

# The Carmel Pine Cone

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## CHOMP nursing supervisor files suit, claims she was fired because she's black

■ She is mother of Reggie Doucet, killed by LAPD officers in 2011

By KELLY NIX

A FORMER assistant nursing director at Community Hospital of the Monterey Peninsula filed a lawsuit against the hospital last week claiming she was harassed, discriminated against and ultimately fired because she is black.

In an 18-page lawsuit, Odessa Doucet, 42, who was fired March 3, 2010, alleges her supervisors at the hospital engaged in a series of "pervasive and discriminatory adverse employment actions" against black workers and those over 40 years old.

**Claims she was demoted while a white man and white woman retained their positions.**

"Defendants belittled, demeaned, and made [Doucet] feel inferior to the point that they interfered with plaintiff's daily working conditions," according to the claim filed in Monterey

County Superior Court.

Doucet, who now lives in Jacksonville, Fla., contends that from July 2008 to March 2010, several supervisors began a series of racially motivated acts designed to force her to resign. Other non-black workers and younger employees, according to Doucet, were not subjected to the same behavior.

Doucet is the mother of Reginald Doucet, Jr., the talented, 25-year-old football player from North Monterey County High School who was fatally shot Jan. 14, 2011 in Playa Vista by a black Los Angeles police officer after the LAPD said a naked Doucet punched two officers in the face and head and tried to

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## A tunnel with a view



PHOTO/COURTESY CALTRANS

If you're headed to San Simeon anytime soon, you'll get a good look at a new landmark on the Big Sur coast. And even after the rock shed at Pitkins Curve is finished, it will offer a splendid view of the sea. See page 9A.

## Outdoor event goal: 'Enhance downtown'

By MARY SCHLEY

IN THE wake of the outcry from downtown merchants who objected to the idea of shutting down Ocean Avenue for a weekly farmers market, Mayor Jason Burnett on Tuesday appointed himself to the committee that came up with the idea. He is replacing city councilwoman Paula Hazdovac, who stepped down from the group due to scheduling conflicts, he said.

"I hope my involvement will help move this in the direction it needs to go," Burnett said. "My original intention was for this to be good for business — to enhance the vibrancy of business downtown."

That was why he appointed four businesspeople to the committee when he created it in May, he said, referring to Hazdovac (who co-owns a downtown shop with her sister), restaurateurs David Fink and Rich Pepe, and Carmel Chamber of Commerce CEO Monta Potter.

"By those appointments, I was signaling I want this to be good for business," Burnett said. "It sounds like some of the ideas being discussed wouldn't be good for business, and if they're not good for business, I'm not interested in doing them."

Initially, the committee, headed by councilwoman Victoria

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## County asks for quick dismissal of Collins lawsuit as SLAPP

■ He calls strategy 'sheer nonsense'

By KELLY NIX

THE COUNTY has made good on its threat to be aggressive in its defense of a \$25 million libel lawsuit filed by former county water board director Steve Collins, who is awaiting trial on several felony charges for conflicts of interest over the defunct regional desalination project.

On July 18, attorneys for Monterey County asked a judge to dismiss a lawsuit filed against the county by Collins, who prosecutors say was lobbying for the desal plant's approval while he was also paid \$160,000 from RMC Water & Environment, a consulting firm that was awarded a \$28 million contract for the project.

In its court filing, the county contended Collins' suit is a Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation — a lawsuit intended to stifle free speech, which California's anti-SLAPP law regards as a nuisance that should be quickly dismissed. The law also puts the burden on Collins to establish at the outset a probability of prevailing on his claims.

"Collins' lawsuit arises out of the exercise of free speech and free expression regarding public issues of

See **COLLINS** page 24A

## Taxpayers' group says user fee headed to ballot

By KELLY NIX

THE TAXPAYERS' group seeking to overturn the Monterey Peninsula Water Management District's new user fee said this week it received more than enough signatures to place the issue before voters in November.

Monterey Peninsula Taxpayers' Association president Ron Pasquinelli said the group got more than 4,700 signed forms from property owners calling for a Nov. 6 referendum to decide whether the user fee should be rescinded.

The water district board of directors says the fee will generate \$3.7 million per year to pay for two important water supply projects for the Peninsula. An earlier effort to overturn it by direct protest failed when 10,343 property owners filed objections to it, short of the 15,255 needed.

"Our position has — from the start of the majority protest — been, and still is, that the voters should have

See **USER FEE** page 22A

## 113 DEAD, 51 LIVE CATS FOUND IN SEASIDE HOMES

By KELLY NIX

IN A horrific scene Tuesday, workers for the SPCA for Monterey County rescued 51 live cats and recovered the remains of more than 100 dead kittens at two residences in Seaside occupied by the same family.

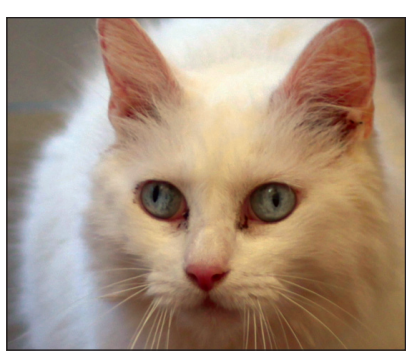
After Seaside Police executed search warrants at an apartment and a house, SPCA workers discovered 113 dead kittens and 51 live cats living in terrible conditions at the two residences. Various members of the a family live in the two properties where the cats were found.

"This is just so overwhelming, because it's such a big case," SPCA for Monterey County humane investigations supervisor Judi Adams told The Pine Cone. "We've never had anything like this since I've been here."

The police and the SPCA went to the homes after receiving a tip from an employee with a property management company who had gone to the apartment to do an inspection, Adams said.

The cats found alive were suffering from respiratory infections, parasites and dental problems largely due to neglect, but none of them had seri-

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When SPCA workers arrived at a Seaside home to investigate animal abuse, they found a horror scene (left). Some of the rescued cats had hopeless looks in their eyes (above).

## Burnett: Cal Am plan 'has left the station'

By KELLY NIX

WHILE CAL AM waits for the California Public Utilities Commission to rule on its proposed Marina desal plant, and hopes the CPUC will decide the plant can be privately owned, the mayor's water group voted this week to recommend that the desal plant should be owned and operated by a government agency, and recommended the beleaguered Monterey Peninsula Water Management District for the job.

Carmel Mayor Jason Burnett said going with public ownership would eliminate a the possibility of a legal fight over a county ordinance requiring desal plants to be publicly owned, and would also make it easier to finance the desal plant with government-backed debt.

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