

# PROBATION E-GRAM



Official publication, L.A. County Probation Officers Union, Local 685, AFSCME/AFL-CIO.

March 23, 2016

## When County Children's Shelters Close

MacLaren Hall was a County facility that housed and cared for hard-to-place foster children - some just troubled, others who were known to be mentally challenged. In March 2003, the Hall closed its doors. Prior to the closure, MacLaren Hall had been labeled as overcrowded and was the target of many audits exposing the high cost for care and treatment of foster children. The cost of the attacks? MacLaren was shut down.

[Click here](#) to read Local 685's position on the closure of MacLaren Hall.

Directly following the closure, the children were sent to what the County described as "Incentive Group Homes." The County paid these facilities as much as \$250,000 to care for these hard to place children. Shortly after the closure, the County realized that the agencies they had sent the foster children to could not handle them. With no place to take these children in their custody, the Group Supervisors resorted to simply driving around or parking at a 24-hour establishment until receiving a message to return to the office because a placement had been found.

DCFS then made a deal with an establishment called Rest Assure, a 24 day-care program for the kids of Children's Hospital employees. Rest Assure was apparently having trouble maintaining the number of kids necessary to receive government funding, so the County agreed to send foster children to Rest Assure (allowing the facility to keep their numbers at a certain level so it would not lose its government funding).



MacLaren Hall Children's Party circa 1960's

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## Calendar of Events

**Shop Steward's Meeting:**  
Thursday, March 31, 2016  
7:30 PM

**Meetings are held at the  
Local 685 office:**

3701 Wilshire Blvd.  
Suite 510  
Los Angeles, CA 90010

## Send Us Your Stories!

We welcome any story ideas - anything from success with a probationer, to the birth of a child or retirement of a co-worker, to the effect of staffing shortages or workload requirements on your ability to do your job.

Please email your story ideas to Cookie Lommel at [clommel@afscme685.com](mailto:clommel@afscme685.com).

[Email story ideas!](#)

## Member Benefits

**AFSCME Advantage**

Discounts and benefits for

## So what happened to the staff?

DCFS employed approximately 150 Group Supervisors, represented by Local 685, who handled transportation, supervision, and monitored visits for these foster children previously at MacLaren Hall. In January 2003 - just before the closure - it was revealed that County HR failed to inform the Board of Supervisors that there were no positions for the displaced Group Supervisors.

DCFS moved quickly to transfer 20 of the Group Supervisors to these homes to handle difficult kids. Local 685 immediately met with the directors as the County attempted to begin lay-offs. Our attorney filed a 'cease and desist' letter, successfully asking the County to take a closer look at what was happening with the relocated staff.

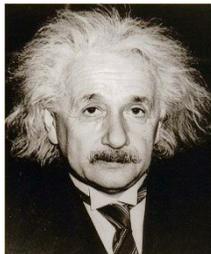
Finally, 20 General Supervisors were sent to Command Post and another 20 were sent to Edelman's Court. The remaining staff was offered the "opportunity" to be laid-off for one day, and then brought back as an Eligibility Worker (at a much lower salary) - a demotion for many.

## What was Local 685's position?

Local 685 felt strongly that the process to deal with the staff and the 'hard-to-place children' was an ill-conceived plan from the beginning. Management wanted to simply send the children to group homes and lay-off the staff. Local 685 was strongly against this plan and explained to management in clear and professional terms that it was these children, with special needs, who would suffer the most. We also predicted - correctly - that if these children were sent to group homes a sizable percentage would run away and the staff would be needed to supervise them. Management did not listen.

Ultimately, we had no choice but to file a "cease and desist" demand to stop the County from laying off the staff. Meanwhile, the kids had already been moved and some - as predicted - became very challenging to manage.

All too frequently, County management asks the 'wrong people' how to make changes rather than consulting with Department



*The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.*  
~ Albert Einstein

employees - represented by Local 685 and the other unions - for our expert opinion. Fortunately for these kids, our "cease and desist" demand meant that the County had not laid off the staff, because they desperately needed us when these group homes could not handle these children. We saved a lot of these 'hard to place' children.

Asking the 'wrong people' - instead of working with Department employees - has had consequences for the County. They moved some of the staff to Command Post, Edelmans Court, and later the Youth Welcome Center, which is now closing. The County needs to talk to the people who know the job, so they won't continuously go through the same process again and again!

AFSCME members that can help stretch your dollars and make life a little easier.

- \* AT&T Wireless Discounts
- \* Energy Efficient Rebates
- \* Health Club Discounts
- \* Vacation Tours
- \* AFSCME Credit Card

[Click here for details](#)

## Scholarships

Several scholarship programs are available for AFSCME members and their children. Select an individual scholarship for information on requirements and deadlines.

[Click here for details](#)

## Education & Trainings

Our union is only as strong as our activist core. That's why AFSCME is dedicated to working with our affiliates to provide high-quality training for AFSCME leaders.

## Online Learning

- See upcoming live online workshops
- See available self-paced courses
- Investor education for working families

## Classroom Learning

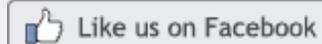
- See AFSCME / National Labor College programs

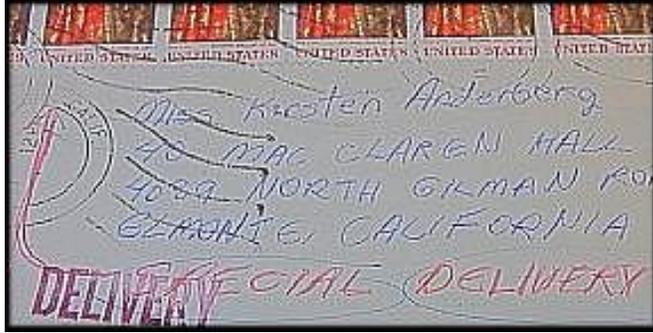
## Women's Leadership & Training

## Additional Resources

[Click here for details](#)

## Join Our Mailing List!





Archive Image of MacLaren Hall Postage

## Senator Leno's Attack on Peace Officers' Right to Privacy

Senator Mark Leno wants to be able to dig deeper into your personnel file. Leno's Bill, SB 1286, would strip peace officers of our right to privacy in our personnel files. Under SB 1286, the ability of criminal defendants to gain access to these sensitive materials would be limitless.



Existing law already requires "a department or agency that employs peace officers to establish a procedure to investigate complaints by members of the public against those officers. Existing law authorizes a department or agency that employs custodial officers to establish a similar procedure for its officers. Existing law establishes retention requirements and access privileges, as specified, for those complaints and related reports or findings. Existing law requires the department or agency to provide written notification to the complaining party of the disposition of a complaint made pursuant to those provisions within 30 days of the disposition."

### TAKE ACTION TODAY!

[Click here](#) for a sample opposition letter. Please send today to Senator Leno at [senator.leno@sen.ca.gov](mailto:senator.leno@sen.ca.gov)

## AFSCME PEOPLE: Fighting to Protect Your Rights!

[California PEOPLE](#) is AFSCME's legislative and political arm in California, representing 76 locals statewide. PEOPLE (Public Employees Organized to Promote Legislative Equality) is on your side, fighting to

protect working families!

AFSCME hosted its annual **PEOPLE** Conference in Sacramento on March 12-14, 2016, and the voices of our great Union, Local 685, were heard loud and clear!



Local 685 President Ralph Miller Speaking Truth to Power



[Click here](#) for more photos!

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