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# Hi-Desert Star



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Wednesday, July 28, 2010

## Woman shot while aiming at deputies

■ 57-year-old came to door with shotgun

STAFF REPORT

**JOSHUA TREE** — Sheriff's deputies shot a 57-year-old Joshua Tree woman they say was pointing a shotgun at them here Friday afternoon.

The woman, Alice Mitchell, was wounded in at least two places, including her arm, but her injuries were not considered life-threatening, Arden Wiltshire, a spokeswoman for the San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department, said.

Mitchell was taken by ambulance to Hi-Desert Medical Center, then by helicopter to Desert Regional Medical Center in Palm Springs, according to a news release from the Sheriff's Department.

Tuesday afternoon, a switchboard operator at the Palm Springs hospital said Mitchell was no longer there, but she did not have further information.

It was Mitchell herself who first contacted the Sheriff's Department, calling the dispatch office at 11:40 a.m., according to sheriff's call records.

Mitchell sounded upset and impaired, but when the dispatcher asked if she needed a deputy, Mitchell replied, "No," and hung up.

Mitchell also called the Morongo Basin Sheriff's Station in Joshua Tree. The person who answered her call thought something was wrong and asked for a deputy to be dispatched to check on Mitchell, Wiltshire said.

Sent to the 4000 block of Polaris Avenue, the deputy was greeted at the door by a person armed with a shotgun. According to the sheriff's news release, the deputy thought the person was a

First reported on [www.hidesertstar.com](http://www.hidesertstar.com)

man.

"The person told him to leave and then shut the door," Wiltshire said.

Thinking that the woman who had called dispatch and seemed distressed could be inside with an armed man, the deputy called for backup.

As additional deputies arrived, they reportedly heard a round fired from inside the house.

The sheriff's deputies started getting into position to approach the house, preparing for the possibility that a potential murderer was inside, Wiltshire said.

As they approached the home, Mitchell walked out from behind a wooden fence and pointed a shotgun on the deputies.

"They ordered her to drop the weapon," Wiltshire said. "She continued to point the weapon at the deputies and that's when shots were fired."

Once Mitchell was on the ground, the deputies approached her and determined she was a woman. "They cleared the house and discovered there was no one else there," Wiltshire added.

No one else was hurt.

The spokeswoman said she did not know why Mitchell pointed a gun at deputies. "We have no idea what her state of mind was," she said.

### Investigation

Homicide detectives are investigating the incident. Anyone with additional information may call homicide detectives at (909) 387-3589 or anonymously at (800) 78-CRIME or [www.wetip.com](http://www.wetip.com).

## Errors in salary story

**YUCCA VALLEY** — The deputy town manager, Shane Stueckle, makes \$139,000, not \$239,000, as was reported erroneously in Saturday's Hi-Desert Star.

The error occurred because Stueckle's salary is listed in the town budget as 239, which refers to a pay range code. Pay Range 239 has a range from \$103,583 to \$139,308.

In addition, the Town Council did not approve a council members' raise this year. On Feb. 2, a motion to increase council compensation effective January 2011 failed on a 2-3 vote.

## Out and about

John Ehrismann, 91, and Helen Young, 81, enjoy the sounds of Silverado during Saturday's Yucca Valley Music Festival. The country-music band was a popular attraction for the concert in the park. Coming up at 7 p.m. Saturday, July 31, will be the Yucca Valley High School All-Stars. For more on them, see page A3.



KELLIE HICKMAN Hi-Desert Star

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## To Afghanistan with love



CPL. MONICA C. ERICKSON USMC

Sgt. Duane Ammeter, an avionics technician with VMU-1, holds his 5-month-old son, Nathan, before departing for a seven-month deployment to Afghanistan April 13.



REBECCA UNGER Hi-Desert Star

Judy Kemp of Landers fills out custom forms for the care packages going to VMU-1 Marines in Afghanistan from the Hi-Desert's Homestead Valley.

## Locals box gifts for Watchdogs

By Rebecca Unger  
Hi-Desert Star

**YUCCA MESA** — In just a month's time, the Homestead Valley Community Council raised \$2,400 to sponsor a U.S. Marine outfit in Afghanistan.

On Monday morning, the council held "boxing day" at member Yucca Mesa Improvement Association, packing care boxes for an unmanned aerial reconnaissance squadron known as The Watchdogs.

Council members were joined by 3rd District Supervisor Neil Derry, his field representative, Alan Rasmussen, and VMU-1 Family Readiness Officer Rachel Sandlin from the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center in Twentynine Palms.

Because it takes 30 days for mail to reach the remote unit, the boxes were filled with non-perishable items that were most requested by the 120 men and 20 women serving in the VMU-1. These



REBECCA UNGER Hi-Desert Star

San Bernardino County 3rd District Supervisor Neil Derry, left, and field representative Alan Rasmussen help to assemble care packages Monday.

included snacks like beef jerky and sunflower seeds, toiletries such as face wipes, lip balm with sunscreen, mouth wash and medicated foot powder, plus "goodwill offerings" of hard candy to be handed out to children in the war zone.

Another highly requested item is one that civilians take for granted — the greeting

card. HVCC President Jim Harvey says birthday, anniversary and "I miss you" cards are hard to come for combat personnel, and greatly appreciated.

"Reaching out to the Marines out there makes a huge difference," Sandlin, who helps families cope while loved ones are deployed, told the council during a June

### Eyes in the air

Marine Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Squadron 1, or VMU-1, started a seven-month deployment to the Helmand Province in April. Known as The Watchdogs, their mission is to use their unmanned aerial vehicles to patrol the sky and report their findings to service members patrolling the ground.

Source: MCAGCC

## Hate crimes halved last year

By Courtney Vaughn  
Hi-Desert Star

**SAN BERNARDINO** — The number of hate crimes dropped nearly 51 percent in San Bernardino County last year and 22 percent in California, Attorney General Jerry Brown's office reports.

Last year's numbers mark the lowest documented hate crime rate since 2001.

Crime data reports show 1,100 bias-based events recorded in California during 2009, with 16 of those occurring in this county.

In 2008, 33 of the state's 1,397 reported offenses occurred in this county.

A hate crime is one com-

mitted out of bias for a particular race, religion, sexual orientation, disability, gender or a combination of those factors. The crime itself can be anything — property damage, assault, rape or homicide, for example.

Statistics show race is the leading factor behind these types of crimes in San Bernardino County and statewide. In California, nearly 57 percent of documented hate crimes were classified as race related. Of those crimes, about 60 percent were targeted against blacks.

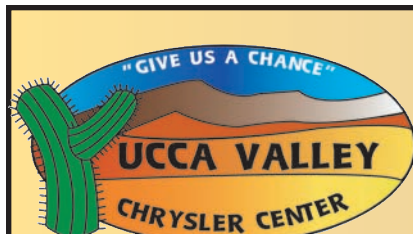
Sexual orientation is the

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