

José Cruz González, a Watsonville native, recently received Cal State LA President's Distinguished

Watsonville native receives Distinguished Professor Award

REGISTER-PAJARONIAN STAFF REPORT LOS ANGELES — A Watsonville native who is a professor at Cal State LA was one of six faculty members recogonized for excellence in the classroom and service to the community during the 2016 University Convocation at the

Luckman Fine Arts Complex.

A Cal State LA President's Distinguished Professor Award was presented to José Cruz González on Aug. 18. This award, which goes to a previous outstanding professor recipient, recognizes the faculty member's superlative teaching and commitment to students, as well as professional accomplishments and services.

Raised in Watsonville, González is a professor of theater in the Department of Music, Theatre and Dance at Cal State

González is an acclaimed playwright and director whose academic career has focused on reaching and inspiring young people with artistic experiences.

He is coordinator of The John Lion New Plays Festival at Cal State LA, which he created in 1997 to stage the best student works in his playwriting classes. Since 1990, he has helped mentor students as a principal academic adviser and a member of the master's thesis committees for the Department of Music, Theatre and Dance.

Gonzalez's plays have been produced nationally and include "American Mariachi," "The Astronaut Farmworker," "The Long Road Today," "Waking Up in Lost Hills" and "The Magic Rainforest."

His published works consist of a collection of his plays, "Nine Plays by José Cruz González: Magical Realism & Mature Themes in Theatre for Young Audiences." He also has written for PAZ, the Emmy Award-nominated television series produced by Discovery Kids for The Learning Channel.

González has received awards including the 2015 Orlin Corey Medallion by the Children's Theatre Foundation, 2012 Ann Shaw Fellowship by Theatre for Young Audiences/USA, 2010 Kennedy Center National Teaching Artist Grant, and 2009 American Alliance for Theatre & Education Distinguished Book Award. He received his M.A. from Arizona State University and M.F.A. from UC Irvine.

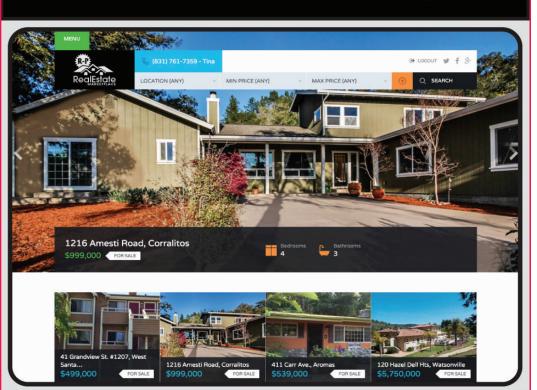
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Thousands of firefighters still on fire lines

SAN SIMEON — More than 10,000 firefighters battled wildfires Monday from California's Central Coast to Sierra Nevada forests or mopped up remnants of destructive blazes beaten into submission up and down

Nearly 1,900 structures were threatened by a nearly 50-squaremile blaze in coastal San Luis Obispo and Monterey counties, where more than 2,400 people were under evacuation orders, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection said.

The blaze was just 35 percent contained after destroying 34 homes and 14 other buildings.

Hearst Castle, the palatial ocean-view estate built by the late newspaper publisher William Randolph Hearst and a major stop on summer road trips, remained closed because of proximity to the fire.

Eighty miles up the coast, California's biggest fire grew to nearly 135 square miles in rugged wilderness coast along Highway 1 north of Big Sur.

More than 400 homes remained threatened by the fire,

which was started July 22 by an illegal campfire and has destroyed 57 homes and 11 other buildings. A bulldozer operator was killed in a rollover accident last month.

The prevalence of poison oak in the region was proving a problem. Five hundred firefighters, including 200 in the past three days, had sought treatment after contact with the toxic shrub, authorities said.

In the Santa Ynez Mountains above Santa Barbara, a wildfire expanded to nearly 37 square miles as it chewed through critically dry brush, grass and oak canopies.

Just 20 percent contained, the blaze has caused the closure of campgrounds and recreation areas but remains far from communities. It was, however, a threat to vegetation in watersheds important to supplies on the south coast of Santa Barbara County.

In the southern Sierra Nevada, a fire feeding on critically dry, beetle-killed timber expanded to more than 30 square miles of Sequoia National Forest in Kern and Tulare counties

northwest of Lake Isabella. Nearly 1,600 people in 13 small communities were under mandatory evacuations orders and evacuations were recommended for a half-dozen others, said fire spokesman Naaman Horn. He said the fire is within a mile of the community of Alta Sierra in Kern County.

Thunderstorms were a concern as well Monday, not for rain, but due to potential for lightning and gusty winds.

Sixty miles east of Los Angeles, minimal activity was seen at fire that burned nearly 58 square miles and 105 homes in Cajon Pass and the San Gabriel Mountains last week. With all evacuations lifted, firefighters were extinguishing hotspots and doing erosion control while utility crews replaced infrastructure lost to the blaze.

At Lower Lake, 80 miles north of San Francisco, recovery efforts remained underway in the aftermath of hard-hit Lake County's latest wildfire, which destroyed 189 homes since erupting Aug. 13. A man has been charged with arson in connection with that fire and others.

Court decision keeps teacher tenure protections

SAN FRANCISCO — In a victory for teacher unions, a divided California Supreme Court decided Monday to let the state's teacher tenure law stand.

The high court decided 4-3 not to review a lower court ruling that upheld tenure and other job protections for teachers. That ruling came in a lawsuit by

a group of students who claimed that incompetent teachers were almost impossible to fire because of tenure laws and that schools in poor neighborhoods were dumping grounds for bad teachers.

The case was closely watched around the country and highlighted tensions between teacher unions, school leaders,

lawmakers and well-funded education reform groups over whether policies like tenure and firing teachers with the least seniority keep ineffective instructors in the classroom, particularly in already lowperforming schools.

Dozens of states have moved in recent years to get rid of such protections or raise the standards for obtaining them.

Associate Justice Goodwin Liu voted for the California Supreme Court to take up the case, saying it affected millions of students statewide and presented a significant legal issue that the lower court likely got

"As the state's highest court, we owe the plaintiffs in this case, as well as schoolchildren throughout California, our transparent and reasoned judgment on whether the challenged statutes deprive a significant subset of students of their fundamental right to education and violate the constitutional guarantee of equal protection of the laws," he said.



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