

# Jackie Lacey

District Attorney  
<http://da.lacounty.gov>



NEWS RELEASE

**Media Contact:**

Ricardo Santiago  
Public Information Officer  
213-257-2000  
[RSantiago@da.lacounty.gov](mailto:RSantiago@da.lacounty.gov)  
Twitter: @LADAOoffice

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## **District Attorney Jackie Lacey Honors Five Who Came to the Aid of Children**

Los Angeles County District Attorney Jackie Lacey today recognized five people who helped rescue young children from potentially deadly situations: a 3-year-old boy sexually assaulted by his own mother; an unattended toddler who wandered onto a freeway on-ramp; and four children who were eating tacos when they were confronted by a man who said he had a gun.

“Today’s program will showcase five heroes who acted on behalf of those too young to defend themselves against danger,” District Attorney Lacey said. “They are role models and their actions are a reminder that we all must do more to safeguard our youngest victims from the abuse and neglect they may suffer – sometimes at the hands of the very people who are supposed to protect them.”

The honorees were a man who ignored threats of physical violence when he took a co-worker’s mobile phone containing child pornography and gave it to authorities; three women who saw a hungry, dirty toddler near a freeway in Echo Park and intervened; and a Bellflower mother who distracted a man who said he had a badge and gun until authorities arrived.

District Attorney Lacey recognized the honorees this afternoon at a Courageous Citizen Awards ceremony hosted by the Rotary Club of Los Angeles in downtown Los Angeles.

The Los Angeles County District Attorney’s Office presents these awards several times a year to people who have performed extraordinary acts of valor and selflessness in assisting in criminal prosecutions, aiding victims, preventing crimes or even capturing suspects.

Awards were presented to:

**Joshua Anderson, 25, of Las Vegas. (Case no. MA067997, presented by Deputy District Attorney Keri Knittel)**

Joshua Anderson was visiting a co-worker’s home in Palmdale on Feb. 7, 2016, when he borrowed the man’s mobile phone and discovered videos containing child pornography on it. Upon seeing the

disturbing images, Mr. Anderson left the home and took the phone with him. The phone's owner confronted Mr. Anderson and threatened to beat him. Yet, Mr. Anderson refused to return the phone and brought it to authorities. Soon after, police arrested the man and located the woman he had instructed to send him the pornographic videos of her 3-year-old son.

In February 2017, the woman pleaded no contest to two counts of forcible oral copulation of a child under 14. She was sentenced to 24 years in state prison. The man was found guilty of numerous sex crimes, including possession of child pornography. He was sentenced to 92 years in state prison on March 2.

The case was investigated by the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department.

**Jenny Unger, 40, of Pico Rivera, Alexandra Plascencia, 28, of Los Angeles and Veronica Gonzalez, 40, of Bellflower. (Case no. BA461699, presented by Deputy District Attorney Irene Lee)**

During rush hour traffic on Oct. 5, 2017, a 3-year-old boy was walking alone on the right shoulder of an on-ramp to the south 101 Freeway in Echo Park, when three drivers noticed him and stopped to get him out of harm's way. Jenny Unger, Alexandra Plascencia and Veronica Gonzalez saved the toddler from entering the dangerous freeway traffic. The child was wearing only a soiled diaper. Ms. Gonzalez called police. They waited with the boy, giving him water, wrapping him in a blanket and holding him, until authorities arrived.

On Nov. 8, 2017, the mother pleaded no contest to felony child abuse and was entered in a woman's reentry program and drug treatment.

The California Highway Patrol, Central Los Angeles Station, investigated the case.

**Sylvia Reyna, 44, of Bellflower. (Case no. 8EM03382, presented by Deputy District Attorney Nicole Venegas)**

Sylvia Reyna was standing outside her car eating tacos at a food truck in Bassett on June 10. Her four young children were inside the vehicle, when a man approached, startling them. He displayed what he said was a police badge and showed Ms. Reyna what looked like a handgun. When Ms. Reyna saw the weapon, she feared that she or her family would be harmed. To distract the man, she offered him a taco. While he ate, Ms. Reyna slowly walked toward a group of people gathered in front of the food truck and told them that the man had a gun. The police were called and the man was arrested.

On June 15, the defendant entered a no-contest plea to one misdemeanor count each of impersonating an officer and cruelty to a child by endangering health. He was sentenced to four years of summary probation, 120 days in county jail and a one-year mental health program.

The case was investigated by the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department.

### [About the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office](#)

Los Angeles County District Attorney Jackie Lacey leads the largest local prosecutorial office in the nation. Her staff of nearly 1,000 attorneys, 300 investigators and 800 support staff members is dedicated to protecting our community through the fair and ethical pursuit of justice and the safeguarding of crime victims' rights.