

Boys & Girls Clubs Cheryl Green center honors another Harbor Gateway shooting victim

By **LARRY ALTMAN** | laltman32@gmail.com | Contributing Writer

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Omar Martinez visited the Boys & Girls Clubs of South Bay/Cheryl Green Community Center for the first time on Monday. Until now, he had never wanted to.

But Monday, the San Pedro resident proudly stood on the Harbor Gateway center's new basketball court, which was dedicated during a ceremony in memory of his uncle, Arturo Ponce.

"He finally got his recognition," Martinez said, looking over at a plaque on the wall above the court. "I mourned a lot and I still recognize my uncle in my prayers. He was never forgotten."

Ponce, who was shot to death in Harbor Gateway on Dec. 5, 2006, was honored during a rededication of the Boys & Girls Club's Harbor Gateway center, [which opened on a dirt lot in 2009 in memorv of Cheryl Green](#). a 14-year-old black girl



Boys Club officials and politicians showed off the facility's newly repainted bungalow, play area and garden, and paved basketball court built during the last few weeks. The renovations, largely funded by Phillips 66, WSS shoes and Sharefest, improved on the center inspired by Green's death as a place for children to safely gather.

"We turn this tragic incident into an opportunity of inspiration and an opportunity of hope and faith," said Joe Buscaino, who represents the area on the Los Angeles City Council.

For Mike Herrera, executive director of Boys & Girls Clubs of South Bay, Monday marked the first day of the busy summer season for his clubs. The Harbor Gateway center serves some 60 children a day, most of whom have nowhere else to go while school is not in session.

The center offers sports, tutoring, beach trips and other activities, including upcoming plans for dancing and drama classes. The Toberman and GAP anti-gang programs also use the site as a base for their outreach activities.

When the center opened, it was housed in a bungalow left over from the temporary facility the Los Angeles Police Department used in Wilmington while the Harbor Division station was built. Its former roll-call area is now a room used for reading, learning and computers.

"I know there is still much more to come," said Charlene Lovett, Cheryl's mother. "This is still just the beginning."

Lovett and her family moved away from Harbor Gateway after Cheryl died. At the time, the area's Latino and black gangs were at war. Cheryl's killer — a Latino gang member — opened fire on her on Dec. 15, 2006, because she stood with friends on a corner considered the dividing line that blacks should not cross. Cheryl was black.

Her death sparked outrage. Television cameras parked their trucks throughout the neighborhood, politicians marched with Lovett, and law enforcement agents raided houses and dismantled the area's gangs. [Her killer eventually was convicted and sentenced to the death penalty.](#)

And, out of it, the Harbor Gateway Boys & Girls Club sprung, with Green's deserving name on it.

Ponce had just learned earlier that day that he had been named a chef at The Depot restaurant in nearby Torrance.

"He was from Jalisco," Martinez said. "When he came over here his dream was to become a chef. He started as a busboy. ... When he finally did, we were celebrating in the house. Then this happened."

Martinez was grateful for his uncle's honor, thanking the crowd of about 100 people for their attendance. He said Monday marked the first time his uncle was remembered outside the family. It was about time.

"That's really good," he said.

U.S. Rep. Janice Hahn, who formerly represented the area on the Los Angeles City Council and helped to spearhead the club's Harbor Gateway center, joined Buscaino and a representative from U.S. Rep. Maxine Waters' office to rededicate it.

In addition to Green and Ponce, the center memorialized longtime Harbor Gateway community member Mary Ann Cyphers, naming a children's play area for her, and William Horst, a community member who operated a food bank in the neighborhood, naming a corner waiting area for him. Cyphers died in 2010, Horst in 2013.

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 Author **Larry Altman** | Contributing Writer

Larry Altman has covered crime and court proceedings in Southern California since 1987. A graduate of Cal State Northridge, where he served as editor of the college newspaper, Altman has worked for the Daily Breeze since 1990. The Society of Professional Journalists named him a "Distinguished Journalist" in Los Angeles in 2006. Altman's work was featured twice on CBS' "48 Hours" and he appeared eight times with "Nancy Grace," who called him "dear." He has covered hundreds of homicides and many trials. Altman has crawled through a mausoleum to open a coffin, confronted husbands who killed their wives, wives

other current and former newspapermen, runs a real estate empire and likes to watch old movies on TCM.

laltman32@gmail.com

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