

SANTA BARBARA NEWS-PRESS



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NIK BLASKOVICH / NEWS-PRESS
Talia Ortega Vestal, 16, left, and Natelie Mowers, 10, were selected as the 2014 Spirit of Fiesta and Junior Spirit on Saturday.

Divine duo

Old Spanish Days announces Spirit, Junior Spirit of Fiesta

By **TED MILLS**
NEWS-PRESS CORRESPONDENT

There were cheers and some tears on Saturday afternoon when this year’s Spirit and Junior Spirit of Fiesta were announced at the Santa Barbara High School Theater.

After a two-hour audition process attended by family and friends who packed out the theater like a rock concert — and with the decibel level to match — El Presidente Dennis Rickard announced the two young dancers who will go on

to represent the beauty and skill of Fiesta.

This year’s Junior Spirit is 10-year-old Natalie Mowers, who attends Hollister School. Her senior, the Spirit of Fiesta, is Talia Ortega Vestal, 16, a student of Santa Barbara High.

In four months’ time they will be two of the most visible participants in Old Spanish Days. The Spirit and Junior Spirit dance on opening night at the Mission, lead parades and perform at many other gatherings.

Please see **FIESTA** on **A7**

Couple: Truck was on fire before deadly bus crash

By **FENIT NIRAPPIL** and **JOAN LOWY**
ASSOCIATED PRESS

ORLAND — A couple said a FedEx tractor-trailer was already on fire when it careened across a median, sideswiped their car and slammed into a bus carrying high school students, adding a new twist to the investigation of a crash that

killed 10 people.

Initial reports by police indicated the truck swerved to avoid a sedan that was traveling in the same direction in this town about 100 miles north of Sacramento, then went across the median. There was no mention of the truck being on fire.

Please see **CRASH** on **A12**

Memories of Mallory

“As we drove, there were multiple calls from the hospital asking how long it would take us to be there and I instinctively knew that this had a deeper, more alarming meaning.”

Matt Dies,
father of Mallory Rae Dies



Mallory Rae Dies in the Santa Barbara Cottage Hospital ICU with her mother, Raeona.

COURTESY PHOTO

A family loses daughter when a motor vehicle becomes a murder weapon

By **PETER LANCE**
SPECIAL TO THE NEWS-PRESS

EDITOR’S NOTE: This is the first in a five-part series on the death of Mallory Rae Dies following a DUI-related hit-and-run, the man behind the wheel, Raymond Morua, at the time a district representative for Rep. Lois Capps, and the length various officials and politically-connected individuals went to protect and later distance themselves from Mr. Morua.

Just after midnight on Dec. 6, 2013, Matt Dies was asleep at home in the Riverside County town of Corona when the phone rang. His eldest son, Matthew, was calling with the shocking news that Mr. Dies’ only daughter, Mallory, 27, had been struck by a hit-and-run driver who was suspected of being drunk.

Worse, doctors at Santa Barbara Cottage Hospital reported severe trauma to her head.

Moments later, Mr. Dies woke up Raeona, his wife of 30 years, to deliver the news that no parent ever wants to hear. They got dressed quickly and began a torturous three-hour drive north to Santa Barbara in the dead of night. “As we drove,” Mr. Dies later wrote, “there were multiple calls from the hospital asking how long it would take us to be there and I instinctively knew that this had a deeper, more alarming meaning.”

Five days later, at 3:15 p.m. Dec. 11, Mallory Rae Dies was declared brain dead and taken off life support. Her organs were used to save five other lives including a 28-year-old father of two. A memorial service at Shoreline Park was attended by hundreds of her personal friends. Mal, as friends knew her, had been a double major in history and law and society at UCSB. She graduated in 2008 and worked as a bartender at Tonic, a downtown club.

Please see **MALLORY** on **A10**

Realtors: Doors shutting on some first-time home buyers

By **STEVE SINOVIC**
NEWS-PRESS STAFF WRITER

Many first-time buyers with good jobs and the incomes they believe are sufficient to swing mortgage payments are finding it tough to get the buy-in from lenders to purchase entry-level homes.

A big obstacle standing in their way continues to be stiff competition at the lower price points from deep-pocketed investors eager to rent out the residences.

That’s according to several Santa Barbara real estate agents, who say that it’s challenging to close deals for local first-time clients purchasing a condominium or single-family home.

Besides vying with all-cash buyers in a low-inventory housing market, attempts to buy a first home can be short-circuited by a tightening in mortgage lending rules that went into effect earlier this year.

In addition, any consumer debt not mentioned on an application

can come back to bite them.

“First-time buyers have to have squeaky-clean credit,” said Realtor Gary Woods, who tracks sales trends and compiles statistics for the Santa Barbara Association of Realtors.

While the last two years are described as an exceptional rebound period in which record low interest rates and pent-up demand spurred sales at all price points, it’s particularly difficult for those wanting to get on the first rung of the South Coast’s property ladder.

First-time buyers — an anomaly in the luxury-driven South Coast real estate market — are frustrated seeing deals fall out of escrow.

“For some reason, I’ve had (first-time) buyers wander over to the car lot” right when they are in escrow, said Mr. Woods.

Taking out an auto loan can derail a mortgage loan application, he said.

“You want to strangle them,” Mr. Woods said. “I tell them to not even buy a stick of gum.”

During the downturn, the hottest sector of the housing market from Carpinteria to Goleta was at the low end. Big drops in values created a short window of opportunity for some lucky locals to snap up distressed properties, he said.

Now the short sales and bank repos have worked through the system and dried up. Coupled with tighter lending regulations, the “low end” is cooling off, prices are higher and competition is fierce.

Realtor John Bahura of Village Properties, who defines the low end in South County as housing in the \$350,000-\$800,000 range, said deals at the lowest range on the scale are within reach of the incomes of some first-time home buyers.

He described one scenario in which a one-bedroom condo selling for \$400,000 required a young working professional to be pulling down \$100,000 a year. Or that same income could be split between a couple who meet the debt-to-income ratio of no more than 43 percent required for

conventional loans.

“We are finding the criteria for loans is much more difficult than last year,” said Mr. Bahura, relating the experience of some of his clients. “It

Please see **HOMES** on **A11**



◻ SILVERHORN



STEVE MALONE/NEWS-PRESS

First-time buyers are encountering tight lending rules and fierce competition for homes they can afford.

SUNDAY

NATION & WORLD / B1
World’s top financial officials predict strengthening global economy

LIFE / D1
SB resident and actor Don Murray recalls Marilyn Monroe

newspress.com

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Memorial near site of crash still maintained



STEVE MALONE / NEWS-PRESS FILE PHOTO
The memorial to Mallory on Anacapa Street, the scene of the hit-and-run that led to her death.

MALLORY

Continued from Page A1

The memorial at Anacapa and Haley streets, close to where Mallory was struck down, is continually replenished with flowers and candles four months after the crash and Vow4Mal.org, a foundation set up to stop those who drink and drive, has already raised \$100,000 in her name. The “Mallory Rae” support page on Facebook had more than 8,100 “likes,” prompting Facebook founder, Mark Zuckerberg, to send the foundation a box of yellow T-shirts.

Mallory’s favorite color was yellow.

No DUI traffic death in recent memory has polarized the city of Santa Barbara more than the crash outside EOS Lounge in the 500 block of Anacapa Street, where Raymond Victor Morua III allegedly struck Mallory Dies at a speed witnesses estimated at 40 mph. After reportedly pausing to eye the body, Mr. Morua fled the scene, only to crash his 2007 Dodge Caliber into a palm tree on Cabrillo Boulevard near State Street, about a half-mile away. This following a high-speed pursuit in which he was dogged by a young

motorist who witnessed the hit-and-run and risked his own life to bring Mr. Morua to the ground.

Mr. Morua, then a district representative for U.S. Rep. Lois Capps, D-Santa Barbara, was arrested and allegedly found to have a blood alcohol level of .17, more than twice the legal limit. He’s been in custody ever since.

The Santa Barbara County District Attorney’s Office filed charges of murder, gross vehicular manslaughter while intoxicated and leaving the scene of an accident causing death.

Mr. Morua pleaded not guilty during a court appearance in March and a guilty plea may be in the works.

Before the collision, he attended the Santa Barbara Independent’s annual Holiday Bash at The Savoy nightclub. Immediately after Mallory’s death, Mrs. Capps’ office took the position that Mr. Morua attended the party on “his own volition.” Her office also claimed Mr. Morua was fired on Dec. 8, two days after the hit-and-run.

But a four-month investigation has uncovered proof that Raymond Morua was not only working for the congresswoman throughout the Independent’s party, he continued to press the flesh on her behalf until he left The Savoy at 11:03 p.m. He then went to a cigar lounge next door where he met with a veteran whose case he was helping to resolve for Mrs. Capps’ office — evidence that he continued on the job through 11:14 p.m., at which time he exchanged a series of texts with his supervisor, Mollie Culver, Mrs. Capps’ district director. That text exchange ended at 11:19 p.m. when Mr. Morua paid his bill at the cigar lounge.

That was just 45 minutes before the DUI collision that would ultimately claim Mallory’s life.

Then, as late as Dec. 9, 2013, three days after Mr. Morua was arrested, Ms. Culver went so far as to write Mr. Morua’s signature three times on official documents from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs in a scheme to get him out of jail and into a Los Angeles treatment facility.

Those forms, written in Ms. Culver’s own hand, authorized the release of Mr. Morua’s medical records and sought to apply for federally funded treatment for his alcohol “addiction.”

The proof that Mr. Morua was

“on the job” through Dec. 5, up until minutes before the fatal collision, is critical to any hope that Mr. Dies and his wife have of collecting damages from the federal government. And while the congresswoman has steadfastly denied it since Dec. 11, the evidence unearthed for this series proves definitively that while first embracing Mr. Morua as their employee and going to extraordinary lengths to get him out of jail and out of town, Mrs. Capps’ office did a 180-degree turn after Mallory Dies was taken off life support, lied publicly about the date of Mr. Morua’s dismissal, and adopted the position that neither Lois Capps nor the federal government were liable for Mallory’s death.

Perhaps more alarming, the lawyer for the House of Representatives who is representing Mrs. Capps petitioned Santa Barbara County District Attorney Joyce Dudley to “segregate” evidence on Mr. Morua’s office cellphone (seized after his arrest) in what Robert Stoll, the Dies’ attorney, characterized as an attempt to “sanitize” evidence.

CONFLICTING STATEMENTS FROM CAPPS STAFF

On Dec. 9, Mrs. Capps’ press secretary, Chris Meagher, himself a former crime reporter for the Independent, said that while Mr. Morua “excelled in his duties... his actions that led to this tragedy are inexcusable.”

As late as Dec. 19, however, Ms. Culver texted Teresa Montoya, Mr. Morua’s fiancé, expressing her “love” for Mr. Morua. A civil claim for damages had been filed by Mr. Stoll the day before and in that same text Ms. Culver wrote, “the attorney for the house of representatives says now that lois is involved in a legal action, we as staff can’t have communication with raymond until it’s over. This is really upsetting us all so much!!!!” She then added, “pls tell raymond ... we love him and we’ll still be there when this is over.”

However, six days earlier, in an interview with Jaycee Hunter, the lead Santa Barbara Police Department detective investigating the case, Ms. Culver claimed that Mr. Morua was not representing Mrs. Capps at the Independent party. In fact, she went so far as to suggest that he’d misappropriated an invitation to the event from a “stack” of

invites in Mrs. Capps’ East Carrillo Street office.

Mr. Morua’s family is incensed by the treatment he’s received.

“We just feel that after he served his country and this congresswoman so well for so many years, he’s been utterly abandoned,” says Albert Canchola, Mr. Morua’s stepfather. “This is a double tragedy. Not only was a daughter taken from her family, but our son, who showed so much promise, has been taken from us. And while we can never equate the two losses, we are shocked that after the commendable work he did in the Army and for Lois Capps, and after her own staff tried to help him at first, they’ve now cut him loose.”

What follows is a detailed account of Raymond Morua’s actions in the months, weeks, days and minutes leading up to that fateful collision on Anacapa Street.

CAPTAIN AMERICA

Raymond Victor Morua III was born in Santa Paula on March 5, 1981. In grammar school, he was an all star in the AYSO soccer league. From the age of 8, he lived with his father in Socorro, N.M., returning to Ventura in 1999. Mr. Morua reportedly got his high school GED through the Ventura Adult and Continuing Education Program, then enlisted in the U.S. Army at the age of 20 on June 28, 2001, two months before the 9/11 attacks. After basic training he was assigned to the 1st Battalion, 35th Armor Regiment in Germany, where he worked principally as a heavy vehicle operator.

As a specialist he was part of the Operation Iraqi Freedom as U.S. forces rolled into Baghdad in March 2003. He drove an M978 fuel tanker more than 75,000 accident-free miles through Germany, Macedonia, Kosovo, Kuwait and Iraq, earned five medals of commendation and achievement and was honorably discharged as an E4 Specialist on Sept. 19, 2004.

Back at home Mr. Morua began an upward trajectory. He enrolled in Ventura College where he was named Distinguished Student for the 2008-2009 Academic Year. He won certificates of excellence in economics and business in 2009 and 2010, and as a student leader helped raise \$20,000 to save a series of summer classes at the campus.

Accepted to UCSB, he was elected president of the Student Veterans Organization and with a former SVO president accepted the UC President’s Award for Outstanding Student Leadership in May 2011.

A month later, Mr. Morua went to work as an intern in Mrs. Capps’ Santa Barbara office. He soon became a media fixture, photographed with the congresswoman at dozens of events.

In April 2012, Mr. Morua was elected board chair of the local chapter of Future Leaders of America, which provides Latino youth with leadership development skills. By that summer, he was being featured in news coverage as an Iraqi War veteran working for Mrs. Capps who was helping other vets transition to civilian life.

The speech Mr. Morua gave at the Santa Barbara Elks Club, describing how he formed a nonprofit group called At Ease to help returning combat vets, included references to his turning to alcohol as a way to cope with transitioning from military to civilian life.

By November 2012 Mr. Morua got the promotion he’d been waiting for, becoming one of the congresswoman’s four district representatives on the Central Coast.

Mr. Morua, who seemed to lead an exemplary public life following his discharge from the Army, was so trusted by Mrs. Capps and her staff



REP. LOIS CAPPS

Rep. Lois Capps and Mr. Morua in a Fourth of July parade.

that he regularly spoke at events in her absence. An avid comic book reader since childhood, he began channeling the image of his favorite superhero, riding next to Mrs. Capps in uniform carrying a Captain America shield.

Mr. Morua represented the congresswoman at dozens of veterans and law enforcement-related events in 2012 and 2013. On Aug. 16, 2013, he appeared for Mrs. Capps along with District Attorney Joyce Dudley and state Sen. Hannah-Beth Jackson at a press conference where motorists were warned not to drink and drive during the upcoming Labor Day weekend.

On Nov. 5, 2013, less than a month before the hit-and-run, Mr. Morua was present with Mrs. Capps and Assemblyman Das Williams, D-Santa Barbara, at a Veterans Day event at Santa Barbara City College where he delivered the keynote address. “I took myself from the battlefield to the battlefield of academics,” he said proudly, exhorting other veterans to get involved in community organizations. “There is life after the military. ... Feel free to always expose yourself.”

Three days later, Mr. Morua appeared for Mrs. Capps at a veterans memorial concert where he presented a congressional proclamation to Air Force Maj. Gen. Phillip Conley, a fighter ace during the Korean War. Sen. Jackson presented a state proclamation at the same event.

On Nov. 12, 2013, Mrs. Capps delivered a U.S. flag that had flown over the Capitol to the Veterans Memorial Building in Lompoc after Mr. Morua notified her that a World War II era flag — with 48 stars — had been hanging from the balcony above the main hall for decades.

THE VETERANS ISSUE AND LOIS CAPPS

The veterans service issue was an important one for Lois Capps, a onetime nurse with master’s degrees in religion and education from Yale and UCSB, respectively, who succeeded her husband, Walter Capps, to Congress following his death in 1997 after only 10 months on Capitol Hill.

Mr. Capps was a Yale Divinity School grad and doctorate who’d been an anti-war activist in the Viet-



COURTESY PHOTO

Santa Barbara County Superior Court Judge Frank Ochoa, left, his wife and KEYT anchor Paula Lopez, Henry Dubroff, editor of Pacific Coast Business Times, and Mr. Morua.

nam era. But he later developed a highly regarded course at UCSB in which peace proponents and veterans engaged in a dialogue. His 1982 book “The Unfinished War” was based on that course.

“There’s no doubt that Raymond Morua was Lois Capps’ go-to guy on veterans issues,” says his attorney, Darryl Genis. “And as a political liberal she benefited greatly from his years of service to her. He was also extremely important to her for his ties to the Hispanic community. He appeared with her and in her absence at dozens of public events in 2012 and 2013 alone.”

Mr. Morua became so identified with both the veterans issue and Mrs. Capps that his speeches became media “best bets.” So reliable was Mr. Morua as a stand-in for Mrs. Capps that he held up the ribbon as Mayor Helene Schneider dedicated the new terminal at Santa Barbara Municipal Airport in September 2013.

In January of that year, Mr. Morua delivered a speech in Lois Capps’ own words, during a presentation of “Theater of War,” a series of performance pieces at Marjorie Luke Theatre. Invoking her husband’s name,

Please see **MALLORY** on **A11**

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COURTESY PHOTO

Mr. Morua stands behind his former boss, Mrs. Capps, at a meeting with veterans.

Capps' office distanced itself from Morua following girl's death

MALLORY

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Mr. Morua said, "We learned that war has a lasting impact on those who experience it first-hand — both physically and psychologically."

The "Theater of War" event was sponsored in part by the Walter H. Capps Center for the Study of Ethics,

Religion, and Public Life at UCSB. The university's Interdisciplinary Humanities Center co-sponsored the event. IHC director is Susan Derwin, a Germanic, Slavic and Semitic studies professor who ran a writing workshop for veterans in which Mr. Morua participated.

Ms. Derwin is an important witness in this story because on Dec. 5,



Peter Lance

nently in this series, particularly its former crime reporter, Chris Meagher, who is now press secretary for Mrs. Capps. Mr. Meagher covered my DUI trial, which was dismissed on constitutional grounds in November 2011. Since then I've had several personal meetings with him and exchanged multiple emails.

So there are multiple connections — not surprising in a city as small as Santa Barbara.

But this isn't about friends, colleagues or former associates. It's about uncovering the facts behind a terrible collision and the ensuing cover-up.

The series will be available in its entirety at www.peterlance.com.

— Peter Lance

2013, she was Mr. Morua's "plus one" at the Independent's Christmas party — one brick in the wall of evidence that he was working on Capps-related issues at the Holiday Bash.

A CRIMINAL HISTORY

But after the collision, at 12:04 a.m. Dec. 6, a darker side of Mr. Morua emerged. He'd been arrested on DUI allegations in Ventura in July and October 2006. For the first offense, he was found guilty by the court and ordered to pay fines and fees totaling \$2,765. After the second DUI, Mr. Morua was ordered to pay \$5,063 and elected to serve 18 days in jail in lieu of the fine.

Then on Dec. 21, 2006, in a third incident, he admitted that he'd broadsided a woman's Lexus with his Chrysler 300 and fled the scene, leaving his license plate behind at the intersection of Cachuma Avenue and Jamestown Street in Ventura. Mr. Morua hid his vehicle in his garage. When confronted by police, he told them that he didn't report the incident because "if he was caught driving on a suspended license he'd go to jail."

In December 2006, he served a two-day sentence for the July DUI and 10 days in 2007 after his conviction for the hit-and-run. He served additional time that summer to pay off court fees and was released on five years probation.

Then, after keeping his nose clean for four years, he was arrested on suspicion of grand theft embezzlement after a video game coupon incident while working at Kmart in Goleta — a conviction that resulted in a 10-day stretch in County Jail in September 2011.

"This is while he's working as an intern for Lois Capps," says Matt Dies. "You have to ask yourself how he could be working in her office and suddenly disappear for 10 days with nobody seeming to ask where he's gone."

In fact, because his driver's license had been suspended, Mr. Morua wasn't able to legally get be-

hind the wheel until January 2013, raising other questions. "You can't do a district field rep's job without a vehicle," says Robert Stoll, the Dies' lawyer. "So how is it that nobody in Lois' office asks what happened to his license? They claim they didn't do a background check on him but how was he in that office from June of 2011 until early 2013 without somebody asking whether he might have lost his license in a DUI? It just defies belief."

DISOWNING MORUA AFTER THE DEATH OF MALLORY DIES

On the afternoon of Dec. 11, 2013, almost immediately after Mallory Dies was taken off life support, Mrs. Capps' office made a concerted effort to distance the congresswoman from the war veteran with whom she'd appeared in public so often.

First, the Independent published a statement from Mrs. Capps' office that Mr. Morua was "fired on Sunday" Dec. 8, two days after the collision. On Dec. 13, Mrs. Capps' press secretary Mr. Meagher issued this statement regarding a change in hiring practices at the Capps office: "Following the recent tragedy involving a former staffer, Congresswoman Lois Capps pledged to review her office's hiring and vetting procedures. While the congresswoman's hiring practices ... were in line with House procedures, she has decided to implement strong requirements and is now working with U.S. Capitol Police to conduct criminal background checks on every new employee hired by her office going forward."

"The congresswoman expects all those who work for her and on behalf of the people of the Central Coast to behave responsibly and professionally at all times, without exception."

That last line takes on huge significance considering the position that Mrs. Capps adopted about Mr. Morua, once Mr. Stoll announced plans to file a claim under the Federal Tort Claims Act with House



STEVE MALONE / NEWS-PRESS FILE PHOTO

Mr. Morua in Santa Barbara County Superior Court.

Speaker John Boehner.

"It will be alleged that he was in the course and scope of his employment at the time and place of the accident," said Mr. Stoll, whose firm Stoll, Nussbaum & Polakov specializes in personal injury and wrongful death actions.

RESPONDEAT SUPERIOR

"The legal principle that would hold the government responsible for Raymond Morua's actions as a federal employee is known as the doctrine of *respondeat superior*," says William Canfield III, former senior staff counsel to the U.S. Senate Ethics Committee. "It holds that the master is liable for any torts committed by their servant in the course and furtherance of their duties. In this case, the master or mistress would be Lois Capps and Mr. Morua would be the servant."

But in a letter to Mr. Stoll's office on Dec. 23, 2013, Mary Beth Walker, a lawyer for the U.S. House of Representatives, took this position: "... we understand that Raymond Morua was not acting at any of the relevant times in his capacity as an employee



William Canfield

of Congresswoman Capps. Rather, he was at all relevant times acting in his personal capacity."

"In legal terms," says Mr. Canfield, "they're arguing that Mr. Morua was 'on a frolic of his own' when he attended the Christmas party in the hours leading up to the hit-and-run. Mr. Canfield agrees that there are no strict rules governing the hiring practices of House staffers, but he says that district representatives like Raymond Morua are 'always on the job.'"

"When it comes to staff members," says Mr. Canfield, "the House and Senate ethics committees generally look at them as being on the clock 24/7 and 365 days a year. It doesn't matter how little you're paid or how much you're paid or your level of responsibility. It's that you are a congressional staffer and you are that all the time."

"There's the over-arching rule contained in the Code of Conduct governing the Senate and the House," he adds, "which all members have to abide by: that as a staffer, you will never do anything inappropriate and that you will always maintain the reputation of the House or Senate. That statement by Lois Capps' office that they expect their employees to act 'professionally at all times, without exception,' says it all. He was on the job."

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Some deals doomed by high debt, minimal reserves

HOMES

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is much more difficult for entry-level buyers to get financing."

With down payments and good credit scores in hand, buyers approach mortgage brokers to get loan pre-approval. Then the application heads to a bank underwriter for the final OK.

That is when some deals go south, because the buyer is deemed to have debt that is too high, and has too little in reserves — such as three to six months in savings to cover the mortgage for something unforeseen like a job loss.

"They are scrutinizing everything," said Mr. Bahura of several deals that have gone kaput.

Like Gary Woods, he's seen issues related to car loans "knock people out of the picture" for final loan approval.

"A guy who brokered one recent loan asked for an 'exception,' because the borrower was slightly above 43 percent and he was used to asking for some wiggle room in the past," said Mr. Bahura. "The underwriter said, 'No dice — no exceptions.'"

Unless there are backup offers, sellers wanting to move up or downsize see their own plans put on hold because they have to re-list the property.

With many local buyers pushed out of the market, homes at the entry level look good to investors who swoop in with cash.

"They buy them to rent out," said Mr. Bahura.

At the lower price points in 2013, "We had a lot of all-cash buyers, which sellers dearly love," said Mr. Woods. "So this squeezed a lot of first-time buyers out of the picture."

Other options do exist. Since cash is king, Mr. Woods has brokered deals where "very kind parents with the financial wherewithal have purchased homes for the kids to get them in the door, who then make monthly payments to the bank of mom and dad."

When asked for a sampling of what is available, Mr. Woods crunched some numbers.

In South County, the overall inventory has risen from about 245 units for sale at the end of February to around 275 at the end of March.

Of that number, 110 homes are in Montecito and 35 in Hope Ranch.

With many local buyers pushed out of the market, homes at the entry level look good to investors who swoop in with cash.

Of the 100 remaining abodes, 27 are single-family homes in the \$500,000-\$800,000 range.

In the condo market, 17 units are priced below \$450,000; 12 are selling between \$450,000 and \$500,000; and 10 are listed from \$500,000 to \$550,000.

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Missing Polish paintings found in Santa Rosa

ASSOCIATED PRESS

SANTA ROSA — Dozens of missing paintings by a Polish artist have been found in a storage facility in Northern California.

Hanna "Kali" Weynerowska, who lived in San Francisco for 45 years, had bequeathed 78 artworks to a Polish government museum before her death in 1998. But then the paintings disappeared.

This month, FBI agents tracked down a relative who led them to the storage facility in Santa Rosa that held 75 Weynerowska originals, the San Francisco Chronicle reported

Saturday.

On Thursday, the artworks arrived at the museum in Rapperswil, Switzerland, that was established to display and preserve Polish art before the fall of the Soviet Union.

"The FBI is proud to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with our Polish counterparts in ensuring safe passage of these lost national treasures," said David Johnson, special agent in charge of the FBI's San Francisco office, said at a news conference Friday.

The relative handed over the paintings voluntarily and isn't in any legal trouble, Agent Johnson said.

One or more of Ms. Weynerowska's relatives apparently kept the works since 1998 because of the costs of shipping them and "perhaps a bit of emotional attachment."

Caria Tomczykowska, an envoy of the Polish Consulate in Los Angeles, says the artworks' financial value is modest — perhaps \$12,000 each — but they "they are priceless emotionally ... very important to the legacy of Polish excellence."

Born in Warsaw in 1918, Weynerowska she was a young art school graduate during World War II, when she said she joined a Polish resistance squad assigned to blow

up bridges, tunnels and highways.

Ms. Weynerowska was wounded in the August 1944 Warsaw uprising against the Germans and was captured and sent to a concentration camp.

She managed to escape and reached Brussels with the help of U.S. forces, said Angeline Friedman, a friend who attended Friday's news conference.

Ms. Weynerowska and her husband, a fellow Polish refugee and resistance fighter, emigrated to Canada and then moved to San Francisco in 1953.

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