

Jackie Lacey

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NEWS RELEASE

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District Attorney Jackie Lacey Honors Three for Courageous Acts

Los Angeles County District Attorney Jackie Lacey today honored three people for their courage in coming to the aid of others in need.

The honorees included a man who intervened to stop a kidnapping during what would become a deadly child custody exchange in Whittier; a Sun Valley woman who testified in a domestic violence case when the victim refused to cooperate with prosecutors; and an 80-year-old man who was assaulted for trying to protect employees at a Monterey Park restaurant from a verbally abusive man.

“It is always a pleasure to honor the brave residents of Los Angeles County who have stepped up in the face of danger to help those in need,” District Attorney Lacey said. “I am proud and thankful for their dedication and courage to help my office prosecute violent offenders and contribute to the safety of our community.”

District Attorney Lacey recognized the honorees this afternoon at a Courageous Citizen Awards ceremony. It was hosted by the Rotary Club of Pasadena.

The Los Angeles County District Attorney’s Office presents these awards several times a year to people who have performed extraordinary acts of valor and selflessness in assisting in criminal prosecutions, aiding victims, preventing crimes or even capturing suspects.

Awards were presented to:

Byran Deering, 61, of Whittier (Presented by Deputy District Attorney Dan Akemon)

During a child custody exchange at the Whittier Police Department on June 11, 2018, a man kidnapped his children and their mother at knifepoint and forced her to drive them away. Along the way, she stopped the car and got out to seek help. The man drove away with her children. Mr. Byran Deering heard a commotion and came out of his house. He called 911 and put the woman in his house for safety. The man returned, held one of the children at knifepoint, while confronting Mr. Deering. Authorities

arrived and the man was killed. Mr. Deering's actions saved the woman and her children from greater harm.

Ana Celis, 42, of Sun Valley (Case no. PA087454, presented by Deputy District Attorney Julie Kramer)

On Sept. 9, 2016, Ms. Ana Celis was driving on Roscoe Boulevard in Sun Valley when she saw a man push a woman and force her into his car. Ms. Celis followed them and watched as the man punched the woman multiple times in the face. Ms. Celis got out of her car and yelled for him to stop, which he did. Ms. Celis called 911 and stayed with the woman until authorities arrived. When the victim refused to cooperate with law enforcement, Ms. Celis' eyewitness testimony helped secure a conviction.

The defendant pleaded no contest to one felony count of injuring a girlfriend in September 2017. He was sentenced to 364 days in county jail and five years of probation.

The case was investigated by the Los Angeles Police Department, Foothill Division.

Robert Melendrez, 80, of Whittier (Case no. GA100893, presented by Deputy District Attorney Presciliano Duran)

Mr. Robert Melendrez was eating at a Monterey Park restaurant on March 14, 2017, when a man entered and began verbally insulting employees. Mr. Melendrez, a retired Los Angeles County sheriff's deputy, intervened and demanded that the man leave the premises. As the man left, he threatened to wait outside for Mr. Melendrez. When Mr. Melendrez left, the man assaulted him, causing great bodily injury. Mr. Melendrez testified for the prosecution at trial.

The defendant was convicted in September 2017 of elder abuse and assault with a special allegation of great bodily injury on an elder. He was sentenced to eight years in state prison.

The case was investigated by the Monterey Park Police Department.

[About the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office](#)

Los Angeles County District Attorney Jackie Lacey leads the largest local prosecutorial office in the nation. Her staff of nearly 1,000 attorneys, 300 investigators and 800 support staff members is dedicated to protecting our community through the fair and ethical pursuit of justice and the safeguarding of crime victims' rights.