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Complaints Accompany VEDC Chapter 11 Filing

FINANCE: Legal actions look at nonprofit's loans and grants.

By **ANDREW FOERCH** Staff Reporter

One day before the **Valley Economic Development Center** declared Chapter 11 reorganization on July 2, a lawsuit was filed against it by a company claiming that its property was fraudulently conveyed to the VEDC apparently for free. What's particularly unusual is that both organizations were headed by

the same man: **Roberto Barragan**. The latest lawsuit is one of a handful claiming questionable financial stewardship during the time Barragan led the VEDC. One small-business borrower, for example, said it got \$287,000 from VEDC but was expected to repay \$1.6 million.

For his part, Barragan said in an interview that he acted properly during his tenure and that the VEDC was financially sound until after he left in October 2016. "Whatever happened,

Please see **FINANCE** page 71



Ex-Chief: Barragan at VEDC gala.

\$78 Million ER Breaks Ground

HOSPITALS: St. Joseph taps Burbank studios for donations.

By **AMY STULICK** Staff Reporter

Providence Saint Joseph Medical Center has a green light from the City of Burbank to build a new emergency room and urgent care facility at an estimated cost of \$78 million.

Preliminary work on the project, including cleaning and prepping the site and soil stabilization, began July 8.

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THE VALLEY

200

THE MOST INFLUENTIAL LEADERS IN THE VALLEY AREA 2019

A core group of top-performing people help to make the Valley area function as an economy and a society. And the Business Journal lists and categorizes them in the annual Valley 200 special edition, which is included in this issue.

The individuals represent a wide swath, from real estate developers to educators to entrepreneurs. All are leaders whose influence extends beyond their own organization to encompass civic groups, other businesses and charitable endeavors. These are

the people who perform the heavy lifting to make the Valley area a better place to live, work and play. The Valley 200 is a way to recognize their efforts.

Please see **THE VALLEY 200** page 17

Valley's Last Orange Grove?

DEVELOPMENT: Politicians, heirs weigh agricultural legacy.

By **MICHAEL AUSHENKER** Staff Reporter

Heirs of the Bothwell Ranch — one of the San Fernando Valley's last orange groves — have listed the property for sale. The plan to create 26 lots for homes has sparked a debate over how to preserve a symbol of the Valley's agricultural past.

Please see **DEVELOPMENT** page 7

SPECIAL REPORT
PUBLIC COMPANIES

The Business Journal's annual list has two types of companies — corporate giants and mid- and small-cap stocks. These companies face separate challenges. Small companies must explain their business model to investors, while large companies grapple with technological shifts. For example, **Walt Disney Co.**, maker of "Toy Story 4" above, will launch Disney+ streaming service this year.

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MOST PROFITABLE PUBLIC COMPANIES
See page 16

- 4 Borderline Bar Survivor Launches Bridal Shop**
Taylor Young, owner of Ever After Bridal at right, gives customers, friends and family an "experience package" when buying a dress.
- 5 Boardroom Revolution**
An investor in Tix Corp. has proposed a new slate of directors to change the strategic direction of the Studio City-based ticket vendor.



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THE VALLEY

THE MOST INFLUENTIAL LEADERS IN THE VALLEY AREA 2019

THE VALLEY 200

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ADVISORS

**DAVID ADELMAN**

G&B Law

David Adelman is a partner at G&B Law, an Encino-based law firm, where he focuses his practice on corporate, real estate and intellectual property transactions. For his clients, he develops business strategies, provides business counsel and structures, negotiates and documents business deals. Adelman served internships at the California Supreme Court and the American Civil Liberties Union. He holds community service in high regard, and is on several nonprofit boards, such as the Valley Industry and Commerce Association, where he is a past chair;

Valley Presbyterian Hospital, New Horizons and Fit 4 The Cause.

FAVORITE PLACE TO VISIT: TJ Korean BBQ followed by Carnival Karaoke.

ECONOMY A YEAR FROM NOW: About the same. Apparent imperviousness to continuing political and social volatility and unrest.

PASSION: Providing fitness programs to low-income communities through my nonprofit organization, Fit 4 The Cause.

**WAYNE ADELSTEIN**

The Decision Group

Wayne Adelstein, 70, is owner of the Decision Group, a business consulting firm specializing in developing and implementing strategies for success. Adelstein has served on the boards of Valley Industry and Commerce Association, where he was vice chair; Valley Economic Alliance; Valley Economic Development Center, where he was chair; California State University – Northridge Alumni Association, where he was president; CSU Alumni Council, where he was president, and he is now chair of the Fernando Awards

Foundation. In addition, he has served on numerous government appointed commissions.

FAVORITE PLACE TO VISIT: Rocky Point and the surrounding hills in Chatsworth; great place to find serenity.

ECONOMY A YEAR FROM NOW: Don't know. The impact of tariffs and other factors impacting the economy are unknown.

PASSION: Spending time with family and friends.

**MARY AKPOVI**

Martini Akpovi Partners

Mary Akpovi, Ph.D., is a partner with the accounting firm of Martini Akpovi Partners in Encino. Akpovi is a certified public accountant with focus on tax and consulting in the areas of estate planning, mergers and acquisitions and international operations. She holds a doctorate in business administration and a master's in business taxation from the University of Southern California, along with a master's in business administration from Santa Clara University. Akpovi devotes significant time to volunteering with various local

and foreign charities that serve women, orphans and the homeless. She has sat on the boards of Exceptional Children Foundation and the Valley Rescue Mission and received the Business Journal's Award for Lifetime Achievement at the Women's Council last year.

FAVORITE PLACE TO VISIT: Hope of the Valley Van Nuys Help Center – where the homeless are helped and encouraged.

ECONOMY A YEAR FROM NOW: It should be up because all economic indicators are currently favorable.

PASSION: Building re-building lives wherever they may be, in whatever ways I can.

**LEE KANON ALPERT**

Alpert, Barr & Grant

Lee Kanon Alpert, 72, is a founding member and senior of counsel to the law firm of Alpert, Barr & Grant in Encino. He also is the president and founding member of Alpert Dispute Resolution and Consulting Inc., and he is a registered lobbyist. Alpert is chair of the committee overseeing the \$550 million rebuilding of Providence Tarzana Hospital (soon to be Providence Cedars Sinai Tarzana Hospital). He is a past president of these organizations: the governing board of Providence Health and Services hospitals; the Los Angeles

Department of Water and Power board of commissioners and the Los Angeles Building and Safety Department. He is First President of Neighborhood Empowerment, a past commissioner of Los Angeles World Airports, and is past chair and current and founding board member of Genesis L.A. Alpert also serves on these advisory boards: Homes for Families, which provides affordable homes for military veterans; the Valley Industry and Commerce Association; the Valley Economic Alliance and New Directions for Youth. Alpert is past president of the San Fernando Valley Bar. He has received the Fernando Award for lifetime achievement.

FAVORITE PLACE TO VISIT: Golf clubs, parks or lakes. Why? Peace, tranquility and beauty of nature.

ECONOMY A YEAR FROM NOW: Sadly, truly uncertain, because of volatility and instability in Washington and world.

PASSION: Helping those in need. Grandkids, travel, athletics, reading, television/movies and friends.

**ERICK ARNDT**

SCV Startup

Erick Arndt, 48, is founder of SCV Startup, a content- and mentorship-driven accelerator program designed to help launch technology companies in the Santa Clarita Valley. Arndt also is a wealth advisor and co-founder of Virtue Wealth Management. He helps human resource directors and chief financial officers improve their retirement plans, teaches employees about money and helps clients pursue their financial and life goals. Arndt also is a member of the advisory board at College of the Canyons.

FAVORITE PLACE TO VISIT: Hollywood Bowl. What a wonderful venue. Can't wait for Mozart Under the Stars!

ECONOMY A YEAR FROM NOW: Up but I pray political leaders are paying attention and not just working on new taxes. The world is changing quickly, and we need to adapt.

PASSION: Self-improvement. Right now it's nutrition and feeding my body optimal food.

**SUE M. BENDAUID**

Lewitt, Hackman, Shapiro, Marshall & Harlan

Sue Bendauid, 56, is chair of the employment practice group at the Lewitt, Hackman, Shapiro, Marshall & Harlan law firm in Encino. For more than 29 years, she has exclusively represented employers in their legal matters. She is a strong proponent of employee claims prevention via management training and clearly established company policies. She also is co-chair of the Labor and Employment Committee of the Valley Industry and Commerce Association.

FAVORITE PLACE TO VISIT: Fryman Canyon in Studio City. I love to hike on the weekends and being in nature.

ECONOMY A YEAR FROM NOW: Like a roller coaster – up and down – due to political tensions and uncertainty.

PASSION: Being outdoors and having new experiences – like traveling to other cities and countries and learning the history.

**BARRY COHN**

Really Great Employee Benefits

Barry S. Cohn, 64, is president of Really Great Employee Benefits, an employee benefits consulting firm headquartered in Canoga Park, and the chief executive of JorgensenHR, headquartered in Santa Clarita. RGEB works with 350 companies, assisting them with employee benefits cost containment, compliance and employee engagement. JorgensenHR works with 150 companies, assisting them with all areas of human resources. Cohn serves on the boards of Valley Industry and Commerce Association and the Valley Economic Alliance. He has chaired three Light the Night Walks raising money for the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. He has served on the board and executive committee of Shomrei Torah Synagogue for 8 years as well as the UCLA Alumni Association executive committee and the board of the UCLA Foundation. He's also a member of ProVisors and other organizations.

FAVORITE PLACE TO VISIT: I like to walk or hike starting at the Victory Boulevard trailhead in Ahmanson Ranch.

ECONOMY A YEAR FROM NOW: I think the economy will be growing about the same, around 3 percent.

HOBBY OR PASSION: My favorite hobby is watching old movies, especially film noir, and reading mysteries, spy novels and nonfiction.

**MARTIN M. COOPER**

Cooper Communications, Inc.

Martin Cooper, 77, is president of Cooper Communications Inc., in Encino, a public relations and marketing firm he founded in 1982. Previously, Cooper was senior vice president-marketing and communications for Playboy Enterprises. Prior to that, he was senior vice president of a national public relations firm and supervised such clients as the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences with its annual Academy Awards and the Pasadena Tournament of Roses. Previously, he was Disneyland's advertising and promotion manager.

He has authored four books, one of which was a compilation of his Business Journal essays. He most recent book, "Read All About It! The San Fernando Valley: 1946-1970," won the annual CSUN Ottiatt Library Award for the best nonfiction book on the San Fernando Valley in 2016. He received his profession's highest award, the Public Relations Society of America's Silver Anvil. Founder of The Executives, a support group of the Jewish Home of the Aging, he was presented its highest honor, the Circle of Life Award. In 2014, he received the Fernando Award. He is past chairman of the Boys & Girls Club of the West Valley and chairman of the UCLA Film & Television Archive.

FAVORITE PLACE TO VISIT: Wherever there is good food, good wine, and good conversation...life's greatest pleasures.

ECONOMY A YEAR FROM NOW: Up – and down. Tariffs and a lack of a clear national fiscal policy lead to instability.

PASSION: Antique typewriters (1850-1930), Winston Churchill and travel.