication to emotional development and life skills, according to Trudy Muller, an Apple spokeswoman.

The special education category is currently showcased as one of four editorial features in the App Store.

Apps, which can be used on Apple's iPhone, iPad or iPod devices, have become increasingly popular in the special needs community in recent years, serving as everything from assistive technology devices to organizational tools and teaching aids.

# Swirlz—meaningful employment in Sonora

## Sonora partnership inspirational

Swirlz Smoothies & Frozen Yogurt opened on Nov. 14 of this year and has quickly become a local favorite.

Parents Kimberly Darr and Sue Collier, along with their children Sinclair Darr and Tim Collie knew they had a team that could make the business happen. The shop offers self-serve yogurt with 18 toppings, as well as dairy and non-dairy smoothies, bakery items, and soup.

Their vision—to provide meaningful employment for people of all abilities.

The shop is located at 13757 Mono Way, #A, in Sonora, CA. Visit them in person and on Facebook.



### Important News for Families with children 3-18 living at home and receiving Regional Center Services!



**WHAT DO YOU THINK...**

About the services your family or family member receives from the developmental disabilities system?

You will soon have a chance to let California know.

Surveys are being mailed out to you from the [State Council on Developmental Disabilities \(SCDD\)](http://www.scdd.ca.gov)

You may have already received it.

Please take a moment to complete the survey.

**Your opinions will help**

improve services and supports in California.

*If you have already mailed us your survey, thank you!*

Call or email SCDD if you need another survey

(714) 558-4421 [qaproject@scdd.ca.gov](mailto:qaproject@scdd.ca.gov)



## Winter Checklist For Your Home

- Fix cracks and holes around doors and windows.
- Inspect your furnace and make sure the ducts and filters are clean.
- Ensure that the fireplace flue (chimney) is open and get it cleaned if there is a lot of built up soot.
- Clean out your gutters and rainspouts and check the roof for broken shingles or tiles.
- Install or check the batteries in your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors.
- Insulate exposed water pipes.

Prepare an emergency kit with: (1) candles, matches, flashlights and batteries; and (2) store extra water and canned foods in case the weather keeps you from going out.

## Tips for Staying Healthy during Winter months

These tips can help you and the individuals you support stay healthy during the winter:

- Get a flu shot as soon as possible.
- Stay active and exercise.
- Get 7-8 hours of sleep.
- Wash your hands often.
- Eat fruits and vegetables and drink plenty of water every day.
- Wear layers of clothing to keep warm when it's cold.
- Wear a rain coat and waterproof shoes and carry an umbrella if it is raining.

If you or someone you support gets sick, stay home and call the advice nurse or see a doctor.

## Doctors Urged to Bone Up on IDEA

In a clinical report published this month in the journal *Pediatrics*, the American Academy of Pediatrics says that doctors have a significant role to play in ensuring that children with disabilities get the services they need from schools.

The 13-page report offers pediatricians a primer on the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, detailing school districts' responsibilities to provide help for young children all the way through the transition to adulthood.

"Specifically, the American Academy of Pediatrics said doctors should identify and refer children who ought to qualify for special education services and communicate effectively with school-based programs about kids' needs.

By becoming involved in a child's school planning – through written communication, calls or in-person meetings – doctors can help promote better medication monitoring, improved behavioral outcomes and they can advocate against the use of restraint and corporal punishment, among other concerns, the pediatrics group said.

## LODI FILM PREMIERE

### *Film Camp Red Carpet Event*

The Lodi Unified School District's Career Connections presented a Film Camp Premiere at the Lodi Stadium 12 Cinemas.

The film "Sharkbite", produced by Joey Travolta & Inclusion Films premiered on Monday, November 16th complete with Red Carpet Arrivals, Pre-Film Presentations and Film Screening.



## From the Director

**VMRC family wonderful ambassadors for annual Christmas Tree Lighting**



The Department of Developmental Services (DDS) notified me in August 2015 that VMRC had been chosen to sponsor a child in our local system to assist Governor Brown with the annual Christmas tree lighting ceremony on the west steps of the Capitol on December 2. I received the required criteria developed by the Governor's office and selected nine-year-old J. J. Paris of Sonora, CA.

J. J. is the son of proud parents, Jeff and Maren Paris. Maren was on the VMRC Board of Directors for seven years and served as President and Past President during her tenure on the Board. Maren also participated in the ARCA Grassroots day advocacy effort at the capitol in Sacramento last April 2015. J. J. and his sister, Sonny were interviewed along with Mom on Channel 13's Good Day Sacramento on December 1, 2015.

Joining J.J. in a pre-tree lighting gathering in the Governor's office, were his parents, sister, brother Austin, both sets of grandparents, Melinda Gonsler, VMRC Board President and myself for time with the Governor (and his dog, Sutter) to enjoy holiday cookies and hot chocolate. While the tree lighting ceremony was cancelled to show respect for the victims of the Inland Regional Center (IRC) tragedy, which occurred on the same day as the tree lighting event, J.J. was able to light up the tree with his family and his fans in attendance. All of us at VMRC express our condolences to the victims of the IRC incident.

J.J. Paris and his family served as excellent ambassadors of good will and representatives of VMRC. —Paul Billodeau

## Gearing up for Celebration

Fifty years ago in June 1969, the State of California enacted the Lanterman Developmental Disabilities Services Act, a bold new direction in public-private partnership that fundamentally changed and dramatically improved the life of people with developmental disabilities and their families. The Act, which established the statewide system of services for persons with developmental disabilities, would become a model for the nation.

The regional center system was intended to provide individuals with developmental disabilities with services and supports that are innovative and cost effective, that result in growth and development, that improve the quality of life, and that support inclusion into community life.

In 2016, we will reaffirm our commitment to this important legislation and renew our investment in the community system.



**50 years of supporting people with developmental disabilities in the community**

## The Giving Goes On

*By Lynnette Dimond*

As the holidays come and go, there will still remain a need for charitable donations. You don't have to give financially to a cause, but you *can* donate unwanted or unused household items to your local thrift stores throughout the year. As many of you know, many of our consumers who attend day programs, or work programs either volunteer or work at various thrift store sites within the community. These employment opportunities and volunteer positions give our consumers a sense of purpose and provide them with valuable vocational skills, and/or allow them to earn a little extra spending money. It is important that we



support the efforts of the businesses that welcome our consumers as a part of their business. So, please feel free to clean out those closets and the garage and support some of your local thrift stores that help to support our

consumers!

Modesto: The Hope Chest Thrift Stores, Society for Disabilities Thrift Stores, Endless Possibilities, Buy Rite, Goodwill, Habitat for Humanity, Interfaith Ministries, Salvation Army

San Andreas: Nancy's Hope Store, Purrfect Bargain's Thrift Store, Trend's Boutique, Walk In Closet, Scrubs & Such, Twig's Baby Boutique, Sonora Good Stuff Store.

Stockton: Assistance League of Stockton Thrift Shop, Habitat for Humanity, The Shelter Thrift & Donation Center.

# Dedicated Teamwork Leads to Prosecution

By Debra Schiffilea



On August 20<sup>th</sup> of this year, a very hard working team saw the culmination of nearly a year long effort to solve the mystery of one consumer's very high power bill. Last summer, in preparation for his IPP, I began to review our consumer, Mike's rep payee account with TMS. An excessive PG&E bill was discovered. I have four adults living in my 2400 sq. ft. home and I love my air conditioning. So, I just couldn't understand why Mike's PG&E bill for one person in a one bedroom duplex could be so high. At Mike's IPP meeting, as the SC, I began to question him about his habits. "Do you leave your doors or windows open with the AC on?" "Do you keep all your lights on during the day?" "How often do you wash your clothes?" Since none of Mike's habits appeared to be out of the norm, I asked Shana Molotch and Delesia Perkins, from Arc Supported Living Services, to help monitor Mike's usage to see if we could determine a cause for Mike's high bills.

When the planning team gathered again in November 2014, this SC again brought up the topic of Mike's high PG&E bills. It was mentioned that Mike shared a basement with his neighbor and that both of them do laundry downstairs. It was suggested that perhaps the washer and dryer were plugged into the circuit associated with Mike's PG&E meter. Shana Molotch said that she would help Mike contact his landlord to ask about the power circuits in the basement. Nancy Iseri from TMS was contacted to find out if Mike was still enrolled in the CARE program and it was confirmed that he was. At Mike's request, I also obtained copies of his PG&E bill from TMS for him to show his landlord. Mike contacted VMRC in December to advise that with help from Supported Living Services, they had made an agreement with the landlord that the washer and dryer would be moved to the neighbor's side of the basement and Mike would do his laundry at the laundromat. Supported Living Services also contacted PG&E to find out if power was being utilized on the neighbor's account as they had been told he hadn't paid rent in months. PG&E reported that they couldn't provide any specific information other than to say that the neighbor's account was still active.

The winter months passed by and the planning team met again in February, 2015. After a review of Mike's PG&E bills, it was discovered that moving the washer and dryer in the basement and doing laundry at the laundromat had absolutely no affect on Mike's PG&E bills. They were as high as ever, averaging consistently around \$250 per month! At this point, Mike was beginning to have difficulty paying his bills despite having TMS as his payee and a part time job. His PG&E bills were just too high. We even had to start conversations about what other bills Mike need to cut from his budget. Shana and Mike contacted TMS to request copies of all of Mike's PG&E bills since the time Mike had lived in the home. Shana also contacted PG&E again. The PG&E customer service representative informed Shana that the neighbor's power had been shut off for many months. With that, we were all convinced that Mike's neighbor was stealing his power, but we had no idea how to prove it or what to do. I did some research on-line and sent out an email to all of my office mates. It was discovered that there is a page on the PG&E website where you can file a confidential report of suspected theft.

In April 2015, SLS staff assisted Mike with filing a report with PG&E. They also contacted Jackson Police Department and Amador County Code Compliance. When the building inspector came to the home, Arc Supported Living was there with Mike. Code Compliance was unable to find anything specific, but did report that they had suspicions which could not be confirmed without entering the neighbor's home. Concerned for Mike's safety, he was advised not to approach his neighbor and not to discuss the issue with anyone other than his planning team and those conducting the investigation. I was soon informed that the police were opening a formal investigation and within a few days Mike's neighbor was arrested on felony charges of utilities theft! Over the next couple of months, the staff and management of Arc Supported Living all worked to help gather evidence for the District Attorney and supported Mike when he met with law enforcement and Victim Witness. PG&E immediately began to work with Mike and Supported Living to determine a fair credit on his electric bill and months later Mike still has no balance due each month due to the large refund he received.

On August 20, 2015, the entire planning team was in court for the trial. The neighbor pled guilty to multiple charges of utilities theft and was sentenced to serve more than a year in jail. He is required to wear an ankle monitor for 18 months upon release and will serve 3 years probation. Mike was granted a stay away order and was awarded \$1,900 in restitution! We were all thrilled with the outcome. Shana Molotch and Jamie Sorrell both reported that they were advised it is nearly impossible to have someone successfully prosecuted for this type of crime, but success was achieved in this case due to the great team work of all involved.

*Report Energy Theft to:* <http://www.pge.com/myhome/addservices/moreservices/energytheft/>

# HAPPY HOLIDAYS



# HAPPY HOLIDAYS

FROM VMRC  
STAFF

