

# BUSINESS

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## State water resources director will speak at SB County conference

Mark Cowin, director of the California Department of Water Resources, will headline the San Bernardino County Water Conference scheduled from 8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Aug. 12 at the Ontario Convention Center.

The conference, titled "When Crises Collide: Overcoming California's Water Challenges during Drought & Recession," will include a panel of representatives from private industries, water agencies and county and city governments.

County Board of Supervisors Chairman Gary Ovitt, Supervisors Vice Chairwoman Josie Gonzales and representatives of the Mojave Water Agency and the Rancho Cucamonga-based Baldy View Chapter of the Building Industry Association are set to attend.

To purchase tickets or inquire about sponsorship, contact Nicole Desmond at 909-795-7760 or visit [www.sbcwater.com](http://www.sbcwater.com). The price is \$125 per person, which includes a continental breakfast and a buffet lunch.

## National University signs lease, will expand operations in Ontario

National University, a private nonprofit institution for higher education, signed a lease with CIP Real Estate for 25,018 square feet in the Empire Towers office park in Ontario.

The lease, valued at \$4.15 million, expands the school's site there and includes space to house the university's nurse training program.

"National University is making a significant investment in both the Ontario office market and its surrounding community," said Scott Flemer, senior vice president at CIP Real Estate. "We are honored to work with the university as it expands to provide much-needed educational opportunities for the residents of the Inland Empire."

CIP Real Estate is an Irvine-based commercial real estate investment and management company. It owns four of the five Empire Towers buildings with a partner, Guggenheim Real Estate. National University occupies 12,902 square feet at 3800 Concourse St. in Ontario for its administrative offices and vocational programs. The school is based in La Jolla and has 22,000 full-time students.

## Business tips to be offered at Ontario breakfast event

Commercial Real Estate Women Inland Empire will have a summer breakfast event from 7:30 to 9 a.m. July 21 at Citizens Business Bank, 701 N. Haven Ave., Ontario.

Featured will be Dino Champagne, division manager of Asset Preservation Inc., who will talk about ways to generate business.

For more information, go to [www.crew-ie.org](http://www.crew-ie.org), or call 951-639-3794. Registration deadline is July 20.

## Springboard in Riverside receives HUD designation

Riverside-based Springboard Nonprofit Consumer Credit Management announced that it has been approved by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development as a regional intermediary agency.

Springboard is a nonprofit community service organization that works to strengthen communities and improve the lives of consumers by offering services that promote financial literacy, homeownership and a healthy economy, a spokesman said.

The HUD designation means that Springboard serves a distinct regional area with branches or affiliates in eight or fewer states. As a regional intermediary agency, Springboard provides training, technical assistance, oversight and pass-through funding to regional affiliates or branches.

Springboard is among the largest nonprofit HUD-approved housing counseling agencies in the Southwest with offices in California, Nevada, Arizona, Texas and New Mexico.

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## THE TICKER

Economic news from across the globe

● **Scott Davis, the chairman and CEO of UPS**, this week was named by President Barack Obama to the President's Export Council. As the top advisory committee on global trade, the President's Export Council advises the president on government policies and programs that affect U.S. trade performance, while also providing a forum for discussing and resolving trade-related problems among businesses, industrial, agricultural, labor and government sectors. UPS' western regional distribution hub is in Ontario.

● **The top regulator of the largest U.S. banks** will leave office when his term expires next month. Comptroller of the Currency John Dugan, a Bush appointee and former bank lobbyist, plans to depart the job on Aug. 14. He announced his plans Thursday in a letter to President Barack Obama. Dugan runs the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency, which oversees national banks and U.S. divisions of foreign banks. It regulates the largest Wall Street retail banks, as well as 1,500 smaller institutions. Banks overseen by the OCC control more than half the banking assets in the industry.

● **BP shares are closing in on a second straight weekly gain** as the oil company gets closer to plugging a blown-out well in the Gulf of Mexico. The shares have come as BP has taken 23 percent since hitting a 14-year low of \$27.02 on June 25. They rose slightly Thursday, gaining 16 cents to \$33.35 in afternoon trading. The gains have come as BP has taken steps to reassure business partners in the Middle East and Russia that it remains a viable company. BP also is moving closer to completing two relief wells meant to stem the oil gusher in the Gulf.

The Associated Press

# Slow tick upward

## Inland Empire wages rank below the national average

By **Ryan Carter** Staff Writer

During the Great Recession, workers in the Inland Empire made 4 percent less of an hourly wage than their counterparts throughout the nation, the federal government said Thursday.

But local wages slowly ticked upward from this time last year.

In the San Bernardino-Ontario-Riverside metropolitan area, the average

hourly wage in May 2009 was \$20.11, compared with the national average of \$20.90.

The numbers were a snapshot of the economy a year ago, but likely reflect the Inland Empire's still developing economy — one hit hard by the crash in housing, building and 13.9 percent unemployment, experts said.

"If we look at unemployment in the area, we can see a number of sectors ... like construc-

tion that have lost employment, and that may be a key factor here," said David Kong, a statistician for the Labor Department.

Jobs in health care, office and administrative service all saw average hourly wages above the national rate.

Sales and administrative support made up the largest percentage of the work force in the region. But if you are in management, business and financial operations, arts, design or media, the picture was different, the Labor Department report noted. Management, business and financial opera-

tions all had average wages below the national average and made up notably less of the work force.

That wasn't a big surprise to Thomas Pierce, professor of economics at Cal State San Bernardino.

"Generally, if you look at employment, comparing the Inland Empire to Orange County or San Diego, you would find that the percentage of workers employed in professional positions, and probably in skilled labor, would be lower here," he said.

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Jennifer Cappuccio Maher Staff Photographer

Saul Sifuentes of Fontana grills chicken Thursday at an El Pollo Loco in Rialto.

# The grill of it all

## Locals place high in El Pollo Loco contest

By **Rebecca U. Cho** Staff Writer

Next time an urge for grilled chicken hits, a stop at an El Pollo Loco in Rialto or Pomona may be the way to go.

Ramon Cano, a Pomona resident and cook in an El Pollo Loco in Pomona, took second place in a national El Pollo Loco grill-off, beating out more than 1,000 contestants to become a finalist in the chain's annual Grill Master Challenge.

Fontana resident Saul Sifuentes, a cook in one of the chain's two Rialto restaurants, placed fifth.

Both first-time participants, they were two of six finalists who competed for the top prize last month.

"I was following what I've always been taught," Sifuentes said through a translator. "I love my job. I always take pride in my job."

Growing up in Zacatecas, Mexico, Sifuentes said he enjoyed cooking, especially chicken.

He took a position as a cook in the El Pollo Loco in Rialto two years ago.

Cano, who started at the chain in 2007 making burritos, said he likes to cook traditional Mexican seafood dishes. He said he joined the contest at the urging of his general manager.

"I was surprised when I won the regional," Cano said. "There were a lot of cooks. When they told me I was going to the

next round, I was very happy and surprised."

Cooks from more than 400 El Pollo Loco restaurants competed in regional competitions before the six finalists fired up their grills in Los Angeles last month.

Two stars from Bravo's "Flipping Out," Jeff Lewis and Jenni Pulos, participated as guest judges.

The event tested the cooks' abilities to prepare citrus-marinated, flame-grilled chicken and carne asada-style steak.

A panel of grilling experts judged the finalist's techniques in preparing, cooking, cutting and presenting the chicken and steak to the tasting judges. A blind taste test helped determine the winner.

The difficulties of preparing grilled chicken are in controlling the intensity of the flames and the amount of time the chicken stays on the grill, Sifuentes said. Chicken can easily dry out or burn on the outside.

Cano received \$1,250 in cash. Sifuentes won \$500.

The winner, Demetrio Jurado of Los Angeles, an El Pollo Loco cook for 20 years, won \$2,500.

Cano cooks at the El Pollo Loco at 72 Rio Rancho Road in Pomona. Sifuentes is at the El Pollo Loco at 1663 S. Riverside Ave. in Rialto.

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# Retailers steepen discounts

The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Stores deepened discounts more than planned in June to draw recession-scarred shoppers to buy summer tops and other merchandise. But shoppers bought mostly items they needed, resulting in small revenue gains.

The mixed results from June, released Thursday, are raising concerns about the

back-to-school season and consumers' ability and willingness to hit the accelerator on spending. The International Council of Shopping Centers' index of June retail sales rose 3 percent, the low end of its growth forecast that ranged from 3 to 4 percent. But that's compared with a 5.1 percent decline in June 2009.

The figures are based on revenue at stores open at

least a year and are a key indicator of retailers' health.

The third straight month of modest sales gains after a surprisingly solid start to the year underscores the choppiness of the economic recovery and puts more pressure on retailers to come up with innovative tactics to get shoppers to spend in the critical months ahead, instead of just resorting to price slashing.

## LOCAL-INTEREST STOCKS

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American States Water (AWR)	34.83	▲0.53
Ameron International (AMN)	60.00	▲0.55
Bank of America (BAC)	14.86	▲0.15
Boeing Co (BA)	64.73	▲1.43
Chino Commercial Bank (CCBC.OB)	14.90	0.00
CVB Financial Corp. (CVBF)	10.00	▲0.29
Edison International (EIX)	32.97	▲0.36
Exxon Mobil Corp (XOM)	58.81	▲0.38
Ford Motor Co. (F)	10.62	▲0.03
General Electric (GE)	14.83	▲0.21
Gilead Sciences (GILD)	34.82	▼0.12
Hormel (HRL)	42.02	▲0.18
Inland Community Bank (ICBN.OB)	2.20	0.00
JPMorgan Chase (JPM)	38.16	▲0.01

KB Home (KBH)	10.97	▼0.17
Lockheed Martin (LMT)	76.15	▲0.74
Macys (M)	18.44	▲0.53
Mitsubishi UFJ Ltd. (MTU)	4.87	▲0.06
Northrop Grumman (NOC)	56.17	▲0.58
Occidental Petroleum (OXY)	80.91	▲1.33
PacWest (PACW)	19.60	▲0.33
Pacific Premier Bancorp (PPBI)	3.96	▼0.16
Rockwell Collins (COL)	55.06	▲0.90
Rockwell Automation (ROK)	51.66	▲0.96
Security Bank of California (SCAF.OB)	8.05	▲0.30
Sempra Energy (SRE)	48.85	▲0.36
Southwest Gas (SWX)	30.94	▲0.30
United Parcel Service (UPS)	59.96	▲0.49
US Bancorp. (USB)	23.24	▲0.31
Verizon (VZ)	26.78	▲0.26
Watson Pharmaceuticals (WPI)	42.46	▲0.45
Wells Fargo (WFC)	26.64	▼0.02

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