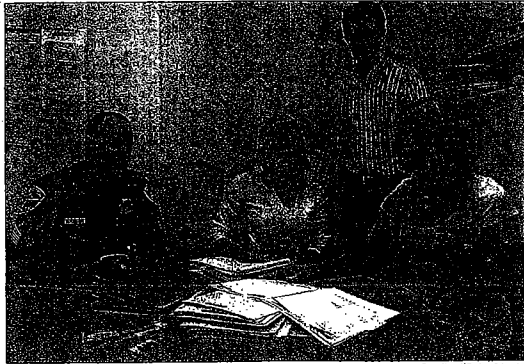


All American
Watsonville American
defeats Aptos to
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Pajaronian

WATSONVILLE FREEDOM PAJARO CORRALITOS AROMAS CASTROVILLE LA SELVA BEACH APTOS ROYAL OAKS EL
News leader of the Pajaro Valley

Protecting your identity



Law clerks Julie Stamps (from right), staff attorney Henry Martin and Jenny Phillips of the Watsonville Law Center refine an identity theft presentation with the help of Watsonville Police Sgt. Darren Thompson (left) on Thursday.

Three-quarters of property investigations focus on the crime

By J.D. HILLARD
OF THE REGISTER-PAJARONIAN

The arrest last week in Aptos of a man who identity deputies said used stolen credit cards to make thousands of dollars in online purchases was an example of a growing crime that leaves low-income, elderly and Latino residents particularly vulnerable.

While the hours of phone calls and series of letters required to clean up after even some basic forms of identity theft present a serious hassle to anyone, the trouble increases the longer you let it go. That's why Latino, elderly and low-income residents — those among the least likely to use their own credit and discover a problem — can come up against the worst problems from the crime, said Henry Martin, an attorney for the Watsonville Law Center.

"They're just not checking their credit reports," Martin said.

Identity theft provides criminals with fraudulent access to money or property and has grown to take up about three-quarters of the caseload for Santa Cruz County sheriff's investigations working in south county, according to Detective Kevin Coyne.

In the Aptos case, investigators following up on online purchases of jewelry that involved the fraudulent use of credit arrested 21-year-old John Kennedy, Coyne said. Three other people drove up in a

Latino, elderly and low-income residents, — those among the least likely to use their own credit and discover a problem — can come up against the worst problems from the crime.

stolen car while investigators were on the scene. Altogether, five arrests have resulted for the investigation of Kennedy, Coyne said.

The case exemplifies a common situation in identity theft, Coyne said. As often happens, two of the suspects were charged with drug-related offenses, one of the charges was possession of methamphetamine for sale.

"People that are using methamphetamine just don't seem to care about anything except themselves," Coyne said.

Luckily, the steps to protecting yourself from most instances of this type of

crime are fairly simple. Anywhere your personal information, birth date, Social Security number and bank accounts end up on paper, hide that paper or destroy it. In addition, once a year, you are allowed a free glimpse of your credit report on the Web site annualcreditreport.com. Check this information and alert creditors immediately if the report is inaccurate.

The Watsonville Law Center, established four years ago to provide legal services to low-income residents, offers several services to help clients respond to identity theft. Martin offers workshops in preventing identity theft. He has given the workshops at Watsonville Public Library, senior and community centers and, most recently, at a meeting of the Sons in Retirement.

In addition, when clients find themselves mired in intractable disputes with creditors, the center offers legal representation to help them recover. With steady responses, clients can usually clear up these problems in a few months, Martin said.

It can happen to anyone. The case of Watsonville, Police Sgt. Darren Thompson demonstrates the wide swath of the population — as many as 10 million U.S. victims as of 2005, according to the Federal Trade Commission — has suffered from

IDENTITY

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the crime in 1996, a thief used Thompson's personal information to for several large purchases.

"The first purchase was a Suburban, and then he went shopping from there," he said.

After the thief cost Thompson as much as \$500,000 by fouling up the financing of his home, a store in Reno, Nev., called Watsonville Police Department to check on the credit of someone using Thompson's information for a purchase. Frances DeHino of WPD relayed the call to Thompson,

who was home at the time. When a store employee in Reno learned that the real Darren Thompson was at home in Watsonville, they chased the fraud into a parking lot and noted his license plate number. The plate number led to his arrest.

Thompson's experience also exemplifies the most troubling characteristic of the crime. The man who cost him hundreds of thousands of dollars obtained his information through an associate who worked at a business Thompson patronized. While you can easily prevent the most common thefts of your personal information, you can't guarantee that everyone you do business with will do the same.

SAN JOSE MERCURY NEWS
(CALIFORNIA)

August 25, 2003 Monday MORNING FINAL EDITION

SILENT VICTIMS OF IMMIGRATION FRAUD; FOR IMMIGRANTS SEEKING LEGAL RESIDENCE, CONSULTANTS CAN OFFER HOPE; AND DECEIT

BYLINE: EDWIN GARCIA, Mercury News
SECTION: FRONT; Pg. 1A

When immigrants in this farming community need help securing green cards, work permits or citizenship, they go to a woman known simply as Gladys. Gladys Jimenez has served thousands of immigrants since she opened her immigration consulting business nine years ago on a crowded strip alongside taquerias and 99-cent stores.

But hundreds of her clients now face possible deportation after federal immigration officials concluded that paperwork filed on their behalf by Gladys Immigration Service may be fraudulent. In some cases, applications for work permits apparently claim immigrants lived in the United States when they did not, working for a farm that's existence cannot be verified. Separately, the Monterey County District Attorney's Office has begun an inquiry into her business.

Allegations of fraud against consultants such as Jimenez are common in California, where breakneck immigration has created a great demand for help in navigating a bureaucracy that holds the keys to citizenship...

Lawyers at the non-profit Watsonville Law Center, have helped former Jimenez clients fill out consumer complaint forms that were forwarded to the Monterey County District Attorney's Office over the past year...

SERVING THE PAJARO VALLEY

Santa Cruz Sentinel

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LINES

WATSONVILLE

Nonprofit law center wins more than \$100K

The Community Bridges Watsonville Law Center has received more than \$100,000 to continue providing legal services for people who can't afford legal representation.

The funds were made available in April by the San Francisco-based law firm, Kennitzer, Anderson, Barron & Ogilvie, which specializes in consumer law, so Watsonville residents be afforded consumer protection when warranted.

Watsonville Law Center is a program of Community Bridges, a family of services supporting residents in Santa Cruz County.

For information or legal advice, call the center at 722-2845.

Law clinic seeks to educate, fight for community

By AMIA PEARSON
SENTINEL CORRESPONDENT

WATSONVILLE — Dori Rose Inda sits at a round white table in the conference room of the Watsonville Law Center, a nonprofit legal aid clinic on Main Street. The small room is also a kitchen, storage area and hallway, but it's immaculate.

Inda founded the center in December 2002 to provide legal services and education to low-income people in Watsonville. Since it opened, it has helped thousands of people, documented and undocumented, understand their rights and fight for them.

The center — funded by private foundations, government agencies and donations — helps clients deal with consumer fraud, fight for workers' compensation and fix their credit, among other things. It also conducts outreach with public seminars and TV and radio announcements.

"Our legal services are really geared toward education," Inda



Dori Rose Inda founded the Watsonville Law Center. Behind her are Henry Martin, Rafael Albarran, Monica Pereira, Diana Rocha and Sara Lipowitz.

said. "When there's a legal problem we try to teach people about the broader issue."

Working with another law firm in San Francisco, the center recently settled a class action lawsuit against Super Taqueria. And it's currently helping with a class action lawsuit against the market chain La Esperanza.

"It's about whether people were paid minimum wage, whether they were paid overtime, whether they were given meals and breaks as required by law," Inda said.

The La Esperanza case is in litigation so she was unable to

provide details, but she said the settlement with Super Taqueria resulted in workers being reimbursed for unpaid overtime.

Inda said success stories such as this are why she founded the center. As a law student at Santa Clara University School of Law she interned at the school's legal clinic. She was commuting from her home in Watsonville at the time, and she noticed there were no legal clinics in Santa Cruz County to help people who were undocumented.

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