

Accused molester named in 2005 O.C. case

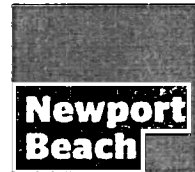
O.C. district attorney says Los Angeles counterparts want to handle charges. Suspect also lost volunteer privileges in local youth soccer organization last year.

BY JILL COWAN

A Newport Beach child likely will be added to the list of a former Los Angeles teacher's alleged sexual abuse victims, the Orange County district attorney's office said Friday.

Robert Pimentel, a 57-year-old Newport Beach resident who taught in a Wilmington school, was arrested Wednesday on suspicion of sexually abusing 20 children and an adult in Los Angeles County following an investigation started in March.

In 2005, the Newport Beach Police Department submitted a case involving Pimentel to the Orange County D.A., Chief of Staff Susan Kang Schroeder said. There were four alleged child victims — one from Newport Beach and three from Long Beach.



2005 and 2007.

Ultimately, though, "insufficient evidence, lack of corroboration, problems with the availability of witnesses and other evidentiary issues" led the OCDA not to file charges, she said.

But now that other victims have emerged, Schroeder said, "the [Los Angeles district attorney's office] has requested for their office to handle all of our charges as well as their charges."

Transferring such cases between counties is not unusual, she said, and increases judicial economy. Furthermore, Schroeder added, victims don't have to testify more than once.

She said as far as she's aware, the LADA is only planning to file charges related to the Newport Beach victim.

LADA spokeswoman Sandi Gibbons said the cases have not been charged, but it is not unusual to combine cases from Orange County to ease the prosecution of an individual accused of crimes in both counties.

Pimentel taught at George de la Torre Jr. Elementary School.

More details of his life outside the school district emerged Friday.

AYSO VOL'

Pimentel volunteered for almost seven years in the local youth soccer community before he was suspended in March, American Youth Soccer Organiza-

tion officials confirmed.

That's when Pimentel told AYSO Region 97 that he was under investigation by the Los Angeles Unified School District, though he didn't say what for.

Pimentel had worked as a registered volunteer coach and referee in the region since August 2005, according to an AYSO statement. Region 97 is a Newport-Mesa area division of the Torrance-based organization.

Pimentel coached boys and had a child who played soccer in AYSO, said spokesman George Passantino.

Although neither the district nor law enforcement contacted AYSO at the time, Pimentel's volunteer privileges were suspended immediately after the league learned of the investigation, as is standard any time allegations arise, he said.

"AYSO takes this very, very seriously, and when any type of a concern of

this sort comes up, it is addressed," Passantino said. "It's not casting judgment, but we're making sure those kids are safe. You've got 500,000 kids. That's a big responsibility, and we're proud of the reputation we have in that arena."

In the statement, the league also said it is "prepared to work closely" with law enforcement, should that become necessary.

All AYSO volunteers, Passantino said, are subject to background checks and must complete the organization's "Safe Haven" training program.

No players or parents have reported abuse by Pimentel to AYSO, but the league is encouraging players' parents to contact authorities if they have any relevant information.

Neighbors on a quiet street off Irvine Avenue near the Costa Mesa city line said they were shocked to hear about Pimentel's arrest.

On a gray afternoon, as rain dripped from the toys and lawn decorations sitting outside stucco houses, some described Pimentel as friendly and outgoing.

One neighbor who declined to give his name said he's known the family for more than 20 years and is skeptical of the charges.

He said that Pimentel was a touchy-feely sort, but not creepy, and is a good father.

Erin Mosher, 33, was also surprised about the allegations, she said, as her 4-year-old son darted around her legs.

"I could see nothing like

that from him," she said. "He's good with the kids. We've known him for years."

Pimentel, she recalled, seemed to be heavily involved with youth sports and would often joke around with her son about playing tee-ball when he got old enough.

She said she's not worried

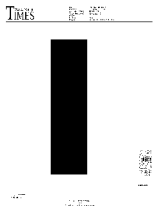
— "It is what it is."

"It's kind of unbelievable," she said. "But until there's evidence and stuff, you never know."

— *Los Angeles Times Staff Writer Richard Winton contributed to this report.*

jill.cowan@latimes.com

Twitter: @jillcowan

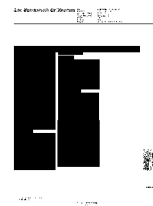
LOS ANGELES**Agency takes months to review misconduct**

Months after the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing was notified of a Los Angeles Unified elementary school teacher suspected of molesting at least a dozen students and a principal who failed to report him to authorities, the agency has not taken action on the cases.

Both educators retired soon after the Los Angeles Police Department started investigating the allegations last March. However, the commission's time lag in resolving the cases, which could include revoking the person's teaching credential, underscores how teachers accused of grievous misconduct can take advantage of a loophole and simply move on to another district.

Although districts routinely check teaching applicants' credentials, the record may not show if complaints are pending and applicants can appear as clear. By the time the commission takes action, the teachers are already employed and their credential may not be checked again for years.

Experts said studies show pedophile teachers work at, on average, three schools before they are caught.



LA Unified leaders sued over teacher sex abuse

CALIFORNIAN NEWS SERVICES

The current Los Angeles schools superintendent and five of his predecessors were sued Tuesday on grounds that they systematically covered up complaints about teacher sex abuse of students over the past two decades.

Digest Attorney Brian Claypool said he filed the suit on behalf of the 12 children and 19 parents he is representing in another lawsuit stemming from the 2012 case of a former third-grade teacher facing charges for allegedly feeding students his semen over five years. Principals as far back as 1992 had received complaints about the teacher, Mark Berndt, but no action had been taken against him.

Since that case at Miramonte Elementary School was made public a year ago, more cases of alleged teacher sex abuse and administrator inaction have surfaced in the district, including last week's arrest of a former elementary teacher on charges of molesting 12 students and the removal of a principal who failed to act on complaints about him since 2004.

SNOW SURVEY

California snow surveyors have confirmed what many feared after a relatively dry January — the water content of snow that has accumulated in the Sierra is slightly below average for this time of year.

Measurements show the water content at 93 percent of normal.

Early storms in November and December dumped snow ranging from 32½ to 44 inches around Echo Summit off of Highway 50. Very little has fallen since.

About a third of the state's water

comes from snowmelt.

NUDITY BAN

A federal judge cleared the way for the city of San Francisco to ban most displays of public nudity, ruling that an ordinance set to take effect on Feb. 1 does not violate the free speech rights of residents and visitors who like going out in the buff.

U.S. District Court Judge Edward Chen refused to block the ban temporarily or to allow a lawsuit challenging it to proceed.

BACKYARD BONES

Authorities say an Orange County man arrested after police found skeletal human remains in his former backyard has been charged with collecting more than \$100,000 in social security checks intended for his dead father. Prosecutors said in a statement that 65-year-old Larry Thomas Dominguez has been charged with felony theft by embezzlement.

UTILITY POLES-GNOMES

Small paintings of gnomes that have popped up on utility poles have become a community sensation in Oakland, prompting Pacific Gas & Electric Co. to say Tuesday that it will keep them in place for now.

The hand-painted portraits on 6-inch blocks of wood began going up last year in an apparent effort to brighten up the city. There are currently more than 2,000 of the images on utility poles, with many screwed to the bases.

The gnomes have red hats, white beards and brown shoes. Some of the images contain a mushroom.



LA Unifie leaders sued over teacher sex abuse

By **CHRISTINA HOAG**

ASSOCIATED PRESS

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"This is not negligence," Mr. Claypool said. "This is an intentional, calculated plan to quash complaints. We're now attacking 20 years of custom and practice."

Mr. Claypool likened what he called the district's culture of concealing complaints about pedophile teachers to the Roman Catholic Church's cover-up of pedophile

priests.

District General Counsel David Holmquist said in a statement that student safety is a top priority for the nation's second largest school district.

Since the Miramonte case, the district has extensively reviewed and overhauled its reporting policies and procedures, strengthened its system for reporting teacher misconduct to state credentialing authorities and instituted a parental notification system when a teacher is being investigated, among other efforts, Mr. Holmquist said.

Mr. Claypool noted that after Miramonte, Superintendent John Deasy ordered principals to comb through four decades of personnel files to find any unaddressed complaints of improper conduct, but principals previously were told not to put such complaints in personnel files, according to a memo from the Associated Administrators of Los Angeles.

"There's a culture in place. These administrators were trained not to report abuse," he said.

He also added that many of the teacher sex abuse cases have surfaced in schools located in poor, minority neighborhoods.

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L.A. teacher sex abuse leads to lawsuit

■ Attorney compares cases to pedophile priests

By Christina Hoag
 Associated Press

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