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THE SUN

San Bernardino County's Newspaper

TODAY'S WEATHER



PLENTY OF SUNSHINE
90s / 60s

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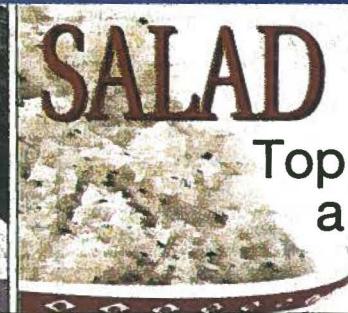
SIBLING RIVALRY

Williams sisters to face off at Wimbledon



SALAD SALUTE

Top 10 recipes for a potato classic



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the **SCOOP**

FIREWORKS SHOWS



If you're still looking to fill up your Fourth of July, you can watch fireworks light up the local skies.

Beaumont

Before the fireworks, you can watch performances by The Basix from 5 to 7 p.m. and Christopher Cross from 7 to 8 p.m. This all

Political web grows

Aleman assisted in state GOP campaign

By Lauren McSherry

Staff Writer

It was an issue of national importance — sending former state GOP chairman Shawn Steel to the Republican National Convention this fall.

And Adam Aleman, a 25-year-old political junkie, wanted to help deliver the votes to make it happen, Steel's top campaign staff members have said.

The goal was to win the committee seat that Tim Morgan, Republican National Committee treasurer, had con-

trolled for 12 years.

As scandal surrounding Aleman has unfolded, investigations by the San Bernardino County district attorney and grand jury have revealed that some of the political activity Aleman was conducting through his job for county Assessor Bill Postmus involved national, state and local races.

It has also become clear that the web linking Aleman, Postmus, Shawn Steel and his wife, Michelle, a top state official, was far more tangled than previ-

ously realized.

Aleman, the county's assistant assessor, was arrested Monday and charged with six felonies, including altering documents and destroying evidence.

As one of 50 campaign workers and volunteers, Aleman was dispatched statewide to collect proxy forms, waivers that allow substitutes to vote in place of delegates at the state GOP convention, which was held Feb. 22-24 in San Francisco, said Steel's campaign manager, Mike Richman, and cam-

CATCH UP

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aign strategist, Tim Clark. Aleman was responsible for collecting proxy forms in San Bernardino County.

"My job was not to know how they got the proxies, it was just to get the proxies," Richman said.

Media reports initially said Steel clinched the state GOP race, winning 61 percent of the vote. But a number of

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STEEL

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the proxy forms, possibly hundreds, collected by Steel's campaign have been invalidated, and it now appears he won by a slimmer margin, about 30 votes, Richman said.

There are 1,400 delegates statewide for whom proxies can be collected, said Jalene Forbis, chairwoman of the state GOP proxies and credentials committee.

She said she could not confirm by how many votes Steel had won.

"We had more proxies than we ever had at any convention before," she said, "so there were more proxies disqualified than ever before. ... In every convention, there are proxies that are disqualified."

The grand jury investigation also discovered that the state Board of Equalization had given Aleman another kind of waiver in 2007 — one that would allow him to work as assistant assessor, earning \$119,000 a year, despite not having the experience and

appraiser's certificate required to be in that position. Steel's wife, Michelle, holds a seat on the board.

John Hrabe, Michelle Steel's spokesman, said the temporary certificate was not issued by Steel and that employees of the board typically issue more than 230 such certificates each year.

"Much like an extension on your taxes, a temporary appraiser's certificate is a routine request," he said.

On March 9, 2007, Aleman received his permanent appraiser's certificate, he said.

Ted Lehrer, a spokesman for Postmus, said the Assessor's Office was aware of Aleman's involvement in Shawn Steel's campaign. However, officials believed Aleman was not doing campaign work on county time.

"He's been politically active in the past," Lehrer said. "He was excited to help a candidate for the National Republican Committee."

The rush to get enough proxies appears to have been tense. An e-mail from Shawn Steel sent to Richman and Ale-

man at 3:01 p.m. Feb. 21, the day before the convention, reads, "where the devil is the Gallagher [Postmus] proxy....????"

Minutes later, Aleman responded, "I have it with me." Accompanying the e-mail was a proxy form allowing Aleman to stand in for a prominent High Desert developer, Dino Defazio.

On Feb. 22, a Friday, Aleman, Lehrer and Postmus' 19-year-old executive secretary, Joshua White, used their vacation time to travel to the convention, Lehrer confirmed.

Meanwhile, as Richman directed Shawn Steel's statewide campaign for the position of GOP committeeman, Richman had also been contracted for \$49,200 to work for the Assessor's Office.

Richman said he could not confirm whether Aleman was a volunteer or received payment for his work on Steel's campaign.

lauren.mcsherry@
inlandnewspapers.com
(909) 386-3875