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DAN McSWAIN

IN FAILING THE HOMELESS,



SAN DIEGO STANDS ALONE

Other regions prove solving problem is doable, but county's approach has been dismal

By any reasonable definition, the soaring population of homeless people in San Diego represents a genuine crisis. More people are living and dying, miserable and filthy, on our sidewalks and in parks and canyons.

Yet here's the real shocker: Most of the suffering is unnecessary. Far from being a hopeless cause, reducing or even ending homelessness seems quite possible, at least outside San Diego.

Federal statistics tell a story of abject local failure.

From 2007 (when counting methods were standardized) to 2015, the nation's overall number of unsheltered homeless people fell 32 percent to 173,268 people. Over the same eight years, the number increased 24 percent in San Diego County to 4,156.

Our performance was worse



PEGGY PEATTIE U-T PHOTOS

Tracy Burgess, who is homeless, makes a cigarette from tobacco collected from cigarette butts. Beside her are stuffed toys brought by well-wishers.

Top: Juanita Sams, 47, sleeps on a bed of cushions sandwiched between her two shopping carts in East Village. She raised four children, she said.

for "unsheltered chronically homeless individuals," a federal category that describes people who, because of mental illness and other disabilities, lived outdoors repeatedly or for a year or more. These are society's most vulnerable people.

In San Diego, the number of chronics soared 77 percent (to 1,249), while nationwide they fell 30 percent. We look even worse compared with Los Angeles, which reduced its chronics by 37 percent (to 10,983) and overall unsheltered homeless by 21 percent.

That's right. While Los Angeles has managed to find housing for thousands of its hardest cases, San Diego has expanded its version of Skid Row.

And the rate of disparity may be accelerating. Although fresh

SEE HOMELESS • A16

FBI CHIEF SPURNED CALLS NOT TO ALERT CONGRESS

Officials unsure why Comey broke with policy in disclosing email review

BY MATT APUZZO, MICHAEL S. SCHMIDT, WILLIAM K. RASHBAUM & ADAM GOLDMAN

WASHINGTON

The day before FBI Director James Comey sent a letter to Congress announcing new evidence had been discovered that may be related to the completed Hillary Clinton email investigation, the Justice Department strongly discouraged the step and told him that he would be breaking with longstanding policy, three law enforcement officials said Saturday.

Senior Justice Department officials did not move to stop him from sending the letter, officials said, but they did everything short of it, pointing to policies against talking about current criminal investigations or being seen as meddling in elections.

That Comey moved ahead despite those protestations underscores the unusual nature of Friday's revelations, which added a dramatic twist to the final days of a presidential campaign. His action also reignited a firestorm that Clinton believed she had put behind her when the FBI decided in July

SEE EMAILS • A6

RAMON SANCHEZ
1951-2016



Ramon "Chunky" Sanchez, a San Diego music institution who gave voice to the barrio, died Friday, his family announced Saturday. See A5.

IN DEPTH

Waging war with no bombs

Hacking could escalate into major attacks, experts say

BY GARY ROBBINS

You flip a switch, but the lights don't come on.

The fan in your living room unexpectedly slows to a stop.

Your cellphone screen glows for a second, then goes dark.

You think, "What a time for a power outage."

Maybe you should also think, "Is this a cyber attack? Where's it coming from? Will it lead to war?"

Cyber experts said there's a deep, constant and growing level of hacking between nations that could escalate into major attacks against critical infrastructure, from power grids and banks to air traffic control systems, oil pipelines and the internet itself.

In just the past few years, Russian-backed hackers knocked out the electricity to 225,000 customers in



JIM URQUHART REUTERS

Analysts work in a watch and warning center of a cybersecurity defense lab at the Idaho National Laboratory in Idaho Falls, Idaho.

"Cyberspace is the Wild West. There is no consensus over how nations should behave in using cyber weapons."

Bryan Cunningham
Cybersecurity Policy and Research Institute, UC Irvine

Ukraine, North Korea broke into Sony Pictures' servers and Iran hit the computers of U.S. banks. Analysts said China has stolen U.S. intellectual property and pondered ideas like how to disrupt the power grid in San Diego so it can harm the Navy and Marine Corps.

The seemingly invisible gamesmanship broke into the public consciousness recently when the Obama administration accused Russia of

SEE CYBER • A17

DIocese delves into family and marriage

Local Catholic leader called rare synod to survey congregants

BY PETER ROWE

When Lulu Valdivia's priest asked her to survey local Catholics, she heard from congregants at multiple parishes about the "beauty and realism" of marriage.

Things got real in a hurry. Parishioners shared intimate secrets with Valdivia, a delegate to the Diocese of San Diego's synod on marriage and family life. A nurse confessed her addiction to drugs and alcohol. The parent of a suicidal teen fretted, "What did I do wrong?" A wife broke down while admitting her husband forces her to have sex with other men.

"This lady said to me, 'You think I can go to my priest with something like that?'" Valdivia said.

She can, insisted Bishop Robert McElroy. In May, the

62-year-old prelate convened a synod — a meeting of church experts — to explore marriage and family issues.

While modeled on a recently concluded Vatican synod on the same topic, this effort has been focused on the diocese's estimated 1.4 million believers in San Diego and Imperial counties.

"This has been very much a learning process for me," McElroy said, "about how the laity wrestles with these issues."

The last time the San Diego diocese convened a synod was 1976. "Rocky" was playing in movie theaters, a gallon of regular gas cost 59 cents, and a Georgia peanut farmer was aiming for the White House.

Much has changed in the intervening 40 years, including the definition "church expert." While senior priests and theologians are still present in the synod, they no longer dominate. The average age of the 125 delegates is 42. Most are lay people

SEE CATHOLICS • A15

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