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What's with the grudge match between reality TV's 'Big Daddy' and the cops in O.C.?
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Watchdog A look back at Laura's Law in Orange County, which forced mentally ill people into
How do you make 250,000 pairs of shorts? Katin Surf Shop seamstress still sewing in O.C.

NEWS (COMMONARCHIVES/FEATURE-1896)
Human pickle kicked from curb
Sept. 10, 2013 | Updated Aug 21, 2013 1:17 a.m.

By ERIKA L. WITCHE, THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER
LAKE FOREST — The human pickle is gone.
"They came and tumbled the pickle," said Mike Luzzi, who owns Mr. Pickles, a sandwich shop that opened last week near Lake Forest Drive and Rockfield Boulevard.

Luzzi hired Billy Cummings and two others to don a giant pickle suit for \$9 an hour and hang out at Rockfield and Centre Drive, drawing customers. Luzzi credits the human pickle for record sales on grand opening day (http://www.ocregister.com/news/sandwich-264945-264945.html). The pickle was sold more than 2,000 sandwiches in two days.

While Luzzi didn't know that a human pickle violates Lake Forest's recently approved sign ordinance (http://www.ocregister.com/news/signs-249393-city-new.html), which bans electronic message board signs, neon signs, and "human" and "animal" signs.
"I went to the city and asked them, 'Can I have a person holding the sign without a suit?' Can I have a suit and no sign? Can I just have him sit here under the chair outside during lunch?' The answer was, 'No,'" Luzzi said.
The ordinance was enacted to ensure a consistent and contemporary look on the city. It applies to businesses undergoing renovation and new businesses.

Code enforcement officer observed the human pickle outside in the public area," Lou Kirk, the city's code enforcement supervisor, said. "We prohibit human signs per our code. There were also some banner violations."

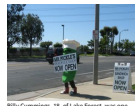
Kirk said a code enforcement officer spoke to Cummings, telling him he could stand inside the restaurant. The city cannot regulate a sign in a business that is 3 feet from a window, Kirk said.
The owner of Mr. Pickles now finds himself in a pickle.

"I need that pickle to be able to stay out," he said. "It's the lifeline of the business.
"But more importantly, he's just fun. And I'm employing three kids full-time that didn't have a job.

On Friday, the lunch lines at Mr. Pickles were out the door despite the missing human pickle. Some guests waited as long as 30 minutes before getting their sandwiches.
Ken Schreiber, of Laguna Woods, didn't mind the wait and enjoyed his hot postcard sandwich outside at a table. He said the pickle helped him find the place after he read about it in the Register.

"At first I thought the place was over by Fencora," he said. "When I saw the pickle on the corner, I knew where to go."

Nick Antonio, who works around the corner from the shop, waited 30 minutes for his sandwich. He didn't think the pickle's absence would make much of a difference.



Billy Cummings, 24, of Lake Forest, was one of three area youths to don a pickle costume in an attempt to draw customers to the new Mr. Pickles.

By ERIKA L. WITCHE, THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

VIDEO: The human pickle is back!

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