

The Jacob Journal

A Newsletter from Supervisor Dianne Jacob

July 2003

Serving the Cities of:
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La Mesa
Lemon Grove
Poway
Santee

Serving the communities of:
Agua Caliente
Allied Gardens
Alpine
Barrett
Blossom Valley
Bostonia
Boulevard
Campo
Canebrake
Casa de Oro
Crest
Cuyamaca
Dehesa
Del Cerro
Descanso
Dulzura
Eucalyptus Hills
Fernbrook
Flinn Springs
Granite Hills
Grantville
Guatay
Harbison Canyon
Jacumba
Jamul
Julian
Lake Morena
Lakeside
Mount Helix
Pine Hills
Pine Valley
Potrero
Ramona
Rancho San Diego
Rolando
San Carlos
San Pasqual
Santa Ysabel
Shelter Valley
Spring Valley
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Cosmit
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Inaja
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La Posta
Manzanita
Mesa Grande
Santa Ysabel
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Tackling Retail Scanner Overcharges

Making Sure the Price is Right for San Diegans

A parent with two hyper children and a packed shopping cart passes through the check out line at the grocery store. At a nearby home improvement store, a senior citizen buys tools, hardware and lumber for a do-it-yourself project.

In San Diego County statistics show that one of these two customers will be overcharged by an inaccurate electronic price scanner.

While retailers blame innocent human error for the overcharges, consumer protection groups point to the retailers who've been prosecuted and fined for repeatedly charging above the advertised price and see more sinister motives.

Is it challenging to manually enter thousands of prices into a computer network? Are some retailers deliberately ripping off customers? Because all cases are different, both explanations are likely true.

New statistics from a lengthy County investigation add gravity to the debate. Scanner overcharges are staggering. Facing limited regulatory oversight and minor penalties for violations, retailers have little

incentive to get prices right for San Diego shoppers. San Diego County can and must do a better job of encouraging retailers to comply with the California Business and Professions Code 12024.2—the law that makes it illegal for sellers to charge more than the advertised price.

After four years and more than 1,500

visits to drug stores, department stores, markets and other merchants, the County's Department of Agriculture, Weights and Measures found that more than half the time San Diegans make purchases of 30 to 50 items, they are being overcharged. This means

one out of every two trips to the store for a sizeable purchase results in customers paying more money than they should.

The bigger picture is even more startling. Retail sales amount to \$26 billion for our region. The County pegs the overall overcharge percentage at 0.4 percent. This year, San Diegans collectively will pay retailers about \$104 million *more* dollars than they should!

That astounding figure begs reform. Right now, current civil and criminal penalties make it cheaper for retailers to pay fines than to hire additional employees to double check

“Going to the store should not be like playing a game of chance.”
-Supervisor Dianne Jacob



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Beat the Heat



Find a Cool Zone

When the mercury rises, so does the risk of heat exhaustion and other heat-related health problems. High summer temperatures can be especially troublesome

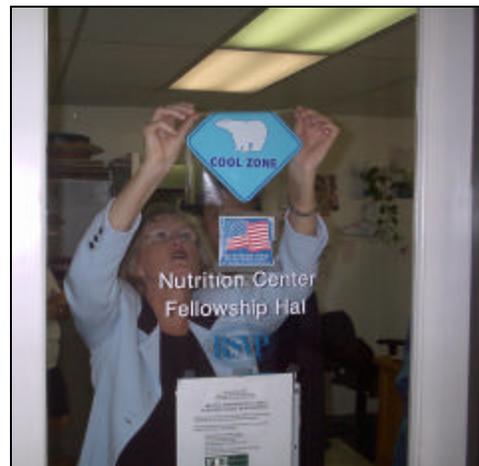
for seniors in warmer inland areas.

It's a good thing the County's Cool Zones are back! From libraries to senior centers to shopping malls and restaurants, Cool Zones are existing places where seniors can go to protect their health, lower expensive air-conditioning bills, conserve energy and even meet new people.

In addition to seeking shelter at a Cool Zone, the County has several important health recommendations for seniors this summer. First, avoid foods high in protein because protein increases metabolic health. Avoid using salt tablets unless directed to do so by a physician. Finally if you take diuretics, ask your physician about a lower dosage during hot weather.

There are about 150 locations around the County with the Cool Zone polar bear logo. In El Cajon, there are Cool Zones at the El Cajon Library and Parkway Plaza, along with sites in Descanso, Jacumba and Alpine.

To find the Cool Zone nearest you or to enroll your business in the Cool Zone program call the County Office of Aging Independence Services at 1-800-510-2020.



Play it Cool: Supervisor Jacob opened the first of 150 Cool Zones for seniors this summer in El Cajon. The program is celebrating its third year.

Scanners

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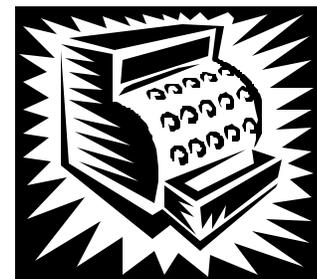
scanners for accuracy. That's why, at my urging and with support from three of my colleagues on the Board of Supervisors, the County is working to tame scanner overcharges.

At the heart of the plan is shopper awareness. The County will soon announce details of a consumer awareness program that will recognize San Diego retailers who get prices right and warn customers about retailers who continuously overcharge. The plan will include posting signs on stores that continuously overcharge customers.

Other parts of the State have instituted similar programs and helped retailers lower their overall overcharge percentage significantly. San Diego should follow that lead.

Going to the store should not be like playing a game of chance. Customers have a right to expect that the price they see on the shelf is the price they'll be charged at the register. Right now, that's just not the case.

By empowering customers with the information they need to protect their wallets, the County upholds its responsibility to protect consumers and puts millions of dollars back where they belong—in the pockets of San Diegans.



Putting the Brakes on Illegal Street Racing

Spectators who cheer on high speed street races must be held accountable for perpetuating the deadly activity.

That's why I'm proud to have joined Sheriff Bill Kolender to enact a new County ordinance that makes it illegal to knowingly watch an illegal street race.

People caught in the act now can be charged with a misdemeanor, fined \$1000 and ordered to serve up to six months in jail.

Over the past 18 months, at least 17 people have been killed as a result of street racing in San Diego County. By encouraging the activity, spectators only proliferate these unnecessary deaths. My hope is that the County's new law will save lives by discouraging both the illegal racers and the spectators who congregate around these very dangerous events.

The County is working on additional ways to crack down street racing. The Board is seeking a change in state law that would allow law enforcement officials to take permanent possession of cars used in illegal races and is asking for stiffer penalties for people convicted of street racing.



Safer Sidewalks in Ramona

Early this summer, Supervisor Jacob was honored to help the family of Robert "Bob" Salyer dedicate the new Ramona Street Pedestrian Bridge in honor of the much-loved Ramona resident.

An avid daily runner, Bob jogged through the town rain or shine. Tragically, he was struck by a car on Ramona Street about the same time major improvements were underway to build sidewalks for the town. Bob's legacy will live on in the form of a safer Ramona.

Join me for Coffee and Conversation

August 8, 2003 at 8:30 a.m.

Howard's Bakery

1097 Broadway

El Cajon

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