Feasting at the lobster fest

Diners, above, sink their teeth into their meals at the Port of Los Angeles Lobster Festival on Saturday at Ports O' Call Village in San Pedro as one of the lobsters, right, awaits its turn to be devoured. The weekend waterfront festival of food and music continues today from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Steve McCrank *Staff Photographer*

More than 10,000 gather to clean up county beaches

SOUTH BAY: Bowling pins, mattresses and furniture are among odd discoveries.

By Josh Grossberg Staff Writer

Like they do every year, thousands of people descended on the region's beaches and waterways on Saturday to clean up the trash that others have left behind.

And like they do every year, they found plenty of oddball items in their search: A World War I gas mask off the Santa Monica Pier, bowling pins at Ken Molloy Harbor Regional Park in Harbor City, chairs and mattresses in San Pedro.

One of the most tantalizing items was a fully intact wallet off the waters of Santa Monica. Inside were $6 in cash, four credit cards and a driver's license that expired in 2004.

King said the wallet belonged to an Encino woman and efforts were under way to locate her.

Among the 10,964 people who joined the effort across the county were a seemingly large number of South Bay residents.

"We're particularly pleased by the increasing turnout in the South Bay, said Matthew King, a spokesman for Heal the Bay, which has organized the event for the past 27 years. "It's fair to say that the South Bay is one of the strongest regions in Los Angeles County."

Helping out were 225 volunteers who picked up 205 pounds of garbage in Hermosa Beach, 365 people who gathered 240 pounds of trash at the Manhattan Beach Pier, 315 people who found 384 pounds of refuse in Playa del Rey and 191 people who collected 115 pounds near the Redondo Beach Pier.

In all, more than 1,000 people joined in at sites across the South Bay and Harbor Area, King said.

An unusually large amount of trash was found at Abalone Cove in Rancho Palos Verdes, where 135 pounds of scrap metal was found.

Although the beaches get most of the attention, volunteers worked at sites in landlocked areas that produce debris that end up in waterways that connect to the ocean. About 75 percent of marine trash comes from farther inland, according to Heal the Bay.

"We're encouraged by the number off people that come out every year," King said. "A single day is not going to remove all the trash, but I think it's a powerful day of action."

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Army Spc. Koran Pulido Contreras began growing last week, after word spread through the Hermosa Beach skateboarding community that the 21-year-old had died Sept. 8 on a Kandahar Province battlefield.

"He was a good guy," said Blake Zingale, a member of [illegible] Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division, based in Fort Drum, N.Y.

Although he grew up in Lawndale and graduated from Leuzinger High School in 2007, Contreras enjoyed spending time in Hermosa Beach.

SOLDIER A7

Harbor women's shelter to open

WILMINGTON: A celebration marks the end of work on the homeless center.

By Josh Grossberg
Staff Writer

After years of planning and praying, the Harbor Area's first shelter for homeless women is poised to open.

On Monday, the Doors of Hope shelter at 525 Broad Ave. in Wilmington will welcome women in need.

But on Saturday, it was time to celebrate the hard work and dedication it took to get to this point.

"It's absolutely exquisite," said staffing coordinator Terreah Dietel. "Women who feel hopeless are going to be helped."

The new 6,500-square-foot facility is next to a 20-bed shelter Beacon Light Mission for men. While the new facility for women will also house 20 people, organizers are starting with 10 on Monday to make sure everything is running smoothly.

"We've seen women who look like they've been sleeping in the dirt, and they have," said Pastor Virgil Best. "We want to change that, love them and give them a sense of peace."

The Beacon Light Mission, which was founded originally in San Pedro, serves about 30,000 meals a year and provides temporary housing for roughly 8,000 male transients.

The new facility will be run entirely by volunteers. Money was raised entirely through efforts of local churches and donations. No public money was used.

Volunteers and staff at the Broad Avenue shelter raised close to $1 million for construction and planning. Local contractors provided some work for free.

The center will include

SHELTER A7