



# info•bits

## 2016 Service Award Luncheon

### Recognizing the Best of the City



**Welcome Chief  
Martin Serna**

**Torrance's New Fire Chief  
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Luncheon Snapshots & Memories

**Employees Honored at Luncheon**

The city celebrated its most dedicated employees at the annual barbecue luncheon held in the Toyota Meeting Hall in March. Emceed by Ben McCain, the event celebrated honorees such as Forrest Hunt, who has served 50 years with the city. Employees participated in a raffle drawing and enjoyed lunch served by Santa Maria BBQ.

“At the annual Service Award Luncheon, we bring employees together to celebrate their tenure in public service to the Torrance community,” said Leyta Fuentes, Human Resources Administrator for the city. “At this event held on March 24, 2016, the city honored over 200 employees that reached, in the previous year, a milestone anniversary in their career.”

Congratulations to all honorees!

## Spotlight: Max Presneill



### Curator, Torrance Art Museum

Recently recognized by CBS Los Angeles as one of the top art curators in the city, director of Torrance Art Museum (TAM) Max Presneill certainly has a lot to be proud of. Curating for TAM since 2009, he promotes the mission of the museum by bringing contemporary art to the public.

Focusing specifically on new art (art created within the last five years), the museum attracts high-profile names and pairs them with dynamic, younger artists. "We do really good shows, but we also take risks and chances, so there's always a sense of excitement," he said.

Presneill became a curator by accident after years of being a practicing artist showing around the world. The curator for a project at the time had dropped out, and after stepping into the role Presneill found he enjoyed the experience. He has founded and/or run a number of galleries, most notably RAID Projects, an artist-run contemporary art space in Los Angeles.

From London, Presneill came to the United States 18 years ago. His influences as an artist include Albert Oehlen, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Fiona Rae, Rembrandt, and Pablo Picasso.

Presneill wants to spread the word about the uniqueness of the gallery. "Torrance has a very, very special little gem in this museum," he said. "We really want the local population to know about it and see the shows, and to keep an open mind because some of this stuff is kind of weird and wacky. But it's art, so it's supposed to be!"

The next show, *Grafforists*, opens June 18th. Exhibiting work from New York, London, and Southern California, it will feature abstract paintings from major and emerging artists. For more information, visit the museum's website at [www.torranceartmuseum.com](http://www.torranceartmuseum.com).

## IRS Phone Scams on the Rise

With this year's tax season behind us, it is still important to stay aware of scam artists that continue to take advantage of unsuspecting taxpayers. Phone scams remain on the IRS "Dirty Dozen" list of tax scams. These scam artists threaten victims with arrest or deportation if they don't pay their tax bill.

According to the Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration (TIGTA), there have been approximately 5,000 victims of IRS phone scams who have collectively paid nearly \$30 million since reports began in October 2013.

Another known scam is the phishing malware scam, where emails are sent from so-called IRS agents asking taxpayers to fill out a form with their personal information in order to have their tax refund wired to them.

According to the IRS website, here are several things these scammers do that the IRS will never do:

- Call to demand immediate payment, nor will the agency call about taxes owed without first having mailed you a bill.
- Demand that you pay taxes without giving you the opportunity to question or appeal the amount they say you owe.
- Require you to use a specific payment method for your taxes, such as a prepaid debit card.
- Ask for credit or debit card numbers over the phone.
- Threaten to bring in local police or other law-enforcement groups to have you arrested for not paying.

If you receive one of these calls, hang up and contact TIGTA at (800) 366-4484 to report the call. For more information, go to [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov).



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# Welcoming Our New Fire Chief



Bringing a fresh perspective to Torrance's fire department, the city is proud to announce the promotion of Martin Serna as Torrance's new Fire Chief. Chief Serna assumed his new position on January 10, 2016, and is starting full steam ahead with advancing the department to the changing times.

"I'm excited by the opportunity, and very humbled by my selection. I'm very enthusiastic about our future in the fire department and what we're doing for the city," said Chief Serna, a native of Norwalk.

Driven by his heart for helping others, Chief Serna brings nearly 25 years of public service to his appointment, starting as a firefighter for the city in 1993. He recalls the day he made the decision to become a firefighter. "I was a little kid about eight years old. There was a house fire down the street, and I remember walking up the street and seeing the LA County fire engine coming up and rescuing my neighbor's grandmother. I decided at that point that was the career I wanted to pursue," he said.

Growing up the youngest of 11 children, Chief Serna attended John Glenn High School in Norwalk. He relocated to Chino, where he graduated from the Fire Academy at Mt. San Antonio College. He later received his B.S. in Fire Administration and Fire Science from Columbia Southern University.

Chief Serna faces some unique challenges for the department, in particular with regards to the ExxonMobil refinery explosion that occurred in February 2015. "It is one of our biggest challenges as a fire department to ensure that we transition ExxonMobil out and the new owners [PBF Energy] in," he said. "It's important they understand what our expectations are in regards to emergency preparedness response, as well as regulatory oversight."

With 145 safety employees and 18 non-safety employees under his administration, one of his goals is to make the department more receptive to the needs of both elected and community leaders. While the department is well-structured, he would like the department to approach its work more from a risk management perspective, and look for opportunities to prevent occurrences.

He is also striving for more efficient ways of handling their daily duties. "We want to maintain the rich tradition and history [of the department], but we also want to be modern and be receptive to the tools that are available to us in the current world," he said.

With this in mind, he is in the process of looking at tablets for handling emergency medical calls, and is also looking at new cardiac monitors that would sync up with cardiologists at one of the local facilities, shortening up treatment times for patients.

In his spare time, Chief Serna stays active in his community. He is on the Supervisory Committee of the Torrance Federal Credit Union, and serves as a Eucharistic Minister and one of the head ushers at his local church. He is also a dedicated family man, and serves as an assistant coach on his son's baseball team.

Welcome aboard, Chief Serna!

## Torrance Trivia

This municipal facility started life as one of the first serving the Walteria section of the city. Over the years it has been destroyed by a runaway Chevy, lodged in a fire station and a WWII surplus dispensary and has a twin not five miles away. What is this facility?

Send your answer to [torrancetrivia@gmail.com](mailto:torrancetrivia@gmail.com) with "Torrance Trivia" in the subject line. Those with the correct answer will be entered into a contest drawing for a gift card! Thanks to Michael George for assistance with Torrance Trivia.

## Signs of the Times

by Michael George, Reference Librarian

At the corner of Madrona and Torrance Blvd. is the first of the new electric informational signs. Entering the city from most of the major north/south and east/west roadways you will see signs proclaiming you are entering Torrance. "Torrance" blazoned in neon over and beside the entrances to our city has a long history.



If you were walking in Pershing Square in about 1911, you would have seen a large sign painted on the side of a building reading, "Go see Torrance, the Modern Industrial City." This was one of the first signs to advertise the existence of our city. Of course, the Gill bridge was, and is, the oldest and best known "sign" advertising you are entering "The Modern Industrial City." In the mid-30s the city put up neon signs over the streets leading into the city. These were perhaps garish by today's standards, red neon on a blue background. In 1936, signs were placed at Torrance and Hawthorne, Vermont and Carson and at Narbonne (Arlington) near the southern border of the city.

A special neon sign proclaiming "North Torrance" was placed at the intersection of Prairie and Riverside Blvd. (Redondo Beach Blvd). The sign was put up in celebration of the renaming of the "McDonald Tract" to "North Torrance." The sign lasted until 1946 when a car ran into it. According to the Torrance Herald, 100 sparrows, who were living in the sign, were made homeless.

In 1953, the Chamber of Commerce put up one of the most impressive neon signs. Proclaiming "Torrance, the City of Industrial Opportunity," the sign was placed at Western and Torrance Blvd. The



\$2,000 sign was turned on to the accompaniment of Manny Harmon and his Movieland Band. As the switch was thrown, a block dance, much like the current "Hot August Night" celebrations, commenced. Just a couple of years after the gala switched on the neon lights, the lighting was found too expensive to maintain. The bright lights went out and flood lights turned on.



## Figuring out the Drought

Part 3 - Where Are We at Now?

Things must be better right? Over the past few months, we've had intermittent weather events that have brought us some signs of encouragement, notably flash flood warnings and weather fronts that have moved across the Southern California area. When we see the storm clouds gathering and the streets rushing with water, it tends to bring hope to a fairly daunting situation. This last March brought with it some rain events and was somewhat helpful. The Sierra snowpack this year was improved over previous years as well. The fact is though, those events we have seen are just a 'drop in the bucket', so to speak, when facing the effects of a drought that has endured now for nearly five years.

Southern California saw relatively little precipitation, and many areas still struggled to save water. By April 1st, typically the end of California's rain and snow season, the state was left with a nearly average snow pack and few hopes of more significant storms.

However, according to Chuck Schaich, Senior Analyst with Torrance Public Works, the city has been doing pretty well saving water. Torrance has been exceeding its targets; overall the city is reducing its end water usage by 20.5 percent, exceeding the 19 percent target recently set in March by the state. "The biggest thing [impacting savings] is discretionary watering. We have an ordinance on the books, and people are pretty much adhering to it," said Schaich.

Even though we are in much better shape than we were in last year, we are nowhere near having a drought-over party. California has long suffered from intermittent water shortages, and a five-year recent rain shortage has put the state in a period of drought. While the increased rain is a welcome change, California would need two to three times its average rainfall in order to begin ending the drought.

Remember, the city is here to assist with your conservation efforts. There are many conservation rebate programs available for residents. Visit [www.bewaterwise.com](http://www.bewaterwise.com) for more information.



# Retirements

7-1-15 through 3-1-16

Scott Schneider	Fire Engineer	12/17/15	37 years
Keith Thompson	Police Sergeant	7/25/15	30 years
Laurie Anderson	Sr Business Manager	7/6/15	16 years
Ross Bartlett	Police Captain	12/28/15	28 years
Robert Borchert	Senior Mechanic	12/28/15	16 years
James Caprio	Communications Sup	9/17/15	24 years
Gary Carter	Custodian	10/6/15	39 years
Cheryle Chapman	Police Services Off	11/30/15	19 years
Thomas Cook	Public Works Sup.	11/19/15	31 years
Gerald Enis	Public Works Insp	7/3/15	33 years
Janene Ferguson	Recreation Sup	11/27/15	15 years
Andrew Fresquez	Water Service Tech II	8/6/15	36 years
Rosemary Herrera	Police Officer	1/29/16	13 years
Kirk Heskett	Equipment Attendant	7/9/15	31 years
Rodney Irvine	Police Captain	12/28/15	26 years
Monty Latham	Airport Worker	12/1/15	35 years
Everett Lomax	Bus Operator	10/8/15	9 years
Richard Lopez	Senior Custodian	12/25/15	30 years
James Mills	Transit Manager	7/3/15	17 years
Thomas Norwood	Mechanic	7/31/15	25 years
Michael O'Brien	Senior Mechanic	12/30/15	31 years
Marlene Pekins	Administrative Asst	8/31/15	37 years
Chester Pitts	Police Officer	9/30/15	35 years
Annarella Pohl	Administrative Asst	7/6/15	18 years
William Racowschi	Fire Chief	12/26/15	35 years
Rodney Steffler	Building Maint Sup	12/17/15	32 years
Giang To	Police Officer	12/12/15	25 years
Joseph Werner Jr.	Custodian	10/9/15	6 years
Margery Werner	Staff Assistant	12/25/15	26 years

## Calendar of Events

Armed Forces Day Parade  
May 20th - 22nd

City Yard Open House and Car Show  
June 4th, 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.  
City Services Facility | 20500 Madrona  
Avenue

Free Residential Hazardous and  
E-Waste Roundup  
June 18th, 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.  
American Honda | 1919 Torrance Blvd.

Torrance Antique Street Faire  
June 26th, 8:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.  
1317 Sartori Avenue

# New Hires Promotions

7-1-15 through 3-28-16

7-1-15 through 3-28-16

Reed, Jill L. City Manager's Office  
Castro, John Clifford M. Police  
Smith, Kirk R. Public Works  
Harbaugh-Shirazi, Arianne N. City Clerk's Office  
Siddiqi, Linda M. Transit  
Walker, Wesley D. Transit  
Castrellon, Jorge A. Transit  
Vazquez, Gerardo Transit  
Estrada, Zachary W. Public Works  
Walsh, Jeffrey M. General Services  
Dorsey, Teri R. Transit  
Jackson, Azhonea A. Transit  
Jonas, Mark A. General Services  
Mohtar, Samar Community Development  
Casillan, Nicholas S. General Services  
O'Toole, Ryan J. General Services  
Von Stietz, Danette M. Community Services  
Villegas, Enrique W. Police  
Stauber, Louis K. Police  
Beranek, Nolan E. Police  
Martinez Jr, Ernesto Community Development  
Wand, Katherine L. Finance  
Bueno, Martha I. Police  
McKewen, Kelsey J. Police  
Gersch, Jason D. General Services  
Baker, Daniel A. City Clerk's Office  
Santos, Michael A. Public Works  
Nori, Robert Public Works  
Rush, Dana Y. Transit  
Ihenacho, Ifeanyichukwu C. Transit  
Shannon, Heather L. City Manager's Office  
Taulii, Amanda J. Police  
Moun, Brenda C. Public Works  
Que, Jessamine C. Public Works  
Berube, Jean Paul F. General Services  
Masak, Michelle V. CIT  
MacDougall, Mark W. Transit  
Rivera Sanchez, Raul General Services  
Vila, Christopher I. Community Services  
Miyasato, Christie L. Transit  
Castaneda, Guillermo Community Development  
Rodriguez, Juan C. Public Works  
Pittman, Mark S. Police  
Smith, Monique N. Transit  
Skinner, Stanley D. Public Works  
McDonald, Anthony E. Police  
Satterfield, Joshua G. Police  
Gonzalez, Jesus General Services  
DeZiel, Julie A. City Manager's Office  
McCrea, Jason C. Community Development  
Sanders, Ellery D. Fire  
Rhodes, Christopher D. Fire  
Baughman, Patrick A. Fire  
Ghaemi, Babak Community Development  
Gent, Zulma G. City Manager's Office  
Oliver, Sally R. Fire  
Samad, Hibah F. City Manager's Office  
Kang, Susan Finance

Flores, Hector Park Services Supervisor  
Le, Jamie A. Management Associate  
Megerdichian, Domenica Management Associate  
Barsock III, Herbert N. Bus Operator  
Camarillo, Johnny Bus Operator  
Mc Atee, Alexander D. Fire Fighter  
Robarge, Douglas G. Fire Fighter  
Hein, John H. Fire Fighter  
Fournier, Brett F. Fire Fighter  
Hagen, Nicholas C. Fire Fighter  
Knapp, Matthew D. Dep Pub Works Dir-Ops  
Cole, Chad E. Sanitation Equip Op  
Marinas Jr, Larry S. Lead Maint Worker  
Connaughton, Terri L. Risk Manager  
Wawryk, Dariusz J. Police Sergeant  
Harris, Ronald L. Police Sergeant  
Nunez, Desiere A. Administrative Assistant  
Valles, George A. Maintenance Worker  
Perry, Brian R. Library Technician  
Lambert, Jeff J. Library Technician  
Oorts, Leo D. Planning Assistant  
Sutherlin, Soraya C. Emerg Services Manager  
Sodaro, Philip M. Sanitation Equip Op  
Beltran, Maricruz Police Ops Sup  
Boykin, Daniel R. Public Works Sup  
Lewison, Jeff M. Fire Fighter  
Williams, Trevor Sanitation Equip Op  
Mendoza, Wilson E. Assistant Engineer  
Hickman, David R. Fire Engineer  
Megeff, Jon R. Police Captain  
Watt, Robert J. Police Lieutenant  
Serna, Martin A. Fire Chief  
Underwood, Mark M. Police Captain  
Moreno, Danny E. Police Lieutenant  
Martinez, Alexander Police Sergeant  
Chance, Michael A. Police Sergeant  
Yun, Zoe H. Admin Analyst -Tier 1  
Bean, Eddie T. Bus Operator  
Hansen, Michael A. Fire Chief, Battalion - 40  
Dobine, Jason S. Fire Captain - 40  
Domingo, Michael K. Bus Operator  
Viera, Stefan A. Fire Captain  
Sifuentes, Daniel M. Sr. Fire Prev Specialist  
Schroeder, Nina Business Manager  
Perry, Myron T. Sanitation Equip Op