

Convicted killer sentenced to 116 years in prison lead story of 2022

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Hotly-contested elections, a sheriff resigning after being charged and the historic Don Nuss collection going up for auction were among the top stories of 2022, but according to readers at triplicate.com, one story stood above the rest.

In April, 34-year-old Neal Thomas Hiller was sentenced to 116 years in prison after he was convicted of second-degree murder.

Hiller was convicted of killing 22-year-old Joseph Deford a year earlier. In that case, a 9-1-1 caller reported a man lying on the ground. When officers arrived, they found Deford unresponsive. It wasn't until Deford was at the hospital, officers learned he had been shot.

Using surveillance video, officers were able to find Deford walking with two men on bicycles close behind. That video led to Hiller, who will likely spend the rest of his life behind bars.

2 – Deputies involved in fatal shooting in Bertsch

In May, a man was killed when sheriff's deputies responded to the Bertsch community for a welfare check. Although details were not released, the check escalated and led to deputies opening fire. The initial 9-1-1 call asked for deputies because an individual was upset after failing his driver's test.

One person was killed in the incident, and the district attorney's office took over the investigation.

3 – Elk Valley Casino opens

In April, the long-awaited new version of the Elk Valley Casino opened its doors, presenting a world-class facility in the middle of Coos Bay.

New games, a larger territory, and perhaps the biggest change, a casino open 24 hours a day, greeted the first customers during the grand opening weekend.

4 – Election 2022

While there were no contested elections in Crescent City in 2022, the county elections more than made up for it. More than a dozen people signed up to run for three county commissioner seats in the May primary, and two of the three races went through the November general election before winners were declared.

When the smoke cleared, Joey Borges earned a seat in District 4 and former Sheriff Dean Wilson was elected in District 5.

The other race that garnered attention was efforts to repeal Measure T and U, but those efforts fell short in November.

5 – City votes to sell guns from police locker

In February, the Crescent City council voted unanimously to allow the police department to sell guns from its evidence locker. Police Chief Richard Griffin said more than 100 guns were in the locker, the vast majority that were never used in a crime.

Under state law, cities can either destroy guns in evidence lockers or sell them through licensed dealers. The city council chose the latter option, suggesting the money raised be used for the Explorer program.

6 – Don Nuss memorabilia goes to auction

Don Nuss became known worldwide for his speed records, so when his estate decided to auction vehicles and other items he left behind, it drew big crowds.

In late May, with Don Nuss III watching, some of vehicles and many of the tools Nuss used to make the fastest race cars in the world were auctioned off to the highest bidder.

7 – Sheriff resigns after being charged with felonies

When Sheriff Randy Waltz announced he was running for re-election, that turned out to be his downfall. In March, Waltz resigned as sheriff after he was charged with perjury, voter registration fraud and election fraud against him.

All three charges related to the address used in his election filings and voter registration forms and a difference of opinion about when Waltz moved into the property.

After being charged with felonies, Waltz eventually pleaded guilty to a single misdemeanor charge and withdrew from the election.

8 – Filthy jail conditions exposed to supervisors

In April, a community activist brought photos before the board of supervisors showing the filthy conditions inmates at the county jail were living in.

The sheriff's office admitted the photos were disgusting, but said the photos only showed what one inmate did to one cell while waiting to be transferred to the state hospital for mental health treatment. Lieutenant

Daniel Schneck said when the conditions were seen, the inmate was moved to a new cell, and the filth was removed.

9 – Candy shop owners extend to Crescent City

Some good news came to Crescent City in October when Amy and Andy Sale announced they were opening a Whale's Tail Candy & Gifts store in Crescent City.

The couple opened their original store in the Brookings-Harbor area, before expanding their sweet treats to Crescent City.

10 – COVID restrictions finally lifted

After more than two years of extreme COVID restrictions, California became one of the last states to lift the mandates in 2022.

It took little time for most of the community to respond by ditching their masks and resuming a “normal” life. While COVID cases have continued, there has been no devastating surge.