

Valley fever is a growing danger

Health officials in Central California struggle to warn visitors of risk from dust-loving fungus.

By SUSANNE RUST

When Nora Bruhn bought admission to the Lightning in a Bottle arts and music festival on the shores of Kern County's Buena Vista Lake earlier this spring, her ticket never mentioned she might end up with a fungus growing in her lungs.

After weeks of night sweats, "heaviness and a heat" in her left lung, a cough that wouldn't quit and a painful rash on her legs, her physician brother said she might have valley fever, a potentially deadly disease caused by a dust-loving fungus that lives in the soils of the San Joaquin Valley.

Bruhn said she hadn't been warned beforehand that Kern County and Buena Vista Lake are endemic for *Coccidioides* — the fungus that causes the disease.

"If there had been a warning that there's a potentially lethal fungal entity in the soil, there's no way I would have gone," said the San Francisco-based artist. "Honestly, I would have just been paranoid to breathe the whole entire time I was there."

The incidence and range of valley fever has grown dramatically over the last two decades, and some experts warn that the fungus is growing increasingly resistant to drugs — a phenomenon they say is due to the spraying of antifungal agents on area crops.

As annual cases continue to rise, local health officers have sought to increase awareness of the disease and its symptoms, which are often misdiagnosed. This messaging, however, focuses only on Kern County and other Central Valley locations and rarely reaches those who live outside Kern County, or other high-risk areas.

In the case of the Lightning in a Bottle festival, Bruhn said she wasn't provided with any information about the risk on her ticket, or in materials provided to

[See **Fever**, A10]



JEFF ROBERSON Associated Press

HELLISH HELENE

People ride through hurricane-ravaged Marshall, N.C., on Tuesday. Two days after Donald Trump visited the disaster zone against the advice of local officials, Kamala Harris arrived Wednesday in Georgia, where she took on a role Joe Biden is well known for — showing empathy to those in distress. **NATION, A5**

3 crises shaping presidential race

By JENNY JARVIE AND NOAH BIERMAN

ATLANTA — A trio of simultaneous crises sent the White House buzzing and threatened to reshape the presidential race this week, as President Biden and the two candidates vying to replace him scrambled to recalibrate their schedules and strategies for a world that felt even more chaotic than usual.

Any one of the events could have counted as an October surprise: a devastating hurricane in the Southeast that left nearly 180 dead; a dock-worker strike that could disrupt the economy, and an Iranian missile volley launched against Israel that ups tension in one of the world's most volatile regions.

The two candidates' approaches underscored the contrast both are trying to draw.

Former President Trump acted quickly and aggressively, descending into the hurricane zone on Monday, against the advice of local officials, where he delivered the first of many verbal attacks on his rival. Vice President Kamala Harris stayed in Washington, addressing the nation from FEMA headquarters and joining Biden for briefings in the situation room before traveling to Georgia on Wednesday, when officials said she could tour the area without being disruptive.

[See **Crises**, A4]

'We are here for the long haul,' Harris says in a projection of stability. Trump's dire message: 'The World is on fire.'



MICHAEL M. SANTIAGO Getty Images

FORMER President Trump visits Valdosta, Ga., in the aftermath of Hurricane Helene. He criticized President Biden's response to the crisis.

A RARE DEBATE: 5 takeaways from a notably civil evening with JD Vance and Tim Walz. **PERSPECTIVES, A2**

Nonprofit left string of failed homeless housing projects



GENARO MOLINA Los Angeles Times

TOD LIPKA, chief executive and president of the nonprofit Step Up on Second Street, stands in a newly built apartment building in Santa Monica in 2009.

Step Up helped inspire California's Homekey program. It denies it's at fault over outcomes, funds' use.

By ANNA SCOTT

One year ago, the Santa Monica-based homeless housing and services nonprofit Step Up on Second Street seemed like it was about to become a national player.

The politically connected organization had helped come up with California Gov. Gavin Newsom's "Homekey" homeless housing grant program and then, along with its for-profit real estate partner, had become a major recipient of Project Homekey funds.

Together, Step Up and its

partner, Shangri-La Industries, pulled in more than \$114 million to convert seven California motels into apartments for formerly unhoused tenants. By the summer of 2023, Step Up was ready to take that model nationwide, with similar projects lined up in North Carolina and Denver.

But getting the Homekey grants turned out to be the easy part. While Step Up and its partner lined up business elsewhere, the seven projects in California fell into debt. Instead of creating hundreds of badly needed apartments, the properties went into foreclosure and were taken over by lenders. Four remain empty and unfinished.

"It's incredibly disappointing," said Philip Mangano, a longtime figure in national homelessness policy who worked as a con-

[See **Homekey**, A7]

Teen killer's case haunts Gascón

Leniency for juveniles becomes key issue in the D.A. race. Critics cite an ex-con again accused of murder.

By RICHARD WINTON AND JAMES QUEALLY

The crime Shanice Amanda Dyer committed as a 17-year-old was as horrific as it was seemingly random.

She was a documented member of a Crips street gang faction in South L.A., according to appellate records from the case, and she wanted to help retaliate for killings by a rival group in August 2019.

The targets the gang chose at random were an expectant father, Alfredo Carrera, and his close friend Jose Antonio Flores Vasquez, an aspiring astrophysicist in UC Irvine's doctorate program who was visiting Carrera to drop off a baby gift. A car pulled up, with Dyer inside. After a brief argument, authorities said, Dyer and two other defendants unleashed a volley of gunfire, killing both men. A third man down the street was wounded in the back as he loaded his 1-year-old daughter into a car seat.

Dyer sent text messages taking responsibility for the shooting, saying she was "satisfied" it made headlines, according to a court of appeals filing that documented evidence gathered from her Instagram account.

Dyer was tried as a juvenile under Los Angeles County Dist. Atty. George Gascón, who at the time had a strict policy against prosecuting teens as adults. She admitted to the murder charges in 2021, and probation records reviewed by The Times show she was released last February. Six months later, she was arrested in connection with another homicide, this one in Pomona.

Dyer's case is one of sev-

[See **Juveniles**, A10]

Israel and Iran trade threats

The two countries vow more attacks as Hezbollah militants and Israeli troops fight in Lebanon. **WORLD, A3**

Summer COVID surge is over

Cases are finally down, state health officials say, reminding it's time to get vaccinated again. **CALIFORNIA, B1**

Dodgers hoping for best of Betts

He isn't entering the playoffs with hottest swing, but star has been freed from many stresses. **SPORTS, B10**

Weather

Mostly sunny; warm. L.A. Basin: 87/63. **B6**

For the latest news, go to **latimes.com**.

Printed with soy inks on partially recycled paper.



Don't miss L.A.'s next big story.

Download the app for breaking news notifications.

