WONDERFUL NURSERIES says the UFW used $600 in federal aid as bait to trick workers into unionizing.

ROBERT GAUTHIER Los Angeles Times

Were workers misled by the UFW?

Some farm employees say they were duped into unionizing, in a tangled labor dispute.

By Rebecca Plevin and Melissa Gomez

WASCO, Calif. — The revelation that United Farm Workers would be representing employees of a Kern County company owned by the state's wealthiest farming family should have been a triumphant moment for the storied union founded by Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta.

Following decades of diminishing membership in California's farm fields, the UFW had seized on a new way to unionize workers, made possible by recent state legislation.

Rather than hold a formal election at a company job site, union leaders invited employees of Wonderful Nurseries in Wasco, the nation's largest grapevine nursery, to off-site meetings where they were instructed in how to apply for $600 in federal pandemic relief for farmworkers. They were also encouraged to sign cards authorizing the UFW to represent them at Wonderful.

The UFW subsequently filed a petition with the Agricultural Labor Relations Board, asserting that a majority of the 600-plus Wonderful Nurseries workers had signed authorization cards asking that it be certified as their union representative. It appeared to mark the UFW's third victorious unionization drive in a matter of months.

But within days, Wonderful — part of the farming empire owned by billionaires Stewart and Lynda Resnick — hit back with an explosive allegation: The company accused the UFW of using the $600 in federal relief as bait to trick workers into signing the authorization cards. The company submitted nearly 150 signed declarations from nursery workers saying they had not understood that by signing the cards they were voting to unionize.

[See **Union,** A6]

HE LOST IDENTITY, THEN FREEDOM

After William Woods' ID was stolen in the '80s, he spent nearly 2 years in jail and a psychiatric hospital. Now he might sue the city of L.A.

By Brittny Mejia

Nobody believed William Woods.

They didn't believe someone had used his Social Security number to run up hundreds of thousands of dollars in debt. They didn't believe the Social Security card he carried was real.

Above all, no one believed he really was William Woods.

He was arrested for unauthorized use of personal information and spent nearly two years locked up awaiting trial, including more than 100 days in a psychiatric hospital. Woods eventually pleaded no contest in a Los Angeles court to identity theft and false impersonation in exchange for a time-served sentence and immediate release from custody.

Woods had never pretended to be anyone but himself. The problem, it turned out, was that someone had spent decades pretending to be Woods.

Last week, Matthew David Keirans pleaded guilty in the case to aggravated identity theft and making a false statement to a National Credit Union Administration-insured institution, according to the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Iowa.

Keirans, 58, faces up to 32 years in prison.

[See **ID theft,** A9]

GATHERED IN PRAYER

Worshipers hear a sermon about the suffering in the Gaza Strip as part of a Ramadan service at the Al Aqsa Mosque complex in Jerusalem. **WORLD, A3**

MARCUS YAM Los Angeles Times

Trail of death includes infant pushed out of car, police say

By Hannah Fry, Richard Winton and Noah Goldberg

The first sign of a tragedy that led investigators on a bizarre trail of violence across Los Angeles County began with an infant and her sister abandoned and injured on the 405 Freeway before sunrise.

Around 4:30 a.m. Monday near the Sepulveda Boulevard/Howard Hughes Parkway exit, officers found an 8-month old girl in the middle of the roadway. She had major injuries and died at the scene. A 9-year-old girl, who had moderate injuries, had made it to the side of the freeway after the pair were pushed out of a moving car, authorities said.

About half an hour later, police in Redondo Beach responded to reports that a black Porsche Cayenne crashed into a tree on Pacific Coast Highway near Vincent Street. The driver, identified by police as Danielle Cherakiyah Johnson, was pronounced dead at the scene.

At first, it wasn't clear that the two incidents were related.

But about two hours later, police arrived at John-

[See **Infant,** A9]

State fails to track homeless funds, audit says

After billions spent, data on programs' effectiveness are lacking, report finds.

By Mackenzie Mays

SACRAMENTO — California has failed to adequately monitor the outcomes of its vast spending on homelessness programs, according to a state audit released Tuesday, raising questions about whether billions of dollars meant to thwart the crisis has been worth it as the number of people living unsheltered has soared.

The report from the California state auditor's office found that a council created to oversee the implementation of homelessness programs has not consistently tracked spending or the outcomes of those programs.

That dearth of information means the state lacks pertinent data and that policymakers "are likely to struggle to understand homelessness programs' on-going costs and achieved outcomes," the audit says.

"The state must do more to assess the cost-effectiveness of its homelessness programs," State Auditor Grant Parks said in a letter sent to Gov. Gavin Newsom and state lawmakers Tuesday accompanying the audit.

California has spent $20 billion over the last five years dedicated to the state's homelessness crisis, including funneling money toward supporting shelters and subsidizing rent. Still, homelessness grew 6% in 2023 from the year prior, to more than 180,000 people, according to federal "point in time" data. Since 2013, homelessness has grown in California by 53%.

The California Interagency Council on Homelessness — created in 2016 to oversee the state's implementation of programs dedicated to the worsening crisis — has not ensured the accuracy of the information in a state data system and has not evaluated homelessness programs' success, ac-

[See **Homelessness,** A5]

HOMELESSNESS has grown in California despite state efforts to tackle it. Above, Skid Row in L.A.

RICHARD VOGEL Associated Press

A debate over cost of fertility care

A state bill would require large insurers to cover IVF and other treatments.

By Mackenzie Mays

In between chemotherapy, a double mastectomy and all the other medical appointments that come with a cancer diagnosis, Katie McKnight rushed to start the in vitro fertilization process in hopes that she could one day give birth when she recovered.

McKnight, 34, of Richmond, Calif., was diagnosed in 2020 with a fast-spreading form of breast cancer. IVF can help boost chances of pregnancy for cancer patients concerned about the impacts of the disease and its treatment on fertility. The process involves collecting eggs from ovaries and fertilizing them with sperm in a lab, then implanting them in a uterus.

But after having begun the process — being sedated to retrieve her eggs and paying hundreds of dollars annually to properly store the embryos made with her husband — McKnight can't afford right now to get the embryos out of a freezer.

"You either have to be able to access a lot of money, or you just keep them frozen and suspended there. It's such a weird place to be," McKnight said last month as she prepared to head into her fifth reconstructive breast surgery. "I got this far, now how am I going to finish this? How am I going to actually realize this dream?"

[See **Fertility,** A7]

Arizona court upholds abortion ban

The 1864 law makes no exceptions for rape or incest. The issue could be a boost to Democrats. **NATION, A4**

Former Dodger Urias charged

He faces misdemeanor charges stemming from 2023 arrest in domestic violence. **SPORTS, B9**

Weather

Sunny and warm. L.A. Basin: 81/56. **B6**

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Theater owners' 'stark challenges'

At CinemaCon, exhibitors make a plea for more movies and less piracy. **BUSINESS, A8**

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