



Photographs by CAROLYN COLE Los Angeles Times

**CHRISTOPHER GARCIA**, 10, center, sits with fellow Central American migrants in the Rio Grande Valley of Texas on March 25 while awaiting transport to a U.S. Customs and Border Protection holding area.

# MIGRANT KIDS LEFT WAITING FOR DAYS

As more children arrive at the border, delays in releasing them to shelters or relatives worsen at Border Patrol facilities

BY MOLLY HENNESSY-FISKE  
REPORTING FROM LA JOYA, TEXAS

The 10-year-old boy crossed the Rio Grande with hundreds of other migrants last month. But he was essentially alone.

That is how Christopher Garcia says he managed to travel to the U.S. border over the course of three months from his home in one of the world's most dangerous cities — San Pedro Sula, Honduras — without an adult: by blending into groups of older children and families.

Christopher, a skinny athletic boy with curly brown hair and an impish smile, departed at an age when street gangs that dominate his neighborhood had started to recruit him. His father, who worked at a clothes factory, had tried to migrate to the U.S. himself in the past but was deported the same day he crossed the border.

[See Children, A4]



**TREKKING** alone from Honduras, Christopher carried only his birth certificate with his great-aunt's phone number written on the back.

# After YouTuber's death, nurse scrutinized

BY DANIEL MILLER

Stevie Ryan seemed ready to break out of a rut.

Her pioneering work as an early YouTuber had led to a VH1 show, but "Stevie TV" was canceled after two seasons and Ryan subsequently struggled to chart a course in Hollywood. For a period, she had stopped going to

auditions altogether.

In spring 2017, however, she recommitted to her career, telling her manager that she was ready to get back to work.

Around the same time, Ryan was also allegedly starting a new relationship — one with Gerald Baltz, a nurse practitioner who for two years had provided her with psychiatric care, issu-

ing her prescriptions for several drugs used to treat mental health disorders.

"We just exchanged numbers and he had a meltdown over it being unethical," Ryan texted a friend in April 2017, according to a legal document.

Three months later, Ryan took her own life. Her July 1, 2017, suicide at the age of 33 staggered her friends and

family.

"You don't expect to be making funeral arrangements for your daughter — that's devastating," said her father, Steve Ryan. "There's just so many unanswered questions."

Now, an ongoing legal proceeding brought by the head of the California Board of Registered Nursing

[See Ryan, A14]

# English learners faltering amid school closures

Without intervention, a million students, mostly Spanish-speaking, could fall permanently behind.

BY PALOMA ESQUIVEL

Aida Vega's 13-year-old daughter, who has attended Los Angeles schools since kindergarten and is in eighth grade, still struggles to read and write English.

Vega has long pushed for extra help so her child can master the language. Early last year, she felt confident that a breakthrough was at hand — her daughter's teachers had a plan to start additional tutoring in March.

Then schools closed. Tutoring was canceled, except for a short stint during the fall semester. Vega says her daughter's schooling has become a constant struggle. There are days when Vega has found her in tears next to her computer.

In the fall, after teachers said her daughter was failing all her classes, Vega began taking jobs cleaning homes and offices to pay \$45 an hour for a private tutor. But she worries her daughter is still falling behind.

"It's tough to see the light," Vega said. "The impact of this time is going to be big. It's going to be bad."

More than 11 million students in California, nearly 20%, are considered English learners. By almost every measure of academic success — graduation rates, college preparation, dropout rates, state standards — these students rank among the lowest-achieving groups. And that was before pandemic-forced campus closures. One year later, this massive population of students is at great risk of intractable educational loss, experts said.

"It's an educational pandemic," said Martha Hernandez, director of Californians Together, a nonprofit that advocates for English learners. "We already had issues of an achievement gap, opportunity gaps, lack of access, lack of equity. Now that's just exacerbated, and it will be a huge challenge. It will have a big impact for many, many years."

She and other experts, parents and educators say

[See Learners, A12]

## Vaccine takeover by Blue Shield

Mendocino clinics find fault. CALIFORNIA, B3

# How many jobs are PPP loans saving? Nobody's counting

BY SARAH D. WIRE

WASHINGTON — A year after Congress created the Paycheck Protection Program, taxpayers don't know how many jobs were saved by the nearly \$1 trillion in forgivable loans issued to businesses during the pandemic.

And economists and government watchdog groups say they probably never will — because the government didn't count.

The PPP was pitched as a way to save millions of jobs threatened during the recession caused by the COVID-19 lockdowns. But the Small Business Administration under President Trump — and now under President Biden — hasn't tracked figures on jobs saved, despite a

legal requirement to do so.

"No one will actually know except for the recipients whatever happened with the loan and with the jobs," said Sean Moulton, senior policy analyst at the Project on Government Oversight, a watchdog group.

The SBA's initial estimate of 50 million jobs "supported" by the PPP was quickly dismissed as wildly inaccurate. Treasury Department economists place the number closer to 19 million, while economists studying the program estimate it's between 2 million and 5 million.

Over 8.7 million forgivable loans worth \$961 billion have been made so far. And Biden just signed a two-month extension, allowing

[See Loans, A15]

## COLUMN ONE

# Bid to adorn utility boxes goes south on Vermont

An artist gave L.A. a gift. Then came the vandal.



KENT NISHIMURA Los Angeles Times

**ARTIST** Terrance Whitten takes a call at Pan Pacific Park last May, when he was homeless.

BY DOUG SMITH

The trip from his new apartment in Glassell Park to his post office box in Hollywood may have been mostly tedious. But on this day, Terrance Whitten looked forward to one glorious moment.

As the Metro 780 bus climbed away from the L.A. River past the handsome facades and proud deodars of Los Feliz Boulevard, then turned south on Vermont Avenue, his anticipation

[See Artist, A8]

## Several Jordan officials held

Prince releases video tearing into leadership after being confined to home for "security" reasons. WORLD, A3

## Politics of fracking ban

A wider crackdown on oil and gas could have implications for Newsum. CALIFORNIA, B1

## Asian American wealth disparity

Attacks reveal a story of low-paid service workers in society's shadows. NATION, A6

**Weather** Increasing clouds. L.A. Basin: 75/55. B10

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DARRON CUMMINGS Associated Press

## HEARTBREAK FOR UCLA

Johnny Juzang and Jaime Jaquez Jr. hug after the Bruins' loss to Gonzaga. The Bulldogs will play Baylor, which defeated Houston, for the title. SPORTS, D1