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The San Diego Union-Tribune

COUNTY FINAL
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PLUS TAX

GUARDIANS OF THE GUARDED

Prison Law Office has been effective at improving conditions for state's inmates

By **Steve Schmidt**
STAFF WRITER

SAN RAFAEL — From her office near San Francisco Bay, Alison Hardy fights for the rights of thugs, gangsters, car-jackers and others doing time in state prison.

Got a problem with that? The 44-year-old attorney knows some Californians do. She has run into those who "resent when prisoners get any

attention. They are not comfortable with it."

Hardy works at the Prison Law Office, a team of Bay Area lawyers trying to protect the civil rights of California inmates and improve conditions behind prison walls.

Some consider them invaluable watchdogs, others meddling mollycoddlers. Either way, the Marin County organization has emerged as a legal powerhouse.

A case in point: A federal judge said Thursday he will place inmate health care operations in receivership, declaring the state prison medical system "terribly broken."

U.S. District Judge Thelton Henderson recently said an appointed overseer would have the latitude to reform the Department of Correction's "dysfunctional" health care program.

The unusual move stems

from a lawsuit filed in 2000 by the Prison Law Office that documented a pattern of poor inmate care within many of the state's 33 prisons.

It's also the latest, and one of the biggest, in a string of courtroom successes for the inmate-rights group.

While media attention has been focused in recent years on the power of the California's

SEE **Lawyers, A8**



Prison Law Office lawyers (from left) Steve Fama, Don Specter and Alison Hardy work to protect the civil rights of inmates in California. Dan Trevan / Union-Tribune

Mainline church OKs same-sex marriage

United Church of Christ votes

NEW YORK TIMES NEWS SERVICE
and COX NEWS SERVICE

ATLANTA — The United Church of Christ became the first mainline Christian denomination to officially support same-sex marriages when its general synod passed a resolution yesterday affirming "equal marriage rights for couples regardless of gender."

The vote set off a celebration in the Georgia World Congress Center. Gay couples hugged one another. Some wiped away tears. A group of UCC delegates joined hands afterward and sang "Amen." But other delegates rushed from the hall warning of schism within the 1.6 million-member denomination.

The resolution was adopted in the face of efforts to amend the U.S. Constitution to ban gay marriage. It was both a theological statement and a protest against discrimination, said the Rev. John Thomas, the president and general minister of the denomination.

"On this July 4, the United Church of Christ has courageously acted to declare freedom, affirming marriage equality, affirming the civil rights of gay — of same-gender — couples to have their relationships recognized as marriages by the state, and encouraging our local churches to celebrate those marriages," Thomas said at a news conference after the vote by the General Synod.

SEE **Gays, A8**

LONG MAY SHE WAVE



Two-year-old Sophia Cofinas of San Diego got an elevated view of the Fourth of July parade yesterday in downtown Julian from atop her father Jon's shoulders. Dan Trevan / Union-Tribune

SEE **STORY, B1**

Boat sale by 'Duke' made him \$400,000

Buyer's kin were lenders of Cunningham mortgage

By **Jerry Kammer**
and **Marcus Stern**
COPLEY NEWS SERVICE

CITY ISLAND, N.Y. — Rep. Randy "Duke" Cunningham made roughly a \$400,000 profit by selling the boat he lived aboard in the nation's capital from 1997 to 2002 to a businessman convicted in a bid-rigging scheme. The man said he subsequently got advice from Cunningham about how to pursue a presidential pardon from the Bush administration.

The businessman further acknowledged that a mortgage company owned by his daughter and nephew provided Cunningham with two loans totaling \$1.1 million so the congressman could buy his home in Rancho Santa Fe. The businessman said he eventually paid off one of those loans in partial payment for the yacht.

Cunningham bought the 65-foot flat-bottom riverboat Kelly C from then-Rep. Sonny Callahan, R-Ala., for \$200,000 in 1997. Five years later, he sold the boat for \$600,000 to Thomas Kontogiannis, the Long Island businessman said yesterday.

Kontogiannis defended the \$600,000 price tag as "a steal," saying that he had received an appraisal for twice that amount.

The Kontogiannis family is a frequent contributor to Republican causes, including a \$300 contribution to Cunningham in July 2002, the year of the sale.

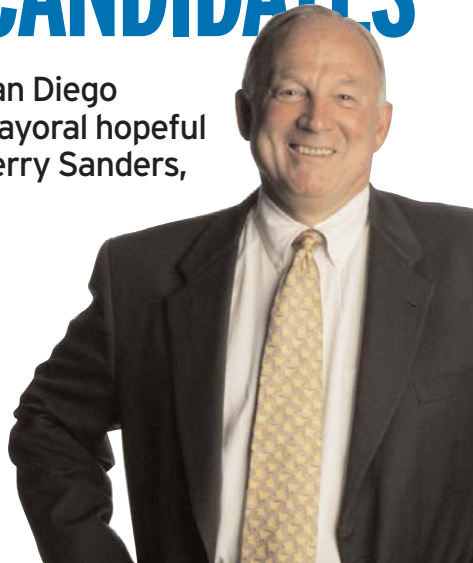
SEE **Cunningham, A8**

No show

• Rep. Randy "Duke" Cunningham cancels appearance at North County Fourth of July pancake breakfast. **B1**

INSIDE MEET THE CANDIDATES

San Diego mayoral hopeful Jerry Sanders, **B1**



Harry Potter and the heavy security

Extraordinary measures taken to safeguard book before July 16 release

By **Edward Wyatt**
NEW YORK TIMES NEWS SERVICE

The security plans are in place, the delivery efforts are under way and lawyers are standing by in case any copies of "Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince" go astray before 12:01 a.m. on July 16, the official time of release for the latest installment in the J.K. Rowling series.

There is only one thing left to do, in fact, in the days leading up to the release of 10.8 million copies of the Harry Potter book in the U.S. and millions more around the globe.

"You keep your fingers crossed," said Barbara Marcus, who oversees the children's book division of Scholastic Inc., the book's U.S. publisher. "You dot all the i's and you



New York Times News Service

cross all your t's, and then you keep your fingers crossed."

Not all the security measures, jointly organized by the publisher with the retailers, wholesale distributors and delivery companies involved in the rollout, are reliant simply on good fortune, of course.

Scholastic has closely policed the companies it works with to produce and distribute the book. It requires many of them and their customers, including librarians and the managers of individual stores, to sign affidavits promising that they will not release the book prematurely and will undertake all necessary security efforts.

At each of Amazon.com's five order-fulfillment centers, for example, the books are kept in a restricted area that workers need a special pass to enter, where they are watched by security guards and are not allowed to carry anything in or out. "We're being extremely careful that there is not an opportunity for

SEE **Potter, A10**



Hank Stram
1923-2005

Hall of Fame coach Hank Stram, who took the Kansas City Chiefs to two Super Bowls and was known for his inventive game plans and sideline exuberance, died yesterday. He was 82.

Obituary, D1

SEALs dead

Senior U.S. defense officials confirm that two Navy SEALs missing in Afghanistan have been found dead. **News, A10**

Padres lose

Craig Biggio's three-run homer knocks out San Diego in Houston. **Sports, D1**



No cure

Most women find there is one certainty in life: cellulite. **Currents Health, E1**



Voice for the poor

Think tank founder does his research, gets results. **Business, C1**

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