

# TALK TOWN



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## Award of Valor to tell stories of bravery and community service

It was before 5:00 a.m. one morning last November that Lakewood resident Michael Morgan headed to a local donut shop. What he saw as he entered the parking lot caused him to put his foot on the gas pedal and plow his truck straight into the passenger side door of an idling vehicle. For his actions, Morgan will receive the Mayor's Award for community service at the Annual Lakewood Award of Valor Luncheon on November 3.

This was not a case of malice or disregard for others. Rather, Morgan foiled an attempted kidnapping and robbery in progress. As Morgan entered the parking lot, he noticed a woman struggling violently with a man who had approached her from behind, grabbed her by the waist and pinned her arms to her side. As he attempted to pull her into his car, she freed herself and ran. Just then, Morgan rammed his truck into the passenger side door, shattering the windows. The two culprits peeled out of the driveway and Morgan comforted the 21-year-old woman while awaiting the arrival of sheriff's deputies.

Remarkable stories of bravery and devotion to duty on the part of sheriff's deputies, firefighters, paramedics and civilians, like Morgan, will be told at the event that draws nearly 500 people every year. The luncheon is an opportunity for city officials and the community to express their appreciation for the dedication and loyalty shown by public safety personnel who are often asked to go above and beyond the call of duty in protecting and serving the community. They also pay tribute to ordinary citizens who got involved to protect the lives or property of their neighbors or who generously volunteered their time to enhance public safety programs in Lakewood.

Deputy Steve Vranek will be among the sworn public safety officers who will receive the Award of Valor for heroism. Deputy Vranek was working at the Lakewood Sheriff's Station in January when a cell phone call came in from a local restaurant. Panicked waitresses hiding in the back room told of an armed assailant who'd entered the diner. The waitresses relayed important information about the suspect and his actions to Deputy Vranek who passed it on to responding deputies. He calmly and patiently assured the women that deputies were on the way. For his calm, compassionate professionalism, the city will present the deputy with this prestigious award.

Three individuals will be honored with Distinguished Service Awards, including Sheriff's Deputy Jerry Ortiz. In June, Deputy Ortiz gave his life in service to the residents of L.A. County when he was gunned down in Hawaiian Gardens. Deputy Ortiz's commitment to exemplary public safety service and his ultimate sacrifice will be honored as the community presents the award to his widow, Chela. ■



Deputy Ortiz



Michael Morgan



Deputy Vranek



# An interview with Lakewood's Telecom Consultant Michael J. Friedman

*Talk Around Town* asked the city's consultant on telecommunications issues to discuss pending federal and state legislation that could affect the city's ability to control how cable and telephone service providers do business in the city and the quality of service residents receive. Mr. Friedman is the vice president of Telecommunications Management Corp.



Michael J. Friedman

**Talk Around Town:** How are communications services currently regulated?

**Michael J. Friedman:** Communications services are regulated at the federal, state and local levels. There are different sets of regulations depending on the type of service provided. In California, telephone service is authorized by the Public Utilities Commission, with local authorities, such as cities, restricted to "time, place and manner" authority on placement of facilities. Cable companies, such as Comcast, are granted a franchise by the city, with significant restrictions placed on the city by the federal government. There also are different laws for broadcasters, satellite providers, high-speed data (Internet) service providers, local telephone service providers and long distance service providers, as well as many other classes of communications services.

The Federal Telecommunications Act of 1996, among other things, allows telephone companies to provide cable services and cable companies to provide telephone service. Combined with increased use of digital technology, there has been an increasing convergence of services and service providers.

**TAT:** Isn't this confusing?

**M.J.F.:** Yes, particularly with respect to regulation. In the very near future, virtually all communications services will be sent in digital form. When a signal has been digitized, there is very little difference between voice, video or data service. For example, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) recently ruled that telephone service that is broken up into digitized packets known as "Internet Protocol" – usually called VoIP, or Voice over Internet Protocol – is not a telephone service subject to state and local regulation. This has potential impacts on everything from utility taxes to emergency 911 services. There is very little difference between voice that has been digitized and digitized video.

**TAT:** What are the proposed changes in this regulatory structure?

**M.J.F.:** Each industry wants to be released from its current regulatory constraints. Telephone companies do not want to have to obtain cable franchises from every community in order to provide traditional cable service. Other providers want the flexibility to provide whatever services they wish, with limited regulatory oversight.

**TAT:** How will all of this impact Lakewood?

**M.J.F.:** Until the legislation is approved, one can only speculate about possible impacts, although the trend is toward less regulation. If cable franchising is eliminated, and the existing franchise is not grandfathered, the city may lose financial support for CityTV, Channel 31, and channels for the local schools. The city also may lose some or all of the rent that it receives for the cable company's use of local streets (e.g., the franchise fee). There may be other restrictions on the city's ability to collect fees for use of public streets, as well as local resolution of consumer complaints.

**TAT:** How will this impact Lakewood's residents and businesses?

**M.J.F.:** There is the potential for both positive and negative impacts. Most people like to have a choice of providers and, in general, competition can reduce the rates for services and spur innovation. Potential negative impacts could include disruption during construction projects, additional equipment placed on utility poles and in city streets, and less attention to consumer concerns. Some providers may "cherry pick" and serve only those parts of town that they feel will be a better market, rather than providing service choice to all residents. Local recourse for poor service may be reduced or eliminated. Finally, some providers may merge, reducing competition and consumer choice. ■



## 'Can We Talk?'

By Sheryl Musicant Stewart



**Did you know that the state requires water utilities to examine water supply and demand in relationship to the community's future development and projected population increases?** Every five years, the city must adopt an Urban Water Management Plan that demonstrates the city's ability to meet future water needs based on anticipated water supply and demand, water conservation programs, and water supply shortages due to drought or disaster.

The review of the water supply and demand information indicates that, over the last five years, the city has strengthened its water supply reliability. The 25-year projections indicate no need for additional water sources other than groundwater.

For more information and to view the document, visit the city's website at [www.lakewoodcity.org/uwmp](http://www.lakewoodcity.org/uwmp). Hard copies of the plan are available for viewing at the Jacoboni and Nye Libraries and in the recreation offices at Mayfair and Bloomfield Parks. Residents are invited to be a part of the planning process by commenting on the plan. If you have an opinion on Lakewood's future water supply needs, forward your comments to Senior Management Analyst Nancy van der Linden at [nvanderl@lakewoodcity.org](mailto:nvanderl@lakewoodcity.org) or call her at 866-9771, extension 2702. You can mail your comments to the City of Lakewood Department of Water Resources, 5050 Clark Ave., Lakewood, CA 90712.

**October is Crime Prevention Month and marks also the nation's annual observance of Red Ribbon Week, the last seven days of the month.** Annually, city officials host a Lakewood Celebrates reception during Red Ribbon Week where they welcome representatives from our local schools, including board members, superintendents and PTA members, to mark this occasion. At last week's reception, schools were honored for their efforts to promote drug and alcohol prevention education activities in the classrooms and through a fun and meaningful mural-decorating contest. More than a dozen schools entered colorful and creative posters that demonstrated students' commitment to living a drug-free life. The national observance honors former DEA agent Enrique Camarena, who was killed by Mexican drug traffickers in 1985. The city's reception also provided an opportunity for the Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control to showcase the results of a grant the department funded over the past year to assist Lakewood Sheriff's Station deputies in increasing enforcement, training and education activities for ABC-licensed businesses to reduce underage drinking and alcohol sales to minors. ABC officials presented L.A. Sheriff's Commander Bob Binkley with a state grant in the amount of \$98,300 to continue the efforts of the program for another year.

**Speaking of the holidays, mark your calendar for our very special Lakewood Celebrates Holiday Reception.** "Talk Around Town" readers and other community leaders and residents will be invited to join with city officials and staff in ringing in the season on Tuesday, December 13, beginning at 6:00 p.m., at The Centre at Sycamore Plaza. This festive event is a great way to celebrate our community spirit and our gratitude for the many blessings in our lives. Supporting the less fortunate, such as our local Project Shepherd families, by bringing a new, unwrapped gift to the reception is one way to show your Lakewood pride. Stay tuned for more information.

**Finally, did you know that Lakewood was honored with a special visit from the Norwegian Royal Family?** Earlier this month, Jacoboni Library played host to a visit by Princess Märtha Louise of Norway who was on hand to read her new children's book, "Why Kings and Queens Don't Wear Crowns." I attended the event with my 8-year-old daughter and the other Brownies in Troop 339. The moms were as excited as the girls to see a real live princess! The library was full to brimming with several hundred attendees who heard from the beautiful and glamorous young woman about life as a mischievous little princess in Norway. Then she told an old Norwegian folk tale. An animated and lively storyteller, she read an excerpt from her book, then patiently signed copies for all those who wanted to buy one. She lamented to my daughter that she'd always wanted to be a "Scout" when she was a girl, but couldn't. See, I said, life as a princess has its ups and downs! ■

Get the Talk Around Town from the City of Lakewood

# Lakewood's seniors to learn valuable tips at upcoming forum on November 10

The City of Lakewood was tapped by Los Angeles County Supervisor Don Knabe to serve as the host city for an upcoming Smarter Seniors Forum on Thursday, November 10, from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. The free event is designed to educate seniors on how to protect themselves from various marketplace abuses and how to better protect their financial assets. The Smarter Seniors Forum will be held at the Weingart Senior Center at 5220 Oliva Avenue in Lakewood.

Lakewood was one of only two cities within the supervisor's district chosen to host such an event this year. The Los Angeles County Department of Consumer Affairs is helping to organize the forum.

At the event, experts will be on hand to discuss estate planning, conservatorships, special property tax programs for seniors and other financial matters. To aid those who so commonly are targeted for fraud or other scams, the Smarter Seniors Forum will include presentations on family/friend/caregiver abuse, real estate fraud, insurance issues, telemarketing and charity frauds, identity theft and more.



The event is free and open to all seniors, their family members and caregivers. Adult children who are caring for their aging parents or who may face that eventuality should find the information useful as they help their parents navigate through their senior years.

The program will feature six to seven panelists who will discuss how to stay safe and independent; how to recognize frauds and scams; wills and estate planning; the perils of elder abuse; making the best health care decisions and more. Each panelist will speak for 10 minutes. There will be time for questions, in a group setting as well as one on one with the experts. Speakers will provide handout materials for seniors and family members to take away.

City staff has asked that information on the new Medicare senior prescription drug benefit be available. Refreshments and giveaway items will be available for everyone in attendance.

A number of county agencies will be represented at the forum. Highlighting the programs and services each offers for seniors will be Consumer Affairs, Community and Senior Services/Adult Protective Services, Mental Health - Office of the Public Guardian, Sheriff's Department, Treasurer and Tax Collector. Additionally, the Los Angeles County Bar Association - Elder Law Section and the California Department of Insurance will be on hand.

Attendance is limited and reservations are required. Call the Weingart Senior Center at 562-630-6141 to save your place for this free, informative and timely event. Special accommodations for those with disabilities can be arranged. ■

