



Vernon Community Fund
Vernon Means Business

Grants Help “Vernon Area” Nonprofits Assist People Young and Old



Vernon Quarterly

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Vernon Quarterly is a newsletter for the residents, businesses and other community stakeholders in this city that “means business.”

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Vernon CommUNITY Fund Grants Help “Vernon Area” Nonprofits Assist Women, Children, Youth and Families



Southeast Community Development Corp.

Since January 2014, the Vernon CommUNITY Fund has awarded grants totaling nearly \$1.5 million to nonprofit community service organizations serving women, men, children and families in the “Vernon Area.” *Vernon Quarterly* visited four nonprofit organizations to speak with a cross-section of men, women and children who have been helped by the Vernon CommUNITY Fund’s grants.

Southeast Churches Service Center Huntington Park

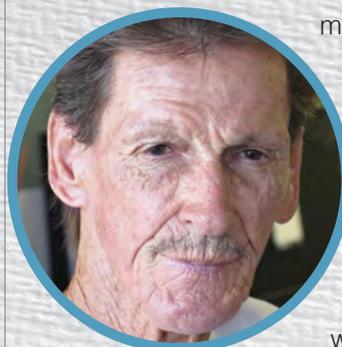
Executive Director: Andy Molina
Grant Awards: \$50,000 (Feb. 2015) – \$50,000 (Aug. 2016)

Southeast Churches Service Center operates a food pantry, provides donated clothing and offers transitional housing assistance to Huntington Park adults and families in need of social services.

Maria Grimaldo – “My husband died six years ago. As a widow, my own financial resources were not enough. Whatever they receive—whether it’s food, clothing, shoes or financial donations—they give back to the community. They’re honest. They care for everyone who comes in for help from this community. I couldn’t make it without what they give me once a month. They’re like angels. There is humanness behind their help.”



George Sossman – “I was homeless for quite some time with no place to prepare meals. They always made sure I had proper food to eat. They helped me with bus tokens and clothing. They helped me get my own place [to live] and provided funds to help me pay my utilities. I’m not homeless anymore. And they’re a big reason why I’m not.”





Frances Delgado –

“They work for us. They never refuse to help you, unless you arrive seeking help when you’re drunk or high [on drugs]. I used to be homeless. You don’t have to beg for help here.

They don’t judge you. They always serve you. They are for the people of this community.”

**Southeast Community Development Corp.
Bell Tech Center**

Executive Director: Cesar Zaldivar-Motts
Grant Awards: \$75,000 (Feb. 2015) – \$50,000 (Aug. 2016)

Southeast Community Development Corp. manages training programs at its Bell Tech Center and mobile technology center where residents—youth to senior citizens—can acquire computer literacy skills that enable them to bridge the “digital divide” and gain access to affordable desktop computers, laptops, tablets and broadband technology.

Estefana Martinez –

“I knew nothing about computers. I was afraid to touch a computer because my nephew had one and I broke it. They gave me confidence. They gave me a place to practice using a computer. Now, I like it a lot. I’ve learned to send e-mails and take pictures and send them by e-mail to family members.”



Hayde Flores – “Our computer learning classes are free, no cost to anyone. My neighbors ask, ‘How is that possible?’ Every donation they receive helps a great deal. I can continue my education.

I’m 69 years old and what I’ve learned to do on a computer at my age helped me find a job with Uber. It makes me feel alive. I’m useful. I have greater self-esteem. My age doesn’t matter.”



**Woodcraft Rangers
Vernon Elementary School – Big Bear
Summer Camp**

Executive Director: Chris Johnson
Grant Award: \$40,000 (Nov. 2015)

Woodcraft Rangers, founded in 1922, manages after-school youth development programs for more than 4,000 youth at more than 60 schools, parks and community centers; and operates summer camp experiences for hundreds of young people.

Atzin Carreon
Age 11 – 6th Grade –
Camp Name: “Baby Winter” –

“It was my first time traveling to Big Bear. I really enjoyed playing with other people. We all participated in archery, rock climbing and going down a zip line, which, at first, was pretty scary. We played lots of games. At night, we saw stars as we sat around a campfire.”





Victor Sanchez
Age 11 – 6th Grade
– Camp Name:
“Bam Bam” –

“It was my first time going to Big Bear. We slept in bunk beds and sang camp songs. I had fun on the water slide. The first night, I was homesick, but now

I want to go again. My parents asked me how it was and what I did. They were excited I could go.”



Diana Isaac
Age 8 – 3rd Grade –
Camp Name: “Dee Dee” –

“The first day, I was so homesick I almost cried. But I would go again, a lot of times. I cried the last day because I missed my family and missed our summer camp.

Woodcraft Rangers takes us places that help us learn new things we’ve never experienced before.”



Woodcraft Rangers



Jovenes, Inc. **Youth Homeless Housing Services –** **Boyle Heights**

Program Director: [Eric Hubbard](#)
Grant Award: [\\$75,000 \(Feb. 2015\)](#)

Jovenes, Inc. purchases residential properties to provide transitional housing to more than 100 homeless, at-risk teens and young adults each year, and provides counseling services to enable them to lead independent and productive lives and secure permanent housing.

Salvador Garduño **Age 22 – College Student**

– “I moved from my relative’s home. I had no place to go. I found a job and an apartment, but lost my job and couldn’t afford housing. I was homeless. Eight months ago, I found



a new job. Jovenes helped me with temporary housing and taught me how to save money. I’ve received counseling in mental health, job search, substance abuse and HIV education. Jovenes helps you build skills for life. Their rent subsidy enables me to continue my education.

I’m studying maritime education at Pasadena City College. I plan to transfer to the California State University Maritime Academy in Vallejo, CA. On Friday, September 23rd, I moved into a one-bedroom apartment in Boyle Heights owned by Jovenes. I’m excited. Jovenes is essential to our community.”



Below: Southeast Churches Service Center, Executive Director Andy Molina, far right



Eco-Rapid Transit: “Back to the Future” for Vernon With Planned Light Rail Line



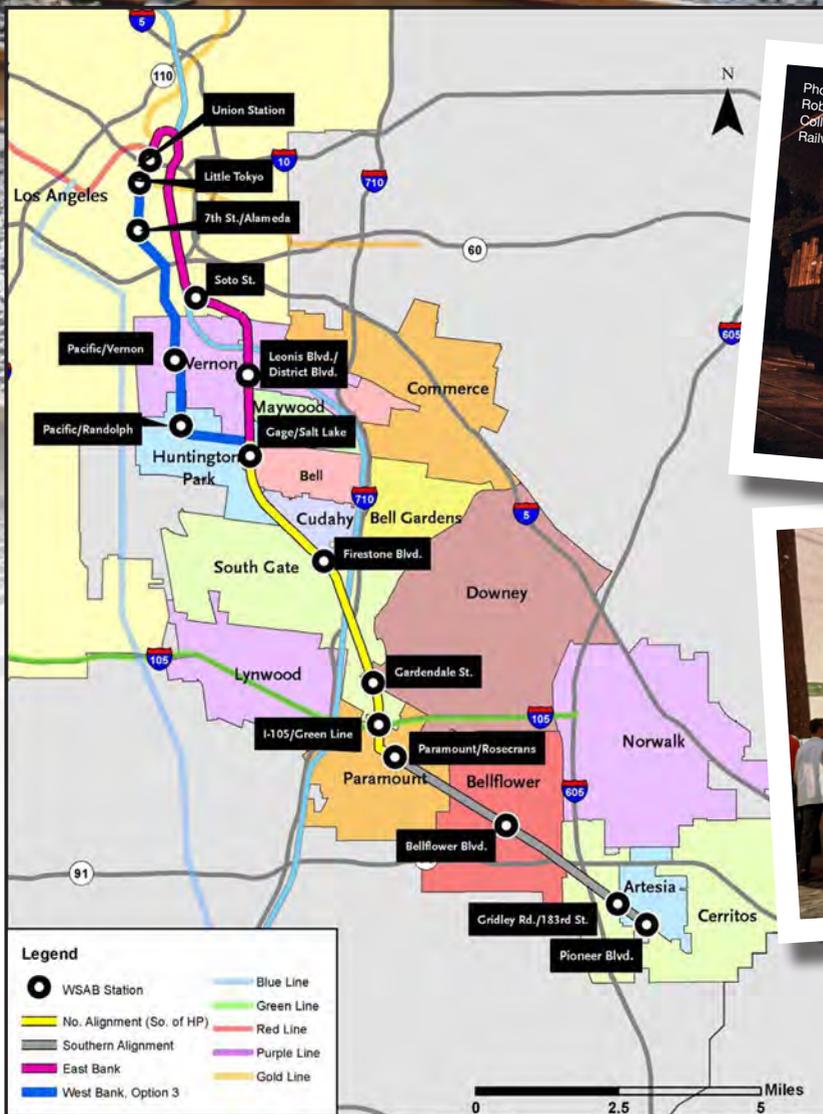
In the 1920s to the 1960s, as many as 40,000 people each day rode the Los Angeles Railway’s “V Line” street cars to commute to work in Vernon, arrive at jobs in Los Angeles or travel to college classes at UCLA and USC. It was an era before freeways, Rapid Transit District buses, millions of personal vehicles and heavy smog that would soon come to dominate Southern California’s lifestyle, air quality and modes of transportation.

With the planned expansion of Metro’s L.A. County light rail system, many observers see a bright future in the proposed return of light rail mass transit serving Vernon and its surrounding communities through construction of the Eco-Rapid Transit Project.

The Eco-Rapid Transit Project will link neighborhoods, communities and 13 cities through a 40-mile north-south corridor stretching from Hollywood Burbank Airport in the City of Burbank to Downtown Los Angeles’ Union Station to the City of Artesia. The proposed project will connect more than 4 million residents to the county’s growing regional mass transit system and create jobs in the process.

Michael Kodama, Eco-Rapid Transit’s executive director, said, “The Eco-Rapid Transit Project has the potential to be the top mass transit light rail line in the nation. Vernon’s mayor serves on the Eco-Rapid Transit Board of Directors. The proposed project will be a big benefit to Vernon.”

“Many residents who work in Vernon today should be able to ride to their jobs on a light rail train in the future and leave their cars at home,” Mr. Kodama said. “The project will help reduce traffic and ease congestion,



40,000 passengers rode the Los Angeles Railway's "V Line" street cars daily to commute in the 1920s to the 1960s.

and that means improved air quality in Southeast L.A. County. The Eco-Rapid Transit Project will lessen the overall impact on our transportation system and create more room on our roadways for trucks delivering goods to and from Vernon."

The project's southern corridor starts in Artesia and heads north through South Gate, Huntington Park, Bell and Vernon before making its connection at L.A.'s Union Station. Working families in the southern corridor depend heavily on public transportation for work, school, shopping and entertainment. Transit planners and southern corridor city officials predict high ridership when the rail line is built.

When the Eco-Rapid Transit light rail is operational, passengers will be able to ride trains connecting to L.A. International Airport, Hollywood, Universal Studios Hollywood, USC, UCLA, Santa Monica's Third Street Promenade and Old Town Pasadena.

The southern corridor is one of 12 L.A. County Measure R-funded transit projects with a \$240 million funding allocation. The proposed transit project had been planned for completion by 2027, but Metro's Board of Directors recently voted to delay the project's construction start date. With the Metro Board's project postponement, the rail line may not be completed until 2047.

The Eco-Rapid Transit Project's northern corridor running from downtown Los Angeles to Hollywood Burbank Airport would connect to the Antelope Valley Line and the proposed California High Speed Rail Line. The project would serve as a catalyst for future L.A. County transportation system enhancements such as higher speeds, plane-to-train connections, added passenger trains for quicker boarding intervals, double-and-triple tracking, grade separation and other improvements.



In Her Own Words

Kelly Nguyen

VG&E Director

On August 3rd, members of the Vernon City Council appointed Kelly Nguyen to serve as director of the city's Vernon Gas & Electric Department. Ms. Nguyen formerly worked for the City of Anaheim Public Utilities (APU) agency as a senior integrated resource planner and power resource scheduler. She previously held positions as an energy scheduler for California Energy Resource Scheduling (CERS) and senior supervisor and market specialist for the California Power Exchange (CalPX).

Ms. Nguyen earned her Bachelor of Science in Business Administration at California State University, Los Angeles. She received specialized training in energy system procedures, protocols and utility compliance policies through the Western Electric Coordinating Council (WECC) and North American Energy Reliability Corporation (NERC), and training in market operations and Cap & Trade through the California Independent System Operator (CAISO).

Vernon Quarterly spoke to Ms. Nguyen about her new job.

What is your biggest challenge in guiding Vernon's electric utility and overseeing its natural gas operations and fiber optics distribution?

I feel very privileged coming into a utility that already delivers stable, reliable and efficient electric, gas and fiber services, and always strives to serve our customers. Having said this, my main objective is to ensure Vernon businesses continue to receive highly reliable and affordable services moving forward. The electric industry business model that has been constant for many years is evolving rapidly. Vernon will have to prudently consider business community needs while analyzing a fluid and developing regulatory, renewable energy and technological landscape in order to continue delivering first-class utility services.

Some of the main challenges we are facing and will be addressing include increasing our renewable energy portfolio to 50 percent by 2030; maintaining extremely

reliable services while integrating increasing levels of intermittent and distributed energy resources; transportation electrification; succession planning for an experienced workforce; managing the increasing California Independent System Operator (CAISO) Transmission Access Charge (TAC); managing increased regulatory compliance requirements; and managing to maintain competitive electric rates versus surrounding utilities at the same time.

In order to assess the best options for our customers, it will be extremely important for all of us to be very flexible as we try to improve data acquisition and analysis, develop advanced forecasting techniques and assess utility rate structures. I plan to work closely with our department's Resource Planning group to find ways to expand their role and services to effectively increase revenue-generating capability. I would also like to increase our customer outreach efforts to really understand our customers' needs as we tackle our joint challenges during the next few years.

How did your background as a senior staff member at the Southern California Public Power Authority (SCPPA) help prepare you for the responsibilities you have here in Vernon?

I was very fortunate to have witnessed the busiest years of the SCPPA. SCPPA experienced exponential growth during the last four-and-a-half years, seeing

their project portfolio nearly double due to California's Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) target of 30 percent by 2020.

I really enjoyed spearheading the entire procurement process on behalf of the 12-member agencies and managing the development of all 18 associated projects. I also managed nine SCPPA committees that provided me the rare opportunity to learn about the 12 publicly owned utilities and their inner-workings. Through this unique arrangement, I was able to build relationships with all of the utility members and gain a valuable 'bird's eye view' perspective of the industry that will help me guide Vernon in the right direction. In addition, my 11 years of experience at the Anaheim Public Utilities gave me a strong foundation in the utility business.

Power reliability is another major issue of concern, since downtime due to power outages can mean costly delays in product production coupled with idled workers who must wait until power is restored to perform their jobs. How does Vernon stack up on reliability compared to other nearby utilities?

VG&E is proud to have some of the highest reliability figures in the country; we are in the top 10 percent both in terms of frequency and duration of outages. I credit



**Kelly meets with
Vernon Utilities
Operations Manager
Todd Dusenberry.**

Kelly's main objective is reliable, affordable services.

this to the dedication of VG&E employees and VG&E contractors who diligently serve Vernon customers.

We have been recognized for our reliability and outage management by receiving the prestigious Diamond level designation of Reliable Public Power Provider (RP3) from the American Public Power Association (APPA) for the period of 2016-2019. VG&E is among eight municipal utilities in the entire U.S. that achieved the Diamond level recognition during this period.

The Vernon electric system is equipped with the most sophisticated relay system that substantially minimizes power outages. The service delivery distribution system is well designed and conscientiously maintained, resulting in less unexpected outages and fewer business interruptions to our customers. We plan to sustain this level of reliability for our customers at all times.

It appears as though Mylar balloons coming into contact with power lines are the cause of a lot of outages. If you could, would you ban them?

Believe it or not, balloons are the number one cause of outages in Vernon, and it's important for us to send the message to the public that all helium-filled foil balloons must be weighted down. It's California law. Responsible use and disposal of metallic balloons will allow us to continue to provide safe, reliable services to the entire city.

The coming years could place a greater power generation emphasis on energy sources from wind and solar power. Vernon has been considering its potential renewable energy options on land it owns in Kern County's Jawbone Canyon. How important is Jawbone Canyon to the city's power future?

The Jawbone Canyon region will eventually be a major renewable power source and prime generating location for California. The city currently owns 18,000 acres of property in Jawbone Canyon and anticipates



maintaining its stake in this site due to the potential for development of future renewable resources.

There are numerous other wind farms in this region. This land is currently being evaluated through a broad outreach to elicit a wide range of developers in order to gather the most advantageous, innovative and effective ideas for successful wind and solar projects and technologies. The City is focused and determined to equip the Vernon City Council with a range of alternatives to ensure successful utilization of the land while addressing future energy needs.

As the first female director of VG&E, what kind of role model do you hope to be to other women in the largely male energy utility industry?

I never really set out to be a role model, but I do realize that I am in a high-profile position. People will evaluate my work and scrutinize my decisions. I accept and welcome that. I am grateful to have this opportunity. I am surrounded by great staff, co-workers and the best 'leader-manager-mentor' I could ever ask for. I take this position very seriously and look forward to contributing and making a favorable impact. I hope that my results will inspire others, especially women and other minority groups.



In His Own Words

Keith Allen

Health and Environmental Control Director

On September 7th, members of the Vernon City Council appointed Keith Allen to serve as director of the city's Department of Health and Environmental Control. Vernon is one of only four cities in California with its own health department. He previously served as environmental health operations officer for the city of Long Beach.

Mr. Allen brings more than 16 years of environmental health experience to his new job in Vernon. Prior to working for the Long Beach Health Department, he worked as an environmental health specialist for the Los Angeles County Department of Health Services.

Mr. Allen earned his Master's degree in Public Administration and Bachelor of Science degree in Criminal Justice at California State University, Long

Beach. He serves as vice president of the National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) for Region 2. He was previously president of the Southern Chapter of the California Environmental Health Association (CEHA). Mr. Allen is the 2005 recipient of the Charles Senn Award bestowed annually by the CEHA.

Vernon Quarterly spoke to Mr. Allen about his new job.

You come to Vernon Health and Environmental Control from the Long Beach Health Department, another of the handful of California cities that have their own health department. How does Vernon's Health Department compare to Long Beach's?

Interestingly, California has only four city health departments and I can happily say that I have now worked for two of those four. Both Long Beach and

Vernon Health Departments have some commonalities and differences. Long Beach is a much larger city, with a population nearly 500,000 residents and a health department that's been in existence since 1906 with a staff of more than 300 employees today. In contrast, Vernon, with a resident population of approximately 200, has a very large industrial business community and a much smaller health department that's been in existence since 1907. The similarity between the two cities' health departments are that, as a local city health department, you are much more in tune with the needs of your specific community and can better serve your constituents in that respect. A city-run health department can be much more responsive with the citizens and businesses in the community that they serve. Both Vernon and Long Beach health departments conduct inspections of their food facilities, hazardous waste facilities, vector control, garment manufacturers and water systems. Both cities' health departments focus on the importance of protecting public health through education and enforcement of laws and regulations, while ensuring that businesses can thrive by operating in a safe and healthy manner.

Members of the public outside the city may not fully appreciate what the Vernon Health and Environmental Control Department does on a day-to-day basis. What should they know about the work of your department and why it's critically important?

The City of Vernon has a very comprehensive health department that offers a very wide array of services to the public. These programs include: Certified Unified Program Agency (CUPA); Hazardous Materials Monitoring; Hazardous Waste; Accidental Release Prevention (CALARP); Above Ground/Underground Storage Tanks; Food Program; Water Quality Program; Cross-Connection Control Program; Garment Manufacturing Program, Solid Waste Management Program; Storm Water Control Program; Vector Control; and Animal Control. As a local city health department, Vernon's health staff is able to respond to complaints very promptly, which helps serve the Vernon community in a responsible and effective manner. Another nice service that our health department offers is Free Sale Letters for food exports for city-based food businesses doing business abroad.

In line with the city's focus on the importance of being business-friendly, our department has taken

efforts to reduce inspection fees on our regulated businesses. Many businesses in the city need multiple health permits of varying types that could result in a complex, time-consuming process, but our health department's inspection staff will do all of a facility's required permit inspections at the same time. We typically have some of the lowest fees among health jurisdictions in Southern California.

Our staff members are highly skilled and highly trained environmental health professionals. They hold multiple state and federal certifications and licenses, including being Registered Environmental Health Specialists with the State of California Department of Public Health. Cumulatively, our current staff has more than 140 years of work experience in the field of environmental health. Vernon is in very good hands with the current staff considering the robust number of years of staff experience in an industrial setting and dealing with hazardous materials and other common environmental health issues. I am truly proud to be part of this elite group of environmental health professionals.

The now-closed Exide Technologies lead acid battery recycling plant has dominated the local news for the past three years. How is the closure of that plant going and how is the clean up of the lead contamination going?

Exide battery recycling plant has not been in operation since March 2014. The State of California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) is the agency in charge of the cleanup of Exide. Our department has been and will continue to work with DTSC in a supportive role. At this stage, DTSC has continued to test residential sites in the agency's preliminary investigation area and will be prioritizing and determining which residential sites will be cleaned up. In order for DTSC to begin any cleanup at residential sites, DTSC must first go through the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) environmental review process that may not be completed until early 2017.

Our department has conducted several community outreach activities for Vernon residents to update them on the current status of the Exide plant closure and cleanup and provide important information. Our city's website is also an excellent resource on information of the Exide closure.



Keith (far right) discusses important health topics with City of Vernon Chief Deputy Director David LeDuff (far left) and Environmental Health Consultant Lewis Pozzebon.

Your department is involved in “green initiatives” in Vernon—from responsible disposal of used oil to storm water runoff collection to CNG-powered trash hauling trucks operating in the city. How have these initiatives helped improve the quality of life for residents and workers in Vernon?

All of these initiatives will improve the quality of life for the entire Vernon community by improving air and water quality. Our green initiatives and sustainability measures are the way of the future throughout California with the goal of improving public health. The Green Vernon Commission is the driving force behind this move to improve quality of life throughout the Vernon community. As a newcomer to Vernon, I am very impressed with the measures the city has implemented and look forward to many more technological advancements that will continue to enhance these efforts for many years to come.

What are your immediate goals for Vernon’s Health Department?

My immediate goals are to make sure that our health department continues onward in its mission to protect public health citywide and make Vernon a great place to work and live. Additionally, I want to make sure we continue to have a highly skilled and trained staff. Vernon has always been known in the field of environmental health as having the most skilled, trained and technically knowledgeable staff amongst all of the Southern California health jurisdictions. This is extremely important to me as department director that my staff continues to maintain its high level of expertise in various programs within the field of environmental health to ensure that we have the best team serving the Vernon community with the highest level of service around.

Vernon Shines as One-Year-Only Host of 24th Annual “Sabor de Mexico Lindo,” L.A.’s Largest Street Festival

On Saturday, October 1st and Sunday, October 2nd, Vernon served as host city for “Sabor de Mexico Lindo,” billed as Los Angeles’ largest street festival. Mayor William “Bill” Davis said, “We were very pleased to join with the Greater Huntington Park Area Chamber of Commerce to welcome residents from our surrounding communities and greater L.A. County to a street festival that has entertained adults and delighted children in our neighboring community for the past 24 years.”

“‘Sabor de Mexico Lindo’ had it all. From arts and crafts to cultural exhibits and live performances on two stages to authentic food from Mexico and carnival rides,” Mayor Davis said. “The one-year-only event in Vernon was attended by tens of thousands of patrons over two days. Next year, the event returns to its longstanding home in Huntington Park.”





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Vernon Fire Department – Regional Fire Training Center

On July 19th, Vernon Mayor William “Bill” Davis and members of the Vernon City Council joined Vernon Fire Department officials for groundbreaking ceremonies marking the start of full construction of the Vernon Fire Regional Training Center. The new specialized fire services training facility—built in partnership with the Los Angeles Area Fire Chiefs’ Association—will offer training opportunities to fire service professionals serving with 31 fire agencies in the Los Angeles area.

Senator Ricardo Lara, Huntington Park Mayor Graciela Ortiz, L.A. County Fire Chief Daryl Osby, L.A. Area Fire Chiefs’ Association President Bill Walker, Regional Training Group Director Jim Birrell, Montebello Fire Chief Dan Amador, Torrance Fire Chief Martin Serna, Sierra Madre Fire Chief Stephen Heydorff and Alhambra Fire Battalion Chief Edward Guerrero joined Vernon city officials at the groundbreaking ceremony adjacent to Vernon Fire Station No. 1.

Today, the training facility is nearly completed.

U.S. Rep. Lucille Roybal-Allard, California State

