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Wednesday, June 17, 2020

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PHOTOS BY ELIAS FUNEZ/EFUNEZ@THEUNION.COM

Grass Valley police make an arrest without incident along Nevada City Highway Tuesday morning.

'Continuing the conversation'

Nevada County law enforcement speaks out on acceptable use of force

By Liz Kellar
Staff Writer

In the wake of George Floyd's May 25 death while in the custody of Minneapolis police, protests have swept the globe. And with those protests have come a number of efforts to reform law enforcement and prevent excessive use of force.

Some have advocated defunding police departments and redirecting funding to social programs. Earlier this week, congressional Democrats introduced The Justice in Policing Act of 2020, which would ban chokeholds, establish a national database to track police misconduct and prohibit certain no-knock warrants, among other initiatives.

Campaign Zero, an organization dedicated to ending police violence in America, made headlines early on with its 8 Can't Wait campaign that urged the immediate adoption of eight policies: Banning chokeholds and strangleholds; requiring de-escalation; requiring a



Grass Valley police officers keep tabs on the large Black Lives Matter protest from behind the Grass Valley Police Department on South Auburn Street June 6. The officers kept a minimal presence yet remained available if needed.

warning before shooting; requiring that all alternatives be exhausted before shooting; requiring officers to intervene when excessive force is being used; banning shooting at moving vehicles; establishing a use-of-force continuum; and requiring comprehensive reporting.

Local law enforcement entities were quick to denounce Floyd's death — but their response has not ended there. Nevada City Police Chief Chad Ellis, Grass

Valley Police Chief Alex Gammegard and Nevada County Sheriff Shannan Moon all are on board with a task force on racism still in the formation stage, with participants including Sierra Nevada Memorial Hospital, the Nevada County Superintendent of Schools and Jamal Walker of Creating Communities Beyond Bias.

The task force issued a statement Tuesday, saying it's started "the process of

creating systemic change by better understanding the lived experience of people of color in Nevada County."

"I just want the community to know the Grass Valley Police Department wants to listen to the people who can help inform us of how we can do better," Gammegard said. "By us making policy changes without having that conversation or listening, is not the most effective way to make meaningful progress."

STATE LAWS PASSED LAST YEAR

All three law enforcement leaders are reviewing their own policies dealing with use of force. Many of the "8 Can't Wait" proposals already are mandated in California, they note.

"One of the big things to point out in California, that is unique, is that we have SB 230," Gammegard said.

That Senate bill, signed into law last fall, mandates law enforcement agencies to establish policy guidelines to use deadly force

POLICE, A6

'A tendency to homogenize people of color'

Reporters of color from The Union's past, present discuss local experiences, what they make of America's moment

By Sam Corey
Staff writer

As the coronavirus, an economic recession and, particularly, widespread protests calling for racial justice rage on, many people believe the media is changing — specifically those inside the industry.

Staff members of news organizations, which publish stories on a variety of print, online, television, radio, podcast and social media platforms, are challenging the publication of certain stories and are questioning who makes up a newsroom and why.

After publishing an incendiary column by U.S. Sen. Tom Cotton (R-Arkansas), much of the New York Times staff revolted, leading to the resignation of one editor

and reassignment of another. Variety's editor in chief stepped down after members of her news organization said she wasn't doing enough to promote diversity. The Philadelphia Inquirer's top editor left after the paper published a story that read "Buildings Matter, Too," which garnered ire from the paper's staff.

What is acceptable to publish is changing, and some journalists are hoping to change the landscape of newsrooms, increasing the hiring of journalists that reflect the makeup of the country's demographics. Today, 77% of newsroom employees are white, non-Hispanic, and 61% are men, according to the Poynter Institute.

JOURNALISTS, A6

Competency concern raised in double homicide case

By Liz Kellar
Staff Writer

A doubt has been declared as to the mental state of a man accused of killing his mother and stepfather.

Dennis Lee Wallace, 60, has been charged with two counts of murder, as well as a special circumstance of multiple murder, after Patricia Breedlove, 80, and Robert Breedlove, 87, were found dead on May 27 from what appeared to be blunt force trauma.

During a hearing last Thursday in Nevada County Superior Court, a doubt was declared as to Wallace's mental competency, said Assistant District Attorney Chris Walsh. Criminal proceedings have been suspended and a psychological evaluation was ordered.



Dennis Wallace

Wallace will return to court on July 23, records state. He remained in custody

Tuesday without bail. Authorities have said the couple was found in their Greenhorn Road residence after deputies responded to a 911 call and were met by an agitated Wallace outside the house.

Wallace, who was appointed a public defender, faces imprisonment in state prison for life without the possibility of parole if he is found guilty.

Contact reporter Liz Kellar at 530-477-4236 or by email at lizk@theunion.com.

COVID-19 cases climb to 57 in county

The Union staff

There are now 57 COVID-19 cases in Nevada County.

The county's 55 cases on Monday inched up two on

Tuesday, with the new cases being in western county.

Eastern county has 41 cases, unchanged since Monday.

Fifty of the county's cases have recovered. There are

six active cases, and one death.

There have been 4,286 coronavirus tests performed in the county.

California has 156,517 COVID-19 cases, and 5,139

deaths linked to the virus.

Nationwide, there are 2,134,973 cases, and 116,854 deaths. The number of recoveries is 583,503.

Nevada County recorded its first case on March 16.

WEATHER

H: 83°
L: 57°

See full forecast, Page A9

Sunny



OBITUARIES

Louise Devitt
Shirley Griffin

Page A5

Relief Fund looks for more applicants

A second application round for the Nevada County Relief Fund starts today, with awardees expected to be announced July 7.

"Safety net" nonprofits and small businesses can apply here: www.nevcorelief.org/ apply. The application period ends June 24.

This will be the second round of grants issued by the Relief Fund. It's already awarded \$210,000 to eight safety net nonprofits and

28 small businesses, a news release states.

"We hope the community will continue to donate to the fund so we can give a similar amount in Round Two," said Sherry Bartolucci, co-chairwoman of the Community Advisory Council. "We need everyone to help us reach our fundraising goal of \$500,000 by the Fourth of July."

People can donate to the Relief Fund at www.nevcorelief.org.

— The Union staff

INDEX

Advice	A7	Lottery	A7
Blotter	A2	Opinion	A4
Comics	B2	Photo Page	A8
Cryptoquote	A7	Sudoku	A7

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