

### NORTH LAS VEGAS

# Not all joy for new hall

*Some deem expensive civic building a waste of money*

By LYNNETTE CURTIS  
LAS VEGAS REVIEW-JOURNAL



JIM MILLER/LAS VEGAS REVIEW-JOURNAL  
Workers on Tuesday put finishing touches on the new North Las Vegas City Hall, which is set to open Nov. 21.

North Las Vegas employees will move into a spacious new City Hall next month, but comparatively few of them are left to fill it thanks to layoffs and a hiring freeze.

The \$127 million, 210,000-square-foot building was meant to house nearly 600 city staffers. But only about

a third of that number will be moving in, leaving vacant plenty of offices and up to an entire floor of the nine-story building at 2250 Las Vegas Blvd. North, near Civic Center Drive.

"The good thing is we have space to lease out," Mayor Shari Buck said Wednesday.

She added that if she could have predicted what would happen to the city's finances after a new City Hall was

conceived years ago, she would not have supported building it.

"Of course I would have said, 'Let's wait until things pick up,'" she said.

The new City Hall has become a bone of contention in the cash-strapped city. Critics nicknamed it the "Taj Mahal" and said it was a waste of money when the city had none to spare.

North Las Vegas leaders

decided to build a new City Hall about five years ago, when the city was still among the nation's fastest-growing and flush with cash. An ever-increasing number of employees were crammed into the 45-year-old City Hall — a short walk down Civic Center from the new one — and modular buildings.

► SEE HALL PAGE 5B  
*Opening brings mixed emotions*

## Felon in SEAL case sentenced

By JEFF GERMAN  
LAS VEGAS REVIEW-JOURNAL

A Las Vegas felon whose cooperation led to the conviction of Navy SEAL Nicholas Bickle on arms trafficking charges was sentenced Friday to five years in prison.

Omar Aguirre, 36, also was ordered to serve three years of supervised release after he gets out of federal prison.

Aguirre, who was convicted in New Mexico in 1999 of possession with intent to distribute more than 100 pounds of marijuana, had pleaded guilty to a firearms conspiracy charge in the weapons trafficking case.

In court Friday, an emotional Aguirre told Senior U.S. District Judge Roger Hunt that being charged in the arms conspiracy ended up saving him from a life of drug addiction — and probably saved his life.

"This was the best thing to happen to me," said Aguirre, who explained afterward that he was hooked on painkillers.

Aguirre said he since has learned through therapy to overcome his addiction and low self-esteem that stemmed from his molestation at the age of 7.

"I know I'm going to be locked up, but at least in my heart and mind, I'll be free," Aguirre said.

His lawyer, Charles Kelly, did not oppose the five-year

► SEE FELON PAGE 4B  
*Navy SEAL convicted as ringleader*



JASON BEAN/LAS VEGAS REVIEW-JOURNAL  
Amelia "Mia" Decker's mother, Michele Terry, middle, breaks down while speaking Friday during a candlelight vigil in Eldorado Park in North Las Vegas. She is flanked by Mia's stepfather, Lewis Terry, and Jasmine Grudier, Alyssa and Rain Mowery's big sister.

## Supporters gather at girls' vigil

*Crosswalk crash killed 6-year-old, injured friends, including one in coma*

By JESSICA FRYMAN  
LAS VEGAS REVIEW-JOURNAL

The lyrics of Justin Bieber's pop hit "Baby" blared through the sound system on Friday night at Eldorado Park. Some of the more than 200 in atten-

dance danced, others giggled. The song may have seemed out of place for another candlelight vigil, but here, mixed with tears, it somehow fit.

The song is 5-year-old Alyssa Mowery's favorite, and her

family hoped she could hear it, a tune of support toward her recovery from a crosswalk crash that has kept her in a medical-induced coma.

Her 6-year-old sister, Rain Mowery, was treated for a

fractured skull and released Sunday. Their 6-year-old friend, Amelia "Mia" Decker, died Monday from injuries she suffered in the accident.

► SEE VIGIL PAGE 12B  
*Family members share stories*

VIDEO AND SLIDE SHOW [lvj.com/multimedia](http://lvj.com/multimedia)

## Job market gloomy for many law grads, but sun shines here

National stories make it look as if the law is no longer such a popular career.

For new law school graduates, jobs are harder to get, salaries have dropped drastically, and fewer say they should have gone to law school.

National Law Journal, citing law school admissions consulting firm Veritas Prep, wrote this week that fewer law school students would apply to law school. One year ago, 81 percent said they would apply to law school. This year, only 68 percent said they would apply. "The bloom is coming off the rose for prospective law students," the headline declared.

So I went looking for a negative local story. Instead, I found a positive one.

While nationally law students are finding it tougher and tougher to find jobs, graduates from the Boyd School of Law at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, are bucking that trend.



Jane Ann Morrison  
COMMENTARY

Since 2007, the placement statistics show that 93-94 percent of Boyd graduates are finding jobs, even in these ghastly economic times.

Nationally, the class of 2010 has the lowest employment rate since 1996 with only 68 percent of graduates landing jobs. That makes Boyd's 93 percent employment rate look pretty darn good.

A few people are holding on to judicial clerkships longer, but the statistics between 2007 and 2010 don't show a lot of

change, said Layke Stolberg, the law school's director of career services.

Out of 146 Boyd graduates in 2010, only two are unemployed and looking, and seven are unemployed and not looking. More than half are in private law firms. Nearly 20 percent are in judicial clerkships, nearly 9 percent work for government, and 5 percent work for public interest or nonprofits.

Consistency locally doesn't sound like much of a trend, but if it's bucking inconsistency nationwide, it's a positive trend.

A recent woe-is-me national study said that the class of 2010 showed a 20 percent drop in salaries and that the national median salary was \$63,000 for new lawyers.

The average salary for a new Boyd graduate is pretty stable. It's dropped about \$4,200, but the \$70,517 average in 2010 is not a drastic drop from \$74,769 in 2007. The private law firm starting average was \$80,500

in 2010 while the government and public interest starting attorneys averaged \$68,800.

Nationally, the number of law school applicants dropped, and that holds true at Boyd, said Frank Durand, dean for student advancement.

The law school applications were 1,755 in 2008 and stayed about that for the next two years. In 2011, applications dropped to 1,381. So yes, fewer are applying to Boyd.

"That's not affecting the quality of our students," Durand said. He said the current class has the highest test credentials of any class so far, including the Law School Admission Test.

"The good news here is that the tuition is still fairly reasonable," he said. In California, the cost of a state law school for a California resident is \$40,000 a year.

Boyd is \$20,000 a year last year, and with the tuition hike, it's \$23,400. The less expensive in-state tuition may play a role

in attracting brighter students. "Relatively speaking, we're doing well," Durand said.

Boyd opened its doors in 1998 and by 2011, U.S. News and World Report included it on its annual list of 100 top law schools in the United States, ranking it No. 75. Not bad for a newbie.

I went looking for a bad news trend story and ended up realizing the facts showed Boyd is bucking some of those negative national trends.

Perhaps instead of reading every negative national story and assuming the same holds true in Nevada, the facts should be researched and challenged more often. Maybe everything isn't always as bleak as we think.

Just something to consider by those perpetually looking at life through a negative viewfinder.

Jane Ann Morrison's column appears Monday, Thursday and Saturday. Email her at [JaneA@reviewjournal.com](mailto:JaneA@reviewjournal.com) or call her at (702) 383-0275. She also blogs at [lvj.com/blogs/Morrison](http://lvj.com/blogs/Morrison)

# Youth camp facing probe

Videos raise questions about possible abuse

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

**PASADENA, Calif.** — Police will investigate whether a crime occurred at a youth boot camp after videos surfaced showing instructors shouting at a boy wearing a tire around his neck and children being told to drink water until some vomited.

Investigators will question boot camp operator Kelvin "Sgt. Mac" McFarland, police Cmdr. Darryl Qualls told the Pasadena Star-News on Thursday.

"Looking at the video, we can only see McFarland, so we will start the investigation with McFarland," Qualls said.

McFarland earlier denied to the newspaper that he appeared in the videos.

McFarland was charged earlier this year with child abuse, extortion and other crimes. Prosecutors allege he handcuffed a truant 14-year-old girl in May and told her family she would be sent to juvenile detention unless she was enrolled in his camp. She was never enrolled.

The Star-News this week released short video clips it said were made in 2009. On one, several instructors in military-style fatigues surround and shout at a boy who is wearing a heavy auto tire. At one point, the boy falls down crying but is ordered to stand again.

In the other, several girls and boys are repeatedly ordered to drink water from colored plastic bottles. Several youngsters vomit.

"I would certainly not subject my son or daughter or any child I know to this type of activity," City Council member Victor Gordo told the newspaper.

"The short clips that I reviewed appeared to be more of a situation of intimidation and humiliation appearing to be employed under the guise of physical activity and discipline," Gordo said.

The Star-News said the videos appear to have been made in Pasadena but did not indicate how it obtained them.

McFarland runs Family First Growth Camp in Pasadena, which like other boot camps uses military-style discipline and exercises with a goal of instilling character and keeping at-risk youngsters away from drugs, alcohol and crime.

The camp "doesn't believe in corporal punishment, nor will it be tolerated," according to a camp website.

"The young men/women who come to us are good kids who have begun to make some poor choices with friends, school, drugs, alcohol, attitude with peers and family members," the website said, adding that through the camp, "these kids seek out, find, then learn to love themselves so they can love their families and start to move in a positive direction."

The camp is funded through a combination of fees and charitable donations. Enrollment is through parents, although in some states juvenile justice systems send some offenders to boot camps.

Some studies have shown that juvenile offenders sent to boot camps were no less likely to commit new crimes than those who were placed in juvenile detention or given probation.

The Star-News did not specify whether the videos were taken at a Family First training session and noted that some children seemed to be wearing T-shirts from another camp.

Keith "Sarge" Gibbs, who runs Sarge's Community Base/Commit II Achieve Boot Camp, said some of the children appear to be wearing his camp T-shirts.

McFarland worked for him in 2009 but left to form his own camp after Gibbs learned that he had lied about taking a required background check, Gibbs said.

"He left and took 28 families and kids with him, with my shirts and some paperwork," Gibbs said Friday.

Although Gibbs uses some tire drills for strength training and does make youngsters drink a lot of water after long hikes, parents are always involved in the instruction, and Gibbs said he has a policy against certain actions.

"You can't demean or haze the kid. ... Your goal is to motivate these kids, to inspire them, empower them," he said. "If that was the entire program, I don't see where the kids are learning anything."

"Do they need to be forced to drink water until they vomit? I don't think so," he said.

A bill introduced earlier this month by Rep. George Miller, D-Richmond, would require training for boot camp staff.

It also would require boot camp instructors to report child abuse and create a federal database where parents can check the credentials of boot camp operators.



PHOTOS BY JASON BEAN/LAS VEGAS REVIEW-JOURNAL

A crowd of more than 200 people showed up to pay their respects during a candlelight vigil for the three girls struck by a car while crossing a street Oct. 21 in North Las Vegas. Amelia "Mia" Decker, 6, died from her injuries.

## ► VIGIL: Family members share stories of three girls

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1B

The candlelight vigil was held a week after the deadly North Las Vegas crosswalk crash that rocked the community. The service overlooked the crosswalk at Camino Eldorado and Bent Arrow Drive where the three girls were crossing when they were struck by a car on Oct. 21.

Protesters at the accident site have called for more visible crosswalks and begged drivers to slow down. Support poured in through teddy bears and flowers at a makeshift memorial and in comments on a Facebook wall dedicated to the girls.

The Mowery sisters' father, Pat, called the support "overwhelming."

"I wasn't expecting any of this," he said after the vigil, as he held Rain on his hip.

The 6-year-old chimed in to say all the kids in her class sent her a note, and students from another school sent one too. But more than anything, she wants her little sister to come home.

"She's been sissy crying every day, asking for her sissy to come home," their mother, Christin, said, noting the girls used to make jewelry and loved to play with their dolls together.

The sisters have wild imaginations, always playing make believe, she said.

"I want everyone to pray Alyssa wakes up and she's that same sweet, creative little girl."

That's just what the community did Friday night during the vigil, which focused on prayer for the families. To signify that support, each lit a candle of the person next to them. Hundreds of candles glowed under the starlit sky as



Family friend and neighbor Josh Pirtle, middle, breaks down Friday during a candlelight vigil in Eldorado Park in North Las Vegas.

family, friends and complete strangers cried and sang "Amazing Grace."

"You can't just stand back and do nothing when the community needs you," said an emotional Jamie Hollis, who lives nearby. "I'm a mother, and this just broke my heart."

Several members of the girls' families also spoke at the ceremony, expressing their gratitude for all the support.

Christin Mowery recalled the first time she met Mia, a girl full of "spunk." Christin had told Mia that Alyssa and

Rain needed to go inside the house, to which Mia replied: "They're not going inside because we are playing."

Mia's mom, Michele Terry, followed, adding that she could tell a million stories about her daughter, each that would make the crowd laugh.

Of one thing, Terry was sure: Her daughter wasn't just looking down at the ceremony, but instead telling God she was going to the park, to play.

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## Defense witness: Michael Jackson caused own death

By LINDA DEUTSCH

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

**LOS ANGELES** — Attorneys for Michael Jackson's doctor dropped the bombshell Friday they've been hinting at for months — an expert opinion accusing the legendary singer of causing his own death.

Dr. Paul White, the defense team's star scientific witness, said Jackson injected himself with a dose of propofol after an initial dose by Dr. Conrad Murray wore off. He also calculated that Jackson gave himself another sedative, lorazepam, by taking pills after an infusion of that drug and others by Murray failed to put him to sleep. That combination of drugs could have had "lethal consequences," the researcher said.

White showed jurors a series of charts and simulations he created in the past two days to support the defense theory.

He also did a courtroom demonstration of how the milky white anesthetic propofol could have entered Jackson's veins in the small dose that Murray said he gave the insomniac star.

White said he accepted Murray's statement to police that he administered only 25 milligrams of propofol after a night-long struggle to get Jackson to sleep with infusions of other sedatives.

"How long would that (propofol) have had an effect on Mr. Jackson?" defense attorney J. Michael Flanagan asked.

"If you're talking effect on the central nervous system, 10 to 15 minutes max," White said.

He then said Jackson could have injected himself with another 25 milligrams during the time Murray has said he left the singer's room.

"So you think it was self-injected propofol between 11:30 and 12?" Flanagan

asked. "In my opinion, yes," White said.

The witness, one of the early researchers of the anesthetic, contradicted testimony by Dr. Steven Shafer, his longtime colleague and collaborator. Shafer earlier testified Jackson would have been groggy from all the medications he was administered during the night and could not have given himself the drug in the two minutes Murray said he was gone.

"He can't give himself an injection if he's asleep," Shafer told jurors last week. He called the defense theory of self-administration "crazy."

White's testimony belied no animosity between the two experts, who have worked together for 30 years. Although White was called out by the judge one day for making derogatory comments to a TV reporter about the prosecution case, White was respectful and soft-spoken on the witness stand.

## Banquet to raise cash to aid tragedies' victims

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

**RENO** — The inaugural Governor's Banquet celebrating Nevada Day is raising money to help victims of two tragedies.

All proceeds from tickets sales and silent auctions from the Thursday night event in Reno were to be distributed to victims of the IHOP shooting in Carson City and the crash at the Reno National Championship Air Races.

Eleven people were shot Sept. 6 when a man walked into the IHOP restaurant and opened fire with an automatic weapon. Four people were killed before Eduardo Sencion committed suicide.

Ten days later, 11 people died, and scores were injured, when pilot Jimmy Leeward's plane crashed at the air races.

Gov. Brian Sandoval hopes the banquet becomes a new Nevada Day tradition.

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