Anyone who has seen or participated in an active shooter drill knows what is happening here. Role players escaping from this active shooter drill have their hands up so it’s clear they are not armed.

Behind the Drill: Northridge Mall Active Shooter Exercise

You may recall last month when Northridge Mall served as the backdrop so that area law enforcement could practice for what was once the unthinkable: an active shooter incident with mass casualties.

In all, more than 150 law enforcement (including Sheriff and Probation) and fire personnel as well as local ambulance providers, the County Emergency Medical Service (EMS), Office of Emergency Services (OES), 9-1-1, District Attorney, American Red Cross and Northridge Mall Security were involved. This drill put Monterey County’s Safety Partners to the test.
But did you know that this drill was more than eight months in the making? And that it was the second part of an area-wide training series funded by a $30,000 Homeland Security grant which was directed towards this exercise from the Grant Approval Authority in partnership with the Office of Emergency Services.

The roots of this drill go back to April 2016, when the first drill was done at the MPC Public Safety Training facility. This is a case of practice, review the objectives, and practice again.

During the large-scale drill, the primary objective was to improve from the first drill, but other objectives included:

- Test the Operational Unified Command System
- Test the radio communications (multi-agency frequencies)
- Re-test Active Shooter Guidelines
- Evaluate protective gear and recent equipment purchased with Homeland Security grant funding
- Identify equipment and training needs.

Those on scene worked through scenarios both inside and outside of the large shopping center. Drone footage was taken of outside work so that those involved can review their procedures and tactics.

Evaluators were on hand during the training and gave the group high marks for its teamwork and encouraged continued training.

An after action report on the drill will be sent to FEMA and partner agencies will be talking more about whether additional protective gear and communications will be needed as a result of this training effort.

Scenes from the drill: one participant played the role of the gunman (top), volunteers played victims during the drill (center), officers prepare to enter the mall where the active shooter incident is happening (bottom). Emergency vehicles lit up the night in the Northridge Mall parking lot (next page).
Library Continues Community Forum Series

If you like to hear and talk about current issues, join in as the Library continues its Community Matters forums.

The third program in this series, which encourages civil discourse on controversial subjects, takes place on Wednesday, April 18th from 6-7:30 p.m. at the Marina Branch Library. The topic for this forum is certainly ripped from today’s headlines: gun violence.

Community leaders and residents are invited to the Marina Branch Library to discuss their various perspectives. Library Director Jayanti Addleman will facilitate the discussion. Panelists for this forum include:

- Supervisor John Phillips – Monterey County District 2
- David Wasson – NRA certified firearms instructor from 831Shooter
- Angie Ortega – Parents of Murdered Children, Inc.
- Wendy Askew – MPUSD Board Trustee, Area 1
- Joy McMurtry – Monterey County Deputy Public Defender
Managers Meeting Educates About Complex Homeless Issues

A recent lunchtime event for County Managers took many outside their ‘comfort zone’ to share the realities of homelessness which is experienced by many in our local communities.

The Management Council offers ‘Lunch and Learn’ events to bring members and guests together to delve more deeply into various topics. The first such event of the year was held at the Health Department and the guest speaker was Jill Allen, Executive Director of Dorothy’s Place.

For those who don’t know Dorothy’s Place, it offers help for those experiencing homelessness and poverty, often acting as a bridge to services those in need may not get any other way. Dorothy’s Kitchen is perhaps the most well-known of its programs. It is a full-service, commercial kitchen serving more than 400 meals a day to those in need.

Attendees say Allen’s presentation was both enlightening and sobering, taking them through the complex issues behind the problem, sharing stories from the Chinatown Community in Salinas where many of the services are offered and the positive strides that are being made.

Here are some reactions from those who attended:

*I felt it was a very educational and powerful message that truly explains homelessness from a hands-on perspective. The idea of Whole Person Care (WPC) is working for so many. I believe that if we are to change our community for the better, we need to understand what creates the cycle and how to help make it better, even if it is only one person at a time.*
- Wendi Reed, Probation

*I appreciated this presentation because Ms. Allen helped me better understand the causes of homelessness. She also explained the programs that Dorothy’s Place and the Salinas community are implementing to address this issue. Her talk helped me be more empathetic and provided a reality check on the extensive measures that are needed to solve this problem.*
- Joy Willett, Treasurer-Tax Collector’s Office

*I was a very thought-provoking presentation. It was hard to acknowledge that society has failed these individuals. It saddens me that we are not providing the treatment to make the homeless well nor the tools they need to care for themselves. Our community needs to come together to provide viable solutions.*
- Linora Ballesteros, Social Services
I learned a lot at the presentation. The biggest thing I got from the presentation is that the County is a leader in social services to this vulnerable community, but there’s a growing potential to increase services with the help of other organizations like Dorothy’s Place. New things I learned about the homeless population in the Salinas area:

- New construction in the Chinatown area has displaced “real estate” for people that would camp in Chinatown, further spreading them out from services.
- Many of the chronically-homeless population have some sort of disability, such as mental health issues.
- Some do not take their medication because they have a hard time dealing with the side-effects.
- The 24/7 access to restrooms and showers are used by homeless individuals and families.
- The Whole Person Care program’s budget allows for only 600 participants from the tri-county area.

-Juan Pablo Lopez, Administration

The next Management Council event is April 18th at Schilling Place.