

VALLEY POLICE BEAT

WINTERHAVEN

Man threatens to kill U.S. Customs officer

A man who was swimming in a canal in Winterhaven threatened to kill a U.S. Customs officer on Saturday, according to the Imperial County Sheriff's Office logs.

Yuma police officers responded to the scene shortly after 7:45 p.m., but asked the Imperial County Sheriff's Office to assist. The man was detained and then booked at the Imperial County jail for being found intoxicated in a public place, according to the logs.

HOLTVILLE

Child approached by male

A male approached a young girl Saturday and said he would pay her to do things with him, according to the Imperial County Sheriff's Office logs.

The incident occurred around 4:30 p.m. at the 7-Eleven convenience store in Holtville, according to the logs. The girl's statement was taken for juvenile reporting.

No further information was provided.

EL CENTRO

Narcotics found on floor of El Centro store

The General Dollar manager found a bindle of suspected narcotics on the floor of the North Imperial Avenue store in El Centro.

The bindle turned out to be a 1.6 grams of tar heroin, according to El Centro police logs. The heroin was booked at El Centro Police Department.

— Krista Daly, kdaly@ivpressonline.com

ANA GALVEZ

Former Calexico resident strengthens sign language skills through prestigious institute**BY HERIC RUBIO**

Staff Writer

When former Calexico resident Ana Galvez moved school districts early in her high school career, one of the first friends she made at Southwest High School happened to be deaf, opening her eyes to a world that would come to dictate and define the course of her education.

Through her interactions with that first friend, and the many who came after, Galvez not only learned American Sign Language, but she also made a promise to herself — that she would become the best sign language interpreter that she possibly could.

"Apart from being in love with the language itself, it was my way of giving back to my friends," Galvez said.

Now 23, Galvez is well on her way to fulfilling that promise. With two bachelor's degrees from California State University Northridge already under her belt — one in linguistics and the other in deaf studies — along with work experience from the National Center of Deafness, she is now one of only 12 students accepted into



Ana Galvez was accepted into a prestigious institute.

PHOTO COURTESY OF VRS INTERPRETING INSTITUTE

VRS Interpreting Institute's semi-annual School-to-Work Program.

A one-of-a-kind 12-week immersion program based in Salt Lake City, participants live on-site and receive additional interpreting training, one-on-one mentoring and professional internships in the deaf community, according to a VRSII press release.

"The program is designed to shorten the gap between (college) graduation and employment," said Carolyn Ball,

VRSII executive director. "The hope is that they stay in the field and start working and get certified sooner than they would on their own."

Ball explained that the program, which pairs participants with host families who require the use of ASL, can prepare future interpreters for the real world in 12 weeks, as opposed to the three years it can take if done on their own.

"We put them through quite a rigorous training," Ball said. "If you think of the work they do, they're actually in every aspect of deaf people's lives. To put someone that doesn't have the proper skills isn't really fair."

That training also includes in-depth self-analyses to help identify in their own interpreting work that requires improvement.

But for Galvez, the VRSII program is much more than just a path to a job.

"I feel that acceptance into this program is a testament to me trying to be a qualified interpreter and not just be satisfied with what I had already," she said from her temporary home in Salt Lake City. "I feel like this program

is helping me achieve my goals."

And though she said it was hard leaving everything behind in Riverside where she currently resides, Galvez said the fruits of her sacrifice would outweigh the bitterness of it.

"We want to push ourselves," she said of herself and fellow participants. "We want to make sure we're providing the best service to the deaf community. The reward is knowing we're going to go out and help."

Eventually, Galvez plans on bringing the knowledge and skills she's gained throughout her education back to where it all began.

"Once I'm satisfied with my professional development, my end goal is to go back to the Imperial Valley to open workshops for local interpreters," she said. "I need to pass on this knowledge because I won't be in this world forever. I definitely want to give back to the community because that's where it all started."

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VETERANS

Continued from A4

L'Italien is expecting to take 43 days to journey the 2,800 miles or so.

"We need to make people aware of it, and that's what this ride is all about," he said.

As a board member and treasurer of The

Team Veteran Foundation Inc., L'Italien is sharing information on their national campaign that will help provide a solution to the veteran suicide problem. The Advocacy for Life in Veteran's Empowerment (ALIVE) program has a goal of reducing and one day eliminating veteran suicide.

ALIVE brings a veteran together with a crisis interventionist, another veteran who can understand what the individual is going through. This person is there to talk to the veteran, respond at any time and advocate for the veteran.

"It's veterans helping veterans," L'Italien said. "They will case manage

until the person is successfully out of danger."

The program was developed after seeing how successful the Statewide Advocacy for Veterans Empowerment was in Massachusetts, he said. The suicide rate in Massachusetts is currently at 9.8 percent, the lowest in the country.

Most other states are at

20 percent or more. California is at 20 percent, he said. Most of those who commit suicide are between 23 and 25 years old.

"They are like my children. It's wiping out a whole generation and no one is paying attention," he said.

L'Italien ventured out on his own last year and

pulled a small trailer, but he nearly died three times along the way. This year, his wife, Lauren, will be following behind in a vehicle.

"I realized the passion he had," she said. "He's become that beacon of hope. ... We're acting as citizens when we say we need to step up and do something."