

TODAY'S FORECAST



Mostly sunny, warm  
High 95 — Low 64  
Details: C8

Wednesday  
August 27, 2008

50 Cents  
Designated areas higher

# Daily News

DailyNews.com

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## BUSINESS A16

JURY AWARDS \$100 MILLION TO MATTEL

## S'MORES

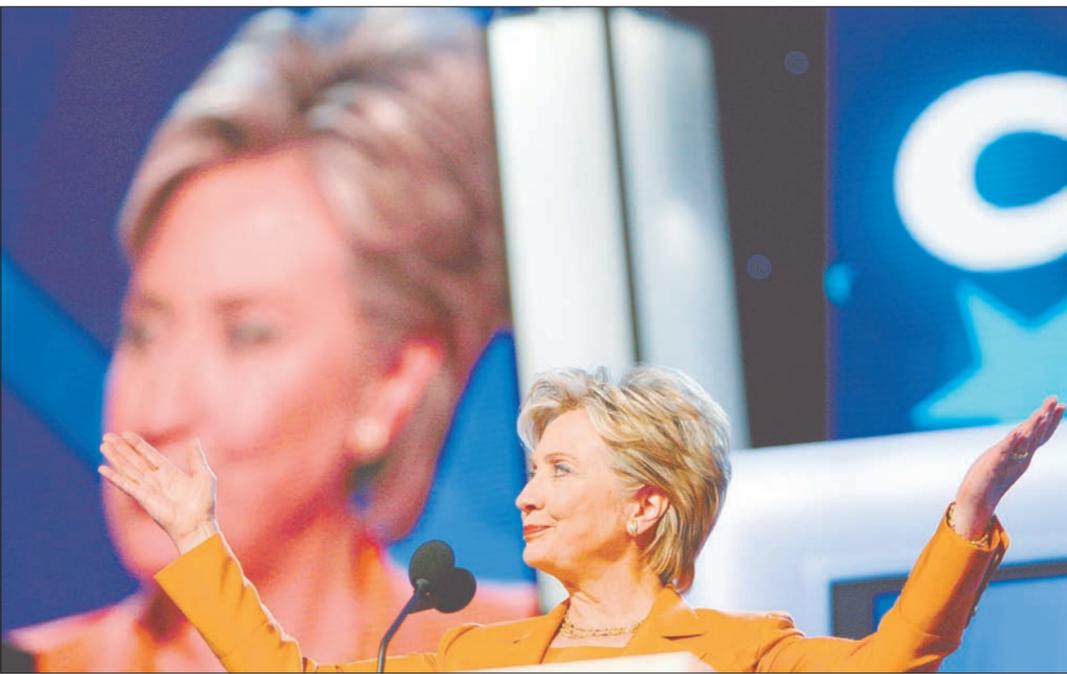
Grown-up versions of the gooey concoctions are on a trio of L.A. restaurant dessert menus

LA.COM L1



## VOTE 2008 NATIONAL ELECTION

# 'I support Barack Obama'



Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton reacts to the crowd as she takes the stage at the Democratic National Convention in Denver on Tuesday.



A sea of signs for Hillary Rodham Clinton crowds the floor as the New York senator and former presidential candidate speaks at the DNC on Tuesday.

## Party runner-up Hillary Clinton asks for unity, healing of wounds

By Scott Shepard and Ken Herman  
Cox News Service

DENVER — Democrats tried to bind the wounds of the longest presidential fight in their party's history Tuesday night, with the vanquished Hillary Clinton seeking to rally her still-disappointed legions behind the victorious Barack Obama.

While the convention keynote speaker, former Virginia Gov. Mark Warner, echoed the economic populism and much-touted "post-partisan" message of Obama, it fell to Clinton to tackle job No. 1 for the Democrats before leaving Denver this week — uniting all factions behind the party's soon-to-be nominee.

And the Pepsi Center, the sports arena housing the convention, was packed to capacity in anticipation of Clinton's appearance, the end of her historic and unprecedented bid for the party's presidential nomination.

Clinton, who came closer to winning a major party's nomination than any woman ever, called herself "a proud supporter of Barack Obama," and urged her Democrats "to unite as a single party with a single purpose" — to defeat Republican John McCain.

### Decision near for McCain

■ Republican John McCain is hours away from choosing his V.P. **A13**

### Today's top speakers at DNC

■ The headline speaker today will be Sen. Joe Biden of Delaware. **A12**



For video and more photos, go to [dailynews.com](http://dailynews.com).

DEMS/A12

# County's reputation crashes

**CLAIMS:** DCFS audit suggests many social workers either liars or really bad drivers.

By Troy Anderson  
Staff Writer

In yet another stinging audit of Los Angeles County's Department of Children and Family Services, a new investigation has found that hundreds of social workers in the past two years racked up \$1.1 million in vehicle-damage claims that included a host of questionable payouts, officials said Tuesday.

Auditors said one social worker sought reimbursement for vehicle damage while off-duty, others forged supervisors' signatures on claims and dozens of claims for windshield damage were paid out at an average cost of \$950 when the usual cost is about \$265.

In one case, auditors said, a social worker claimed a vehicle was totaled and filed a claim exceeding \$10,000 — more than the vehicle's fair market value — even though a police report described the accident as a minor "fender bender."

And overall, auditors said a

## AUDIT HIGHLIGHTS

■ 360 of 690 claims between July 2005 and November 2007 were for single-vehicle accidents based solely on employees' own statements that they were work-related.

■ 80 employees filed about 170 claims — an average of two or more per employee.

■ One employee submitted four claims in a year, all single-vehicle accidents, totaling about \$6,000.

■ One employee filed two claims totaling \$5,800 for damage that occurred on days the employee's timecard indicated she was not at work.

Source: County of Los Angeles Department of Auditor-Controller  
See **A14** for more

widespread lack of management oversight and controls in reimbursing the county's 3,000 social workers for work-related vehicle damages from July 2005 to November 2007

AUDIT/A14

## TOP OF THE NEWS

■ SAT scores for the Class of 2008 remain at the lowest level in nearly a decade. **A10**

■ Hurricane Gustav grows into a Category 1 storm with 90-mph winds as it rams Haiti. **A15**

■ United Online Inc. completes its \$441 million acquisition of flower retailer FTD Group Inc. **A16**



Ariana Cubillos  
The Associated Press

# As Valley home prices go lower, some think bottom here or near

## VALLEY HOME SALES

This chart shows how the mortgage meltdown has impacted the housing market in the San Fernando Valley.

MONTH	MEDIAN PRICE	ANNUALIZED CHANGE*
July '07	\$639,500	4%
Aug.	\$650,000	6.3
Sept.	\$620,000	0.8
Oct.	\$589,000	-4.2
Nov.	\$580,000	-5.2
Dec.	\$580,000	-7.2
Jan. '08	\$525,000	-16.7
Feb.	\$520,000	-15.4
March	\$500,000	-19.4
April	\$505,000	-19.8
May	\$485,000	-26.5
June	\$472,750	-27.8
July	\$453,500	-29.1

\*Percentage change from one year earlier.  
Source: DataQuick Information Systems

## FORECLOSURES:

Record pace comes amid one-year drop in median value.

By Gregory J. Wilcox  
Staff Writer

San Fernando Valley housing prices continued their free fall in July, plunging 29 percent as foreclosures mounted at a record pace, an economic research center said Tuesday.

The median price tumbled to \$453,500, down nearly \$20,000 from June and a whopping \$186,000 below the median in July 2007, said the San Fernando Valley Economic Research Center at California State University, Northridge.

At the same time, foreclosures jumped 221 percent,

flooding the market with deeply discounted homes seized by lenders. Sales ticked up 5 percent.

"The problem right now is we're getting foreclosures ... faster than sales are taking them off the market," said Daniel Blake, the center's director and an economics professor at CSUN.

In the Valley, 844 homes lost their homes to foreclosure last month, while 1,509 more received notices of default — the first step in the foreclosure process.

July's total compares with 803 foreclosures recorded in June and 263 a year earlier.

Blake said he expects the total number of foreclosures in the third quarter, which will end Sept. 30, to surpass the second-quarter record

HOMES/A14



For a database of foreclosures in and around the Valley, go to [dailynews.com](http://dailynews.com).



Alberto Ochoa picks up his food at the MEND emergency food program in Pacoima. "I wasn't always poor," he said, "and I don't intend to remain poor."  
David Crane  
Staff Photographer

## Conditions are poor in Northeast Valley

**DATA:** Overall, more in state living below the poverty line.

By Tony Castro  
Staff Writer

Life for Bradley D'Aunoy of North Hills is all about making sense of numbers: 1,375, 971, 404.

He has to raise his family of seven on a \$1,375 monthly disability check. And when he pays his mortgage of \$971, he is left with \$404 to feed, clothe and take care of himself, his

wife, a 16-year-old daughter and four grandchildren who live with them.

"It's hell trying to make ends meet," said D'Aunoy, 48, a former studio animatronics and robotics machinist down on his luck. "All you can do is sit there and wonder if you can cover the next bill."

D'Aunoy is among the poorest of the poor in the San Fernando Valley and part of the poverty equation in California, where Census Bureau data released Tuesday showed that

CENSUS/A14



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## YOUR GUIDE TO SOUTHLAND EVENTS

If you're hosting an event or want to list anything going on, just go to [dailynews.com](http://dailynews.com) and look for the Calendar section. There you can submit your event online and it can go directly into the newspaper.



## HADDOCK IN THE PADDOCK

NASCAR comes to Fontana this weekend. Tim Haddock breaks down the latest in the world of auto racing at his blog. Go to [blogs.dailynews.com/haddock](http://blogs.dailynews.com/haddock).

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