

LAS VEGAS SUN

LOCALLY OWNED AND INDEPENDENT | SUNDAY, APRIL 14, 2013

GRACE THROUGH GRIEF

A shattered family recovers

A year ago this week, a young family was torn apart by unspeakable evil. Starting today, the Sun presents an intimate, seven-chapter serial chronicling how the survivors have moved forward. The series also is online at lasvegassun.com/grace-through-grief.



SLEEPING WITH ANGELS, AWAKENING TO FIND ONLY A NIGHTMARE

STORY BY JACKIE VALLEY | PHOTOS BY LEILA NAVIDI

nanolder, one-story home at 1016 Robin St. lives a family of five — six if you count the puppy. ¶ They have chores to do, places to go on this Saturday, April 14, 2012. ¶ This will be the family's last day together. ¶ Yadira Martinez cuts her 9-year-old son Christopher's hair. He has religion class in the morning, a rite of passage for any Catholic youngster. Later, Yadira drives Christopher and her oldest child, 10-year-old Karla, to their acting class. Her husband, Arturo Martinez-Sanchez, an electrician, takes their little one, Alejandro, 4, with him to the supermarket. ¶ The family gathers in the evening at their friends' house. On TV, the adults watch Juan Manuel Marquez box his way to a unanimous-decision victory over Sergey Fedchenko while the kids hunker down in another room, glued to a PlayStation. ¶ A guitar comes out next. Yady, as her husband affectionately calls her, slides onto Arturo's lap as he strums the guitar and softly sings one of her favorite songs, "Romeo y Julieta," a take on the Shakespeare tale by Joan Sebastian, a popular Mexican musician. Translated into English, it begins: *[See Grace, Page 8]*

For a presentation of photos and videos, visit lasvegassun.com/grace-through-grief.

CHAPTER ONE
Waking up to
the inconceivable
TODAY

CHAPTER TWO
Unimaginable grief,
unimaginable grace
COMING MONDAY

CHAPTER THREE
The boys' refuge;
the father's hell
COMING TUESDAY

CHAPTER FOUR
Repairing the blow
of a hammer
COMING WEDNESDAY

CHAPTER FIVE
Comfort of friends,
compassion of strangers
COMING THURSDAY

CHAPTER SIX
Prayers for yesterday,
hope for tomorrow
COMING FRIDAY

CHAPTER SEVEN
Old memories,
new dreams
COMING SUNDAY

A shattered family recovers

Editor's note: The information presented in this series is based on the reporter's direct observations, conversations, interviews and public records including the Metro Police arrest report, the grand jury transcripts of testimony by Cristopher Martinez, teacher Candace Wagner and various law enforcement officers. The reporter did not ask brothers Cristopher or Alejandro Martinez to recollect their memories of April 15, 2012.

For more photos and videos, visit lasvegassun.com/grace-through-grief.

FROM PAGE 1:

*They told me the story of Romeo and Juliet
And I thought, "What a beautiful story,"
And now it turns out
That this, what I feel for you
Is bigger and more beautiful*

Arturo repeats the song four times, buoyed by the spirit of the moment. By now, it's past midnight. Friends invite them to stay the night, but Arturo and Yady kindly decline. It would be an imposition. Too many people.

They pile into their red Ford Escape and drive home. The children and Yady go to bed; Arturo remains in the family room to watch TV.

"We'll see you guys tomorrow," he says, growing very drowsy.

His wife replies for all to hear, uttering her signature bedtime wish.

"Goodnight. Sleep with angels."

...

What happens overnight is all but impossible to piece together. And the survivors might be better off not knowing.

The allergy-ridden 4-year-old sleeps in his big brother's room, which he does frequently, and in the morning sneezes, startling Cristopher awake.

Cristopher creeps out of bed to get his brother a tissue from the bathroom. As he opens his partially closed bedroom door, he finds blood covering the hallway's tiled floor. Suddenly, he thinks, must have had a bowel move.

As Cristopher walks down the hallway, he turns to his left and sees his father, on the other side of the house, standing near the masterbedroom door. On the floor is the boys' mother, naked from the waist down and surrounded by blood.

Startled, Cristopher gets the tissue and steps back toward his bedroom as the two most logical words enter his head: *What happened?*

He leaves Alejandro with the tissue and walks down the hall to his sister's bedroom. He stops at the doorway, frozen by what he sees: Karla lying on a pool of blood on her bedroom floor, and like their mother, is naked except for the waist down, stripped of the pink, polka-dot pajama pants that she was wearing when they said goodnight.

His sister, older than him by a year and two weeks, is motionless. Cristopher steps through the family room, heading toward his parents' room. Standing nowin front of his father, he realizes Arturo's face and head are obscured with blood.

"Do you need anything?" Cristopher asks.

Arturo stares at Cristopher but doesn't say a word. He can't physically speak, but it doesn't matter. He doesn't have an answer for his son. The same question is plaguing his jumbled thoughts.

Somewhere among the emotions flooding his being — horror, shock, confusion, sadness — a thought occurs to Arturo, a one-time law student in his native Puebla, Mexico. He shouldn't touch anything. This is a crime scene.

He obeys his primal instinct, with one exception: He closes the eyelids of his wife and daughter.

Cristopher returns to his room and his father, wobbly and disoriented, staggers behind him, grabbing at the walls for support along the way. Together, they join Alejandro, who is in bed.



FAMILY PHOTOS

Blood is dripping down Arturo's face from somewhere on his head. Woozy, he drifts asleep. Next to him, Alejandro is asleep, too. Cristopher is left to himself, wondering in silence what has happened. He notices two holes in his father's head.

The 9-year-old is traumatized and isn't sure what to do.

Alejandro awakes hours later, about to vomit. He throws up several times as he tries to make his way to the hall bathroom.

When Cristopher checks on him, Arturo motions him to come closer. He gives him a hug in lieu of the words trapped in his mind. He toys with his iPhone, but nothing happens. Maybe it's broken. Or maybe it's his fingers that aren't working.

That's why Arturo hasn't called for help. And because the family doesn't have a landline phone and Cristopher's and Karla's Galaxy S2 cellphones aren't charged, nobody has called 911. They suffer alone, in stunned, frozen anguish.

Cristopher carries Alejandro to his little brother, a preschooler. He leads Alejandro into his own bedroom and tells him to stay put. He lets Alejandro finish leftover Easter chocolate while he sips water. They flip through books to pass time.

Alejandro decides he wants some juice; before Cristopher can stop him, the youngster slips out of the bedroom and sees his mother sprawled on the floor.

"Mom?" Cristopher says, as he guides his brother back to his bedroom.

By now it's 8 p.m. Sunday and Cristopher realizes a way to fetch help: He'll go to school Monday and call to tell someone. He wakes up at 6 a.m. and Karla is normally doses. He goes to the bathroom because of the blood and washes his face using a bottle of water from his bedroom. He changes into fresh clothes, packs his book bag and walks over to his father, who is sitting on a living room couch, listless.

Cristopher climbs into his father's lap and they embrace without speaking.

Now it's time for Cristopher to get help. He gives Alejandro, who normally takes a bus to preschool, strict instructions to stayput at home, with their father.

Alejandro agrees and reminds his brother to say goodbye to their puppy named KO, an eod to the family's boxing gym.

"Bye, KO," Cristopher says.



It's 8 a.m. on a sunny, tranquil spring day and Mabel Hoggard Elementary School is alive. Cars pour through the parking lot, the playground is filling and soccer games are in full swing.

In this same neighborhood, Metro Police Sgt. Bobby Johnson's patrol officers are 90 minutes into their workday. They're keeping an eye out for any suspected of sexually assaulting a 50-year-old woman. Sunday morning is a vacant, gravel-strewn lot on the southwest corner of Vegas and Tonopah drives.

The suspect description is vague: a slender black male, likely in his 20s, who is about 5-foot-8 or 5-foot-9 inches tall.

Cristopher's walk to school takes him past a rusted Neighborhood Watch sign. A half-mile from home, he reaches Mabel Hoggard, a place of familiarity and safety.

Cristopher joins a soccer game with friends, but it's short-lived as the class ends at 8:30 a.m. — the time to line up by class, recite the Pledge of Allegiance and sing a song or two. During an otherwise-cheerful start to the school day, Cristopher is crying.

His teacher, Miss Wagner, notices. Cristopher, the younger brother of former student Karla, is not a crier.

"Cristopher, what happened?" Candace Wagner asks.

The words that tumbled out of the fourth-grader's mouth next would set in motion a discovery so heinous that first-responders would wrestle for months with nightmares:

‘MY MOM AND SISTER ARE DEAD.’

...



The dispatcher doesn't broadcast the details of the 911 call over the radio system. Instead, she instructs officers to check the car's interior.

Officer Edward Benítez, a four-year Metro veteran who's on a traffic stop, reads the details on his screen and immediately responds to the call with lights and siren, arriving within seconds of another officer. Together, they approach

the peach-colored, wood-and-stucco house at 1016 Robin St. and peer into a front window.

They see a woman's body lying on the floor and alert other officers pulling up the driveway.

Officers flap in another window at the south end of the home. They hear a tapping sound, and a small head appears. It's a child with large, brown eyes and shaggy, black hair framing his face.

Not knowing who might be lurking inside, the officers try to lure the little boy out of the window, but he appears confused and drops out of sight.

Seconds later, the front door opens.

A man covered in blood staggers outside.

The boy, who had just now zipped out next and huddles behind the man's legs. They're standing just outside the open door — and what if the assailant is just inside?

Benítez sprints and scoops up the boy, as other officers converge on the dazed-looking man, who they later identify as Arturo Martinez-Sánchez. He could be their suspect. They don't know.

Medical help is on the way, but they need this man in custody just in case.

The moment overwhelms Arturo.

*Put your hands up!
Put your hands down!
Put your hands up!
Get on the floor!
Put your hands behind your back!*

The next thing he knows, he's wearing handcuffs.

About 60 seconds have elapsed since officers arrived on scene.

Sgt. Johnson leads four Metro officers into the house to locate any victims, dead or alive, as well as potential predators hiding inside.

The officers search carefully not to disturb evidence. An open jar of nail polish rests on the kitchen counter, a hint of normalcy among the shades of red staining nearly every surface. Blood is smeared on every wall, pooling in bathtubs, congealing on couches.

"The totality of this house, with the odd exception of the boys' rooms, suggested that something very violent had occurred, and it didn't matter which wall or ceiling or floor — every surface displayed evidence of something nefarious," Johnson, a 20-year police veteran, would say later.

A dog barks from inside, its paws darts in and out of a doggy door, creating a flapping sound. "Dog in... dog out," an officer announces, with each flap of the door.

It's an unnecessary narration but a welcome human sound in an otherwise inhumane setting. They find a woman and young girl, each with severe head injuries that Johnson would later describe as "incompatible with life." In fact, homicide detectives would report that the mother had been struck on her head twice with a blunt object; her daughter, at least three times.

Yady and Karla are dead, just as Christopher told his teacher.

...



No more than 10 minutes have passed since police arrived. As the day progresses, more than two dozen paramedics, detectives, coroner investigators, crime-scene analysts and others will converge on the now-coroneted Martinez-Sánchez residence.

Curious neighbors gawk, cars drive extra slowly before making U-turns at the barricade and reporters roam the perimeter of the crime scene for people to interview.

Amid the frenzy, Norae Charlton, a senior crime scene analyst, makes two new friends: Christopher and Alejandro. They're in her care for the time being as she photographs the scene for forensic purposes.

Hanging out in a giant, white tent — Metro's mobile crime scene unit — the three chat about school, where they ate lunch last week, what movies they hope to see. Christopher explains every book in his backpack and every drop of blood on his clothing.

Alejandro is shy, not quite able to grasp what his older brother understands about this day and these people. His protector, Christopher, tries his best to fill in the gaps.

And when Animal Control shows up later, it's Christopher who voices concern for their other surviving family member, an American bulldog.

Who is taking his dog? Where would KO be held? Would he be fed on time?

Inside the house, crime-scene analysts document evidence and evidence. This will spend three full days processing the scene, the longest time investigators have spent at a crime scene in more than two decades.

Officers patrol the residence around the clock, warding off nosy citizens, all of whom want an answer to the same question haunting detectives: Who did this?

For the Martinez-Sánchez family, Monday, April 16, ended in a nightmare.

KO passes inside an animal shelter kennel. Christopher and Alejandro fall asleep at Child Haven, the county's facility for children in its temporary custody. Arturo lies in a hospital bed at University Medical Center, sedated from emergency surgery to repair a brain laceration. Investigators would later say he suffered that injury, and a second skull indentation, when he was struck by a hammer at least three times.

And Karla's and Yady's bodies await autopsies at the county morgue.



LAS VEGAS SUN

LOCALLY OWNED AND INDEPENDENT | MONDAY, APRIL 15, 2013

GRACE THROUGH GRIEF

A shattered family recovers

A year ago this week, a young family was torn apart by unspeakable evil. Continuing today, the Sun presents an intimate, seven-chapter serial chronicling how the survivors have moved forward. The series is also online at lasvegassun.com/grace-through-grief.



Arturo Martinez-Sanchez gathers his composure and wipes away tears with his son, Christopher, 9, in his office at his gym, Real KO Boxing Club, in July. Martinez-Sanchez's wife and 10-year-old daughter were beaten to death in their home in April 2012; Martinez-Sanchez was hospitalized with severe head injuries from the attack.

AFTER THE HORROR: UNIMAGINABLE GRIEF, UNIMAGINABLE GRACE

STORY BY JACKIE VALLEY | PHOTOS BY LEILA NAVIDI

of 38-year-old Yadira is distinguished by red roses; the roses on top of 10-year-old Karla's casket are purple. ¶ It's May 2012, nearly a month since Yadira and Karla were brutally killed, and even if the shock has worn off, the community still quietly seethes. ¶ The church is filled with family — including Arturo's two sons, Christopher and Alejandro — friends and strangers. Reporters wait across the street; Arturo isn't ready to face them quite yet. ¶ No funeral Mass comes without heartache, but this one stings for the Rev. Julio Alberto Alzate, co-pastor of St. Christopher Catholic Church in North Las Vegas. He ate meals with this young family. He baptized their three children. And he is the godfather of 9-year-old Christopher, the middle child who walked to school and reported the deaths. ¶ Now, Alzate finds himself alongside the two caskets, asking a community to find the strength to forgive the evil that shattered this family.

[See Grace, Page 4]

CHAPTER
ONE
Waking up to
the inconceivable
AVAILABLE ONLINE
TODAY

CHAPTER
TWO
Unimaginable grief,
unimaginable grace
TODAY

CHAPTER
THREE
The boys' refuge;
the father's hell
COMING TUESDAY

CHAPTER
FOUR
Repairing the blow
of a hammer
COMING WEDNESDAY

CHAPTER
FIVE
Comfort of friends,
compassion of strangers
COMING THURSDAY

CHAPTER
SIX
Prayers for yesterday,
hope for tomorrow
COMING FRIDAY

CHAPTER
SEVEN
Old memories,
new dreams
COMING SUNDAY

TRANSPORTATION

For some, hailing a cab downtown is only half the battle

BY JOE SCHOENMANN
A version of this story was posted on lasvegassun.com at 12:47 p.m. Thursday.

Complaints about cab drivers refusing to give people rides for relatively short distances are fairly commonplace downtown. Just try getting a cab to drive you from Fremont Street at Las Vegas Boulevard to the Soho Lofts at Charleston and Las Vegas boulevards and watch him roll his eyes as he tells you he's going on bread.

But the story of how a cab driver Thursday night refused to give a ride to Michael Cornthwaite, owner of the Downtown Cocktail Room, Emergency Arts, the Beat coffeehouse and part-owner of Oscar's

steakhouse in the Plaza, might beat them all.

Around 9:30 p.m., Cornthwaite walked over to a line of waiting taxis on Fourth Street, a block west of the Cocktail Room.

Taxis lined Cornthwaite's block tight and at a small midwestern college, he's been in Las Vegas for 18 years, having worked for places on the Strip before opening the Cocktail Room seven years ago. But for his long hair that is usually pulled into a ponytail, he looks like anybody else you

might see on the street.

Not that looks should make any kind of difference to someone seeking a cab ride.

But in this case, they made a big difference.

Cornthwaite said he got into the back of a cab and gave the address of his home, which is in the Scotch 80s, the same neighborhood as Mayor Carolyn Goodman and comedian Jerry Lewis.

The cab driver, Cornthwaite said, sat for a minute and said nothing.

Then, looking at Cornthwaite's reflection in his rear-view mirror, the cabbie said, "People that look like you, they don't pay me!"

Cornthwaite was dumbfounded. He told the cabbie he lives about two miles away; the fare would be \$12 and he would give an \$8 tip.

"Please, please just get out of my cab!" the driver said. "I'm going on break; I'm going home!"

Cornthwaite didn't budge. He said the driver got out, opened the backseat door and tugged at his bag, trying to throw it outside.

Cornthwaite got on his cellphone and called the Nevada Taxicab Authority to [See Cab drivers, Page 6]

A shattered family recovers

FROM PAGE 1:

On this Friday morning in May, 22-year-old Bryan Clay is in a Clark County Detention Center jail cell, accused of sexually assaulting a 50-year-old woman in a gravel-strewn lot at Vegas and Tonopah drives, then traveling several blocks and entering the home at 1016 Robin St. Inside, police say he viciously bashed the heads of Arturo, his wife and daughter with a hammer. ¶ Police allege he also sexually assaulted Yadira and Karla. Arturo survived, along with 9-year-old Christopher and 4-year-old Alejandro, who slept through the attacks and awakened to a house of horrors the following morning. ¶ Funerals, it's said, help with the healing process. They help bring closure, as if that's possible. ¶ Alzate speaks in his native Spanish, and his co-pastor, the Rev. Ron Zanoni, adds a few words in English, asking mourners to pray for a path to healing and peace. ¶ "That is our prayer for all of us and all those who suffer the tragic effects of violence," Zanoni says. ¶ Christopher helps uncles carry the caskets. They pass a vestibule filled with photos from brighter days and wreaths adorned with messages from loved ones. ¶ Karla is seen grinning sweetly, posing with freshly manicured nails and performing splits on a pool table. Her mother smiles broadly for the camera while holding a drink at a restaurant. ¶ Outside, mourners hold white and lavender balloons. A few slip away, drifting into the sky. ¶ Pallbearers hoist the caskets into two awaiting Cadillac Escalades. From here, they will drive a half-mile south to Woodlawn Cemetery, where mother and daughter will be buried in a single grave. ¶ Until now, this family had seemed blessed, succeeding in ways beyond their humble reach.



FAMILY PHOTO

Arturo and Yady, her nickname to family and friends, met on a college campus in Puebla, Mexico. It was 1992 and they were law students. When Yady noticed Arturo, she enlisted the help of a friend to make introductions. Oblivious to Yady's intentions, Arturo nodded and said, "See you later."

Arturo's nonchalant demeanor didn't deflate Yady's hopes. They exchanged greetings several days later. After a few more days, they again ran into each other.

It was two weeks before the impatient Yady boldly struck, planting a kiss on Arturo. It spurred Arturo to finally ask her out on a date.

For the next six months, they were inseparable in their spare time but, by college standards, were not considered "a couple." The uncertainty reduced Yady to tears on her birthday, Feb. 1.

"You should be happy on your birthday," Arturo told her. "Let's make this birthday happy."

He asked her to be his girlfriend.

They remained true to one another, even as Arturo took time off from school to care for his ailing mother in Mexico City. He never did finish school.

Arturo sold shoes door to door, which led to his opening a shoe store in Yady's hometown of Hidalgo. The store reaped \$300 a month, not enough to get ahead financially.

After Yady graduated from college, Arturo decided he could make a real living by moving to the United States.

Arturo secured day-labor gigs — moving rocks, cutting grass, mopping, anything to earn a buck.

After four months, they accepted a woman's offer to drive them to Las Vegas city boozing with construction and new jobs. Arturo paid her \$300 for the ride, an amount he would later realize he'd given her off the far from Disneyland.

They scrambled for jobs. Yady found work at a fast-food restaurant. Arturo secured day-labor gigs — moving rocks, cutting grass, mopping, anything to earn a buck.

They were getting married, Yady said, and three days later, they did. They wed Nov. 27, 1997, at a simple ceremony in a government building. She wore a navy blue pantsuit with red shoes; he wore khaki slacks and a light blue dress shirt.

The newlyweds tried to cross the border together twice with the help of coyotes, but they were caught and returned to Mexico.

Arturo decided to go alone and then make arrangements to bring Yady.

He succeeded on his fifth solo try on foot, a 3 1/2-day trek that ended safely in Anaheim, Calif. He didn't know whether he could trust the coyotes to bring Yady across the border, but several days later, they dropped her off far from Disneyland.

But they arrived safely, carrying only a bag or two, and that's all that mattered.

Using fake Social Security cards they got from forged documents,

peddlers, they easily snagged minimum-wage jobs, including work at a fast-food joint near Rainbow Boulevard. At another place, Arturo made burritos.

The long hours paid for rent; a yellow, older-model Toyota Corolla; and, eventually, their first home, 1016 Robin St. They bought the fixer-upper for \$10,000 in December 1999.

Arturo landed a stable union job as an electrician to suit his growing family. Within a few years, he worked his way up to foreman, making \$22 an hour.

He felt good about his decision to move with his bride to the United States.

In the summer of 2001, Arturo and Yady welcomed their first child, Karla Edith. He named the girl for his daughter, the little girl he'd left behind in Mexico, affectionately known as "princess."

Two little boys followed — Christopher, born in the summer of 2002, and Alejandro, five years later.

The couple enrolled their children in after-school activities: music, sports, acting classes. They bought the kids a trampoline for the backyard, took vacations to California and spent weekends at church and with extended family. Expectations for their growing children were high. "We wanted them to have a good education,"

"That's my goal and that's their goal," Arturo says.

As his kids grew, Arturo began working out at a gym operated by former boxing referee Richard Steele. It renewed his passion for the sport. During his teen years, he had fought a dozen amateur boxing matches, winning all but one.

There, amid the sweat and burning muscles, a thought occurred to him: What if he opened his own gym?

Yady was in agreement. So was Steele.

In April 2011, using money they had saved, the couple opened Real KO Boxing Club. They rented a storefront in an aging North Las Vegas plaza painted white with a blue roof.

For two months, they worked nights and weekends to spruce up the interior. They envisioned the gym being a community gathering spot for children and teens living near Cheyenne Avenue and Civic Center Drive.

Yady worked as accountant. Arturo ran the business and coached several classes. Karla came up with the gym's slogan: "We grow champions."

On opening day, seven people enrolled. As word spread, registration increased, keeping Arturo and his family busy the evenings. The gym wasn't their money-maker, but it was a dream realized.

Not all dreams last, though. Two weeks after Alejandro was born, the young family moved to North Las Vegas into a newer, bigger home — a purchase they felt confident about after cobbling together enough money for a down payment. They rented out their Robin Street house.

But the region's emerging housing crisis took its toll on Arturo and Yady, like it did for countless other Southern Nevada homeowners. Their escalating payments grew beyond their means; their house fell into foreclosure.

In December 2011, the family returned to its Robin Street home.

Arturo and Yady considered it an unfortunate setback, not an end to their way of life.

A shattered family recovers

Editor's note: The information presented in this series is based on the reporter's direct observations, conversations, interviews and public records including the Metro Police arrest report, the grand jury transcripts of testimony by Christopher Martinez, teacher Candace Wagner and various law enforcement officers. The reporter did not ask brothers Christopher or Alejandro Martinez to recollect their memories of April 15, 2012.

For more photos and videos, visit lasvegassun.com/grace-through-grief.



PHOTOS BY LEILA NAVIDI (2012)



Above, Cristopher Martinez, 9, stands with his father, Arturo Martinez-Sanchez, during an event at the family's boxing gym in July 2012. In the photo at left, Martinez-Sanchez hugs family friend Billie Walker.



CHRISTOPHER D'VARGAS (2012)

On May 11, 2012, Yadira Martinez and her daughter, Karla, were laid to rest with a funeral Mass at St. Christopher Catholic Church in North Las Vegas and burial at Woodlawn Cemetery. Cristopher helped carry the caskets of his mom and sister. The Rev. Julio Alberto Alzate, who baptized Cristopher and is his godfather, said the Mass at the family's church.

These days, Arturo and his two boys live with his sister, Gaudia Martinez-Sanchez, whose words encouraged him to start fighting as he lay hospitalized at University Medical Center.

"Arturo, you have to come back to us," she whispered three days after the attacks. "You have two babies that need you."

But Arturo knew he and his boys could never fall asleep again inside 1016 Robin St. They needed a place to live.

In February 2012, Gaudia's husband, Ken Seal, had bought a sprawling, ranch-style home along a quiet street to accommodate the couple and his wife's teenage son, Jesus Vazquez.

They didn't quite know what to do with the extra space, but the house called to them.

Several days after the funeral, they all move into the house, complete with a backyard pool.

"You can stay here as long as you want," Gaudia tells her brother. "Feel comfortable. Feel like home. Enjoy."

This allows Arturo to focus on his physical recovery. He begins physical and occupational therapy May 15 at the Nevada Community Enrichment Program, a day treatment program tailored to people with brain injuries.

Arturo's injury is considered traumatic — in other words, the result of a blow to his head rather than an unprovoked medical episode. His injury led to memory loss as well as coordination and balance difficulties.

It's hard for everyone who meets him at the treatment program. He falls over if someone hums into him. He doesn't know the date, month or year. He recalls loved ones but becomes confused easily.



Arturo Martinez-Sanchez suffered major trauma when the intruder hit him in the head with a hammer. He continues to suffer the effects of those injuries.

Weeks pass, then months. Arturo improves enough to pass a driving test, regaining his license. For this 39-year-old man, that's a milestone worth celebrating. It means more independence.

But it's not permanent, which is why Arturo is signing on a Monday morning in late July. He's sitting at a table with his speech therapist, Julie Peterson.

He has reviewed a paper listing ways to improve one's memory, but now his cheat sheet is gone, and Peterson wants him to recite the strategies.

He nails four, no problem, repeating information, watching a video and using iPhone applications. After a pause, he adds one more to the list: He's halfway there, but he's stumped.

"How do you organize your day? What do you keep

that information on?" Peterson asks, guiding him to another memory.

"Calendar," he says.

The pair slot through the remaining tips, with Peterson issuing prompts so Arturo can connect the dots. Defeat etched on his face, Arturo tries to muster a smile.

"It's going to improve. It's going to get better," she tells him. "I don't want you to get upset over this. I just want you to be happy."

Erasure marks slather his papers by the end of the session. Arturo often writes the wrong letter, a key indicator of his motor-programming shortcomings. His brain struggles to connect his thoughts with his actions.

So, by 11 a.m., his brain needs a break. It's time for more physical therapy.

Cued by his physical therapist, Christine Solan, Arturo uses his arms and stands on his leg. With his right foot lifted, he wobbles back and forth. He balances for 30 seconds, uncrossing his arms only once at the 15-second mark.

His time is consistent with what any uninjured person his age should achieve.

"Close your eyes," Solan tells him next. "Cross your arms as far as you can to the side."

The former amateur boxer can only last three seconds — well below the 23-second threshold most people could meet.

"He probably had excellent balance because that sport requires it," Solan says. "His balance has already gotten a lot better, so I think his balance will continue to improve."

Less than a month later, on Aug. 22, Arturo has improved in all areas — so much that it's graduation day from the Nevada Community Enrichment Program.

[See Grace, Page 8]

A shattered family recovers



Arturo Martinez-Sanchez undergoes cognitive and speech therapy with Julie Peterson at Nevada Community Enrichment Program, a therapy program for survivors of traumatic brain injury, in Las Vegas on Aug. 20, 2012.

FROM PAGE 5:

gram. Gaudia attends along with Christopher, Alejandra and Arturo's sister-in-law, Lupita Olmedo.

In a large room filled with work-out equipment and mats on one side and tables and chairs on the other, a small crowd has formed. Arturo's case manager, Jerry Kappeler, stands next to him and rattles off a list of accomplishments: Arturo speaks in more complex sentences and has better balance, improved hand-eye coordination and more strength.

Their initial handshake was wimpy at best.

"Now, he crushes my hand," Kappeler says.

As the accolades continue from therapists, another client, a man sitting in a wheelchair, lets out a whoop and shouts, "All right!"

Arturo is their role model — their reason to hope that one day, they, too, will graduate. But in the world of brain injuries, recovery doesn't have a finish line.

When Kappeler asks Arturo to speak about his memory improvements, he pauses for a long time. Christopher gives him a hug.

"I cannot even remember..." Arturo trails off, shaking his head and passing that question.

It's a somber moment in an otherwise triumphant day. Arturo tells his fellow program participants, "God bless you," and thanks his sister for her relentless support.

As Kappeler hands him his certificate of completion, the room erupts in applause, signaling snack time. Gaudia brought homemade flan.

"I used to be a good guest," Arturo says. He means *host*. "But now you can get it yourself."

...



PHOTOS BY LEILA NAVOID (2012)

Arturo Martinez-Sanchez walks with his two sons, from left, Alejandro, 5, and Christopher, 9, during a news conference at his gym, Real KO Boxing Club, in North Las Vegas in July 2012. He would tell those who had gathered that the gym was again open, and he would share a personal message of forgiveness with his boys at his side.

What's the key to human resolve? Is it an inner strength, embedded in the human consciousness for birth? For life? For death? For pure grit exhibited by those facing diversity?

Scholars and theologians can debate. For Arturo, a former altar server rarely seen without a rosary around his neck, the answer came in early summer: He must forgive.

It's a commandment and a survival necessity.

Arturo shares his feelings with Alzate, a gentle confidant who listens rather than pontificates. He understands Arturo's desire to move on with his life. In the grief-stricken man before him, he sees an act from the heart.

"For me, you can easily forgive," Alzate explains several months later. "It comes from inside."

On a hot summer day in early July, Arturo invites the community back to his gym to announce its reopening and offer a personal message. It's his first appearance in front of reporters since the attacks.

He arrives in a dark suit, white shirt, black slacks, accented by a white tie. Christopher and Alejandro don matching grey vests.

As Arturo makes his way to a front table, the boys clutch his sides. And, for the first time, those seated in metal chairs in the gym can see Arturo's physical wounds: a deep, red scar running from above his left ear to the top of his head and a marble-sized dent on the back of his head.

With Christopher's hand on his shoulder and cameras rolling, Arturo looks down at the words he painstakingly wrote during occupational therapy sessions.

His voice trembling, he begins:



Martinez-Sanchez is consoled by Christopher during the event at Real KO Boxing Club. It was the first time since the slayings of his wife, Yadira, and daughter, Karla, in April that he spoke to reporters. He read a statement from a document he had written during occupational therapy sessions.

"Forgive this murderer because of my faith in God and in Jesus Christ."

With tears streaming down his face, he speaks of his once-happy family, the forgiveness of sins, and his solace knowing he will spend eternity with his wife and daughter in heaven.

And in the process, he delivers a personal manifesto:

"...I choose life over death."

"This terrible crime is just one of many, many evil things in our world. I choose not to give in to this evil. I choose life and happiness for my sons Christopher and Alejandro..."

... We choose to turn our heads away from evil and acknowledge the good things in this world. We choose to be strong and move forward."

LAS VEGAS SUN

LOCALLY OWNED AND INDEPENDENT | TUESDAY, APRIL 16, 2013

GRACE THROUGH GRIEF

A SHATTERED FAMILY RECOVERS

A year ago this week, a young family was torn apart by unspeakable evil. Continuing today, the Sun presents an intimate, seven-chapter serial chronicling how the survivors have moved forward. The series is also online at lasvegassun.com/grace-through-grief.



Arturo Martinez-Sanchez is consoled by his family and friends after attending a hearing for Bryan Clay on Aug. 27 at the Regional Justice Center. Clay is the accused killer of Martinez-Sanchez's wife and daughter. He faces 10 counts connected to the crime spree that began with a 50-year-old woman and ended at the Martinez-Sanchez house.

SEARCH FOR SOLACE — THE BOYS' REFUGE; THE FATHER'S HELL

STORY BY JACKIE VALLEY | PHOTOS BY LEILA NAVIDI

sliced apples, oatmeal, chocolate and two eggs. He awoke an hour earlier, showered and dressed in black slacks, a collared shirt, a belt and dress shoes. Physically, he's ready for the day. Emotionally, maybe not so much. He'll watch his youngest, 5-year-old Alejandro, start kindergarten and his middle child, Christopher, enter fifth grade. Then he will head to the courthouse and face the man who allegedly raped and killed his wife and daughter.

It's the first day of school and Arturo Martinez-Sanchez is anxious. Until today, he hasn't had to face the morning routine as a single father, and he can't find something. ¶ He is opening and closing cabinets and peering into the back reaches of drawers. Finally, there it is: the blender lid. Crisis No. 1 averted. He can mix the shake, made of sliced apples, oatmeal, chocolate and two eggs. ¶ Arturo has given himself plenty of time this morning. Physically, he's ready for the day. Emotionally, maybe not so much. ¶ He'll watch his youngest, 5-year-old Alejandro, start kindergarten and his middle child, Christopher, enter fifth grade. ¶ Then he will head to the courthouse and face the man who allegedly raped and killed his wife and daughter.

[See Grace, Page 4]

CHAPTER ONE
Waking up to
the inconceivable
AVAILABLE ONLINE

CHAPTER TWO
Unimaginable grief,
unimaginable grace
AVAILABLE ONLINE

CHAPTER THREE
The boys' refuge;
the father's hell
TODAY

CHAPTER FOUR
Repairing the blow
of a hammer
COMING WEDNESDAY

CHAPTER FIVE
Comfort of friends,
compassion of strangers
COMING THURSDAY

CHAPTER SIX
Prayers for yesterday,
hope for tomorrow
COMING FRIDAY

CHAPTER SEVEN
Old memories,
new dreams
COMING SUNDAY

PUBLIC POLICY

State official defends practice of moving psychiatric patients

BY CYNTHIA HUBERT, PHILLIP REESE AND JIM SANDERS
The Sacramento Bee

Over the past five years, Nevada's primary state psychiatric hospital has put hundreds of mentally ill patients on Greyhound buses and sent them to cities and towns across America.

Since 2008, Rawson-Neal Psychiatric Hospital in Las Vegas has transported more than 1,500 patients to other cities via Greyhound bus, sending at least one person to every state in the continental United States, according to a Bee review of bus receipts kept by Nevada's mental health division.

About a third of those patients were dispatched to California, including 19 to the city of Sacramento.

As Nevada has slashed funding for mental health services, the number of mentally ill patients being bused out of Southern

Nevada has steadily risen, growing 66 percent from 2009 to 2012.

But Rawson-Neal bused out patients at a pace of well over one per day, shipping nearly 400 patients to a total of 176 cities and 45 states across the nation.

Nevada's approach to dispatching mentally ill patients has come under scrutiny since one of its clients turned up suicidal at a Greyhound bus terminal in a homeless services complex. James Flavoyoy Brown, who is 48 and suffers from a variety of mood disorders including schizophrenia, was discharged in February from Rawson-Neal to a Greyhound bus for Sacramento, a place he had never visited and where he

knew no one.

The hospital sent him on the 16-hour bus without making arrangements for his treatment or housing in California; he arrived in Sacramento out of medication and without identification or access to his Social Security payments. He wound up in the UC Davis Medical Center's emergency room, where he lingered for three days until someone was able to find him temporary housing.

Nevada mental health officials have acknowledged making mistakes in Brown's case but have made no apologies for their policy of busing patients out of state. Las Vegas is an international desti-

nation and patients who become ill while in the city have a right to return home if they can't afford to pay for it, officer Dr. Tracey Green told Nevada lawmakers during a hearing last month.

Nevada Health and Human Services Director Michael Wilden told lawmakers last month that while health officials "blew it" in their handling of Brown, an internal investigation found no pattern of misconduct.

But an investigation by the Nevada State Health Division documented several other instances from a small sampling of cases in February in which the state hospital violated written rules for safely discharging mentally ill patients.

Other patient violations surfaced during the Bee's investigation.

At least two patients from the Nevada system arrived in San Francisco during the past year "without a plan, without a

[See Bus, Page 6]

A SHATTERED FAMILY RECOVERS

Editor's note: The information presented in this series is based on the reporter's direct observations, conversations, interviews and public records including the Metro Police arrest report, the grand jury transcripts of testimony by Christopher Martinez, teacher Candace Wagner and various law enforcement officers. The reporter did not ask brothers Christopher or Alejandro Martinez to recollect their memories of April 15, 2012.

For more photos and videos, visit lasvegassun.com/grace-through-grief.



Cristopher Martinez, left, 10, and his brother Alejandro, 5, walk to line up with their classes on Aug. 27, the first day of school at Mabel Hoggard Elementary School.

FROM PAGE 1:

Arturo heads to the bedroom he shares with his two boys in his sister and brother-in-law's house. It's time to settle an age-old question on the first day of school: "Which one do you want?" Arturo asks Alejandro, holding up two T-shirts.

"This," Alejandro says, smiling sheepishly, pointing to a "Cars" shirt. Arturo ties Alejandro's shoes, then inspects his son from head to toe. Alejandro's black shorts don't cut it. They're falling off his skinny frame. Off they go. Arturo rifles through a stack of clothes, snags a tiny pair of blue jeans and hurriedly slides them on Alejandro.

"Ah, perfect," he says.

So far so good as Arturo warms up to the morning drill. The summer months slid by in a chaotic blur of doctor appointments, physical therapy and small victories amid grief. He regained his driver's license. He reopened his boxing gym. He publicly forgave Bryan Clay, the suspect. And slowly but surely, his speech is coming back.

Arturo's wife, Karla, 39, remains a shell of her former self. She, too, has lost weight. Her wife of 14 years, rests on a bedside table. Paper wreaths from their funeral — adorned with messages of love — hang across the room. The decor reminds Arturo and his boys of all they have lost. Karla should be entering middle school and Yady should be making the clothing choices.

In the adjacent bathroom, Arturo glides a comb through Alejandro's knotted hair as the youngster whimpers in pain.

"And don't say poopic face to the kids," Cristopher chimes in, thinking the conversation has turned to school.

It's almost time to go as the boys head to the kitchen for their shakes. Cristopher gulps his down, eager to be on his way to school and friends; Alejandro protests and only takes small sips when Arturo holds the glass up to his mouth.

"More... more... more..."

Arturo's sister, Gaudia Martinez-Seal, appears in the kitchen. Her son, Jesus, started his first day of high school. Before he left, he hung a Post-it note on the boys' bedroom door, wishing them good luck.

Gaudia hugs her nephews and traces the sign of the cross over them. With that, Arturo ushers them to the car. As they back out of the driveway, Cristopher turns up the radio for the Neon Trees' latest pop song.

Summer is over.



PHOTOS BY LEILA NAVIDI
Arturo Martinez-Sanchez gets breakfast ready for Alejandro and Cristopher before preparing them for the first day of school.

GRACE THROUGH GRIEF

A SHATTERED FAMILY RECOVERS



Alejandro gives a thumbs-up to his dad during his first day of kindergarten at Mabel Hoggard Elementary School.

This is your school," Alejandro tells Christopher as they pull into a gravel parking lot next to Mabel Hoggard Elementary School.

"It's your school now, too," Christopher says back.

For Christopher, the elementary school is a place of familiarity, the reason he wanted to return. It was his choice and Arturo approved. Now was not the time for more choices.

"Christopher, how are you, dude?" a staff member calls out as the boys and Arturo make their way to the entrance.

It's a mob scene outside the school as many parents forgo the drop-off and instead accompany their children into the school's open-air common. Alejandro, distracted by the scene and first-day jitters, runs headfirst into a pole. Tears well in his eyes.

First stop: the nurse's office. "You'll be fine," Arturo tells Alejandro as a nurse tends to the emerging red bump above his right eye.

Christopher takes one look at his brother's injured eye and shrieks, "Oh my gosh."

Arturo again consoles Alejandro, whose tears are drying up as he sits, still wearing his backpack.

"Hate to see your baby go to school?" a nurse inquires.

"Yeah," Arturo says, then sighs.

"I'll be fine. We'll take good care of them," Christopher says.

Outside again, Christopher holds his younger brother's hand as they walk to the

playground, where Arturo tells Christopher goodbye. Christopher's teacher will be Miss Maher, a teacher new to the school who staff members assure Arturo, will be a good fit.

The playground is a scene of frenzied excitement. Children run around, make friends, see old teachers and meet new ones. In the kindergarten corridor, trepidation might be a better word — for both the students and parents.

As Arturo and Alejandro round the corner, a line of kindergartners is entering Mr. Hernandez's classroom. Several are crying as parents try to find the right words to boost their spirits.

Genaro Hernandez spots the father-son pair and steps forward. "Hi, Alejandro! How are you?" he says.

Alejandro smiles but doesn't speak.

Hernandez guides Alejandro to his seat at a six-person table. Arturo watches from near the door. Today will be about introductions, Hernandez says.

Alejandro turns his head and flashes his dad a thumbs-up sign — Arturo's cue that, like it or not, it's time to say goodbye.

"Basically, when they start studying you're losing them one cycle at a time," Arturo says, referring to his move to the cafeteria for a parent meeting. "Kindergarten, Junior high. You start losing them."

In the cafeteria, filled with other parents of kindergartners, Arturo spots a piano against a wall. He says Karla used to take lessons on it. He stares off into the distance as he recalls the accomplishments of his daughter, his "princess," his "Karita," as he used to call her:

[See Grace, Page 8]



Alejandro gets his last few minutes of sleep before his first day of kindergarten Aug. 27. He attends the same school as Christopher, who wanted to return to a familiar place.

FROM PAGE 5:

"She was a pianist."
 "She was a yellow belt."
 "She was first place in freestyle swimming."

The president of the school's Parent Teacher Student Association opens the meeting by touting the benefits of enrollment at Mabel Hoggard, a magnet school and home of the Chargers.

Principal Linda Rayfield offers a small dose of reassurance to any parents struggling with the kindergarten milestone.

"We are a community," she says. "Please know that as you are dropping your kids off, we are going to take excellent care of them."

Arturo knows that. Karla and Christopher grew up attending Mabel Hoggard, and it's the place Christopher sought help



on that Monday morning in April four months ago.

School is the one certainty in the family's life as it enters a new reality. What worries Arturo is providing for and raising two sons without their mother and sister.

Arturo contemplates it all as he walks back to his car.

"A lot of stuff goes through my mind," he says. "I don't know how I am going to handle the kids for the rest of their lives."

And then it's like he hears his own words to Alejandro about staying strong.

"I can deal with this," he says to no one in particular.

Now it's time to see the man indicted in the rape and murder of his wife and daughter.



PHOTOS BY LEILA NAVDI

Arturo Martinez-Sanchez waits outside of court before attending a hearing for Bryan Clay, the accused killer of Martinez-Sanchez's wife and daughter. The prosecution has decided to seek the death penalty for Clay, the 22-year-old man also accused of assaulting a 50-year-old woman the same night.

Arturo peers the 14th floor of the Regional Justice Center in downtown Las Vegas. He is joined by family and friends. They huddle in the hallway as sunlight streams through large windows, reminiscing about old times and whisper with a victim advocate appointed by the court.

Arturo is mostly quiet, methodically rubbing a small metal cross that he then slips into the chest pocket of his suit.

The group files as they enter the courtroom, filling two rows of public seating. Sitting just 15 feet in front of them, next to his court-appointed defense attorney, is Bryan Clay, the accused.

Arturo removes the cross from his pocket and grasps it as he eyes the 22-year-old man with short dreadlocks, an unshaven face and stained blue jail attire.

District Court Judge Jessie Walsh enters, breaking the moment and signaling the start of the hearing.

"Your honor," begins Clay's defense attorney, Anthony Sgro. "Essentially, Mr. Clay seeks to attack, I believe, four of the counts currently alleged in the indictment. One of them is the burglary charge and the others are the sexual assault charges."

In June, a grand jury returned a six-page indictment charging Clay with 10 counts connected to his alleged crime spree that began a few blocks away from the Martinez-Sanchez house.

The first three charges — first-degree kidnapping, sexual assault and robbery — relate to the 50-year-old woman Clay allegedly followed, grabbed and forced into a vacant lot at the corner of Vegas and Tonopah drives.



Gaudia Martinez-Sanchez, Arturo's sister, breaks down in court, where Clay's attorneys argued that rape charges should be dropped. A judge upheld the charges, but listening to the back-and-forth upset Gaudia. After her sister-in-law and niece were killed, she let Arturo and his two sons move in with her and her family.

The defense isn't fighting the legal foundation of those charges.

But there is a fundamental legal issue involving the alleged rapes of Karla and Yady. Were they alive or dead when they were sexually assaulted?

During grand jury testimony, neither the sexual-assault evidence examine nor the prosecution examiner pegged whether the sexual assaults occurred before or after each died.

"Rape requires a live victim," Sgro tells the judge, citing a 1996 Nevada Supreme Court decision. "If there is evidence of an assault and it is impossible to determine pre- or post-mortem, we don't just charge the most serious crime," he says.

Arturo and family shake their heads in silence.

Prosecutor Robert Daskas hands the judge a photograph from the crime scene. It's graphic, he says, and no one wants to look at it.

"What's significant is the evidence in the case clearly indicates both the mother and the 10-year-old daughter were attacked with a hammer — first the mother in her bed and then the daughter in her bed," Daskas says. "They were both dragged to the floors of their respective bedrooms, where they were raped by the defendant."

The blunt, step-by-step description of her niece's and sister-in-law's deaths jolts the courtroom.

Daskas continues: "Common sense tells us their hearts were still beating for that amount of blood to be present on the floor, where each of them was raped."

After more back-and-forth between the attorneys, Walsh rules against the defense. All counts remain.

Arturo exits the courtroom visibly drained and numb, with the small, metal cross still within his grasp.

'I have no words,' he says.

Bryan Clay told police he wished they had killed him. Today he is in a one-person cell, separated from the rest of the jail population, awaiting his trial and possible execution. For more about the accused killer, visit lasvegassun.com/grace-through-grief.

LAS VEGAS SUN

LOCALLY OWNED AND INDEPENDENT | WEDNESDAY, APRIL 17, 2013

GRACE THROUGH GRIEF

A SHATTERED FAMILY RECOVERS

A year ago this week, a young family was torn apart by unspeakable evil. Continuing today, the Sun presents an intimate, seven-chapter serial chronicling how the survivors have moved forward. The series is also online at lasvegassun.com/grace-through-grief.



Arturo Martinez-Sanchez kisses his son Alejandro, 5, before surgery at Valley Hospital. The procedure was risky because the damage was on top of a sensitive vein.

DOCTORS REPAIR THE BLOW LEFT BY AN INTRUDER'S HAMMER

STORY BY JACKIE VALLEY | PHOTOS BY LEILA NAVIDI

cranioplasty, will fix a skull indentation on the back of his head, made by the intruder who raped and killed his wife and 10-year-old daughter in April. ¶ And this is how Arturo has prepared for it — by creating a 21-page last will and testament. It's sitting on the counter as Alejandro and Cristopher eat breakfast. ¶ "If I was lost, I need my sons taken care of," the 39-year-old single father says of the document. ¶ The night before, his sister, Gaudia Martinez-Sanchez, made flan, his favorite dessert. He snacked on the custard treat, along with chips, fruit and cereal before fasting for the surgery. ¶ Arturo and his boys temporarily live with Gaudia, her husband and her teenage son; Arturo is her older brother and the reason she moved to the United States. ¶ She tries to give him space. She lets him come to her. Last night, however, she broke her usual silence and gently prodded Arturo about his feelings. ¶ "You know, what else can I be nervous for?" Arturo told her.

The boys will not be attending school this September morning. Instead, they will accompany their dad to the hospital, where Arturo Martinez-Sanchez will undergo his third surgery in five months, after being struck hard on the head by what police say was a hammer. ¶ The first two were brain surgeries and involved the repair of a brain laceration toward the front of his head. This one, a cranioplasty, will fix a skull indentation on the back of his head, made by the intruder who raped and killed his wife and 10-year-old daughter in April. ¶ And this is how Arturo has prepared for it — by creating a 21-page last will and testament. It's sitting on the counter as Alejandro and Cristopher eat breakfast. ¶ "If I was lost, I need my sons taken care of," the 39-year-old single father says of the document. ¶ The night before, his sister, Gaudia Martinez-Sánchez, made flan, his favorite dessert. He snacked on the custard treat, along with chips, fruit and cereal before fasting for the surgery. ¶ Arturo and his boys temporarily live with Gaudia, her husband and her teenage son; Arturo is her older brother and the reason she moved to the United States. ¶ She tries to give him space. She lets him come to her. Last night, however, she broke her usual silence and gently prodded Arturo about his feelings. ¶ "You know, what else can I be nervous for?" Arturo told her.

[See *Grace*, Page 4]

CHAPTER ONE
Waking up to the inconceivable
AVAILABLE ONLINE

CHAPTER TWO
Unimaginable grief, unimaginable grace
AVAILABLE ONLINE

CHAPTER THREE
The boys' refuge: the father's hell
AVAILABLE ONLINE

CHAPTER FOUR
Repairing the blow of a hammer
TODAY

CHAPTER FIVE
Comfort of friends, compassion of strangers
COMING THURSDAY

CHAPTER SIX
Prayers for yesterday, hope for tomorrow
COMING FRIDAY

CHAPTER SEVEN
Old memories, new dreams
COMING SUNDAY

2013 LEGISLATURE

Points of contention in the Silver State's North-South battle

BY ANDREW DOUGHMAN
A version of this story was posted on lasvegassun.com at 2 a.m. Monday.

CARSON CITY — Fairness may be in the eye of the beholder, but some eyes are more equal than others at the Nevada Legislature.

Clark County legislators have the clout to steer state dollars southward, fixing what many have called a long-standing inequity in state funding that favors northern Nevada.

Consider: Fifteen of the state's 21 senators and 32 of state's 42 members of the Assembly represent districts wholly in Clark County; they represent more than two-thirds of the state's population and the state's vital economic interests.

"If Southern Nevada gets a cough, the whole state gets a cold," Assembly

Speaker Marilyn Kirkpatrick, D-North Las Vegas, said.

"We want to be fair to everyone, but part of being fair to everyone is being fair to the south," Senate Minority Leader Mike Cane, R-Las Vegas, said.

Whether to address fairness or to advance agenda, this year's legislative session again features a number of ideas and proposals that would send state money slicing south from Carson City to Clark County.

Public schools

Nevada's major battle this year begins and ends with how much more money the state needs for a quality education system and where that money gets channeled.

A study last year showed that the

[See *Nevada*, Page 6]

BUSINESS

Zappos CEO wades into working-from-home debate

BY ED KOMENDA
This story first appeared on vegasinc.com at 2 a.m. Tuesday.

First, it was Yahoo CEO Marissa Mayer, the corporate mommy who built a private nursery next to her office, then banned employees from working from home.

Next, Best Buy CEO Hubert Joly dismantled his company's flexible work program.

Then came Zappos CEO Tony Hsieh, who published a column in CNN Money defending Mayer's decision.

Some companies claim a ban on telecommuting is vital to workplace culture, but many experts say allowing employees the choice to work from home actually boosts productivity and saves money.

About 1 in 10 Americans work partly from home, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. And the number is growing.

So, which philosophy is right?

It depends on whom you ask.

"The new way of working allows companies to do more with less — less buildings, less pollution, less overtime and less waste," said Kate Lister, owner of Global Workplace Analytics, a telecommuting research company in Carlsbad, Calif. "Employees are doing more with less time, less stress, less distractions, less commuting."

One study showed that companies could save an average of \$10,000 to \$13,000 a year for every half-time "teleworker" they employ, Lister said.

While less than 3 percent of U.S.

[See *Telecommuting*, Page 6]

A SHATTERED FAMILY RECOVERS

Editor's note: The information presented in this series is based on the reporter's direct observations, conversations, interviews and public records including the Metro Police arrest report, the grand jury transcripts of testimony by Christopher Martinez, teacher Candace Wagner and various law enforcement officers. The reporter did not ask brothers Christopher or Alejandro Martinez to recollect their memories of April 15, 2012.

For more photos and videos, visit lasvegassun.com/grace-through-grief.



Arturo Martinez-Sanchez talks with friends and family before surgery to repair damage that resulted from a hammer attack. Investigators believe they found the hammer in a wall in Arturo's yard.

FROM PAGE 1:

The three-letter question might be impossible to answer: Why? Why did the suspect pick that modest, one-story home on Robin Street? Why did he attack Arturo; his wife, Yady; and daughter Karla; but not harm the couple's two young children, Yader and Alejandro? Why did it happen to them?

The questions run through Arturo's head on a daily basis. All Arturo knows is he awoke mid-morning Sunday, April 15, and found a horror story within his home. Then he felt something wet trickling down his face. Blood.

Arturo drifted in and out of consciousness for the next few hours. Around 11:30 a.m., Las Vegas police arrived at the home after Cristopher walked to Mabel Hoggard Elementary School and told school officials a chilling statement: His mother and sister were dead.

Detectors combing the crime scene two days later found a hammer at the bottom of a hole in a cinder-block wall along the north side of the Martinez-Sanchez family's home. The hammer, made of a wooden handle and silver head, was stained with blood.

The discovery supported what doctors suspected: A blunt-force object had been the perpetrator's weapon.

When Arturo arrived at University Medical Center, he was speechless. He couldn't speak.

"It was an odd first encounter," said Dr. Logan Douds, an endovascular neurosurgeon who was the on-call doctor that day. "We couldn't ask him any questions to sort of find out how he was doing."

The injuries on his head spoke for themselves. Douds ordered an X-ray showing skull fractures — one on the top or frontal region of his head, and another on the back side, or occipital region.

The blows to the skull caused a cerebral hemorrhage, which acts like a stroke, in the frontal

region, resulting in speech impairments. The injury demanded immediate attention, landing Arturo in the operating room that afternoon for his first brain surgery.

"Some patients make a complete recovery in terms of function," Douds said, explaining potential outcomes after suffering traumatic brain injuries. "Some people don't have any functional deficits at all. Some people have a permanent deficit."

Douds and his medical team lifted the skull fracture in the frontal region, washed out the affected underlying tissue and repaired the laceration. A couple of weeks later, Douds operated a second time, placing a piece of mesh over the skin.

Douds didn't consider Arturo's head injuries life-threatening when they met, but no surgery is without risks, especially ones involving the bone and brain. Arturo had cleared his first two major medical hurdles.

A marble-sized dent, however, remained on the back of his head — the type of cut doctors call a "comminuted fracture."

Translation: This part of the skull was so pulverized, the bone fractured in multiple pieces and detached from the rest of the skull. Headaches plagued Arturo throughout the summer. By this time, swelling had subsided, making it clear a deformity existed. But there was another problem: A detached skull fragment was overlying a vein as large as its name — the superior sagittal sinus. Freeing the skull fragment could pose bleeding risks.

"I made sure he really wanted to have the surgery done for that reason — knowing there's risks involved," Douds said.

Arturo decided the potential good outcome was worth the risk. Days later, he called his attorney, Barbara Buckley, director of the Legal Aid Center of Southern Nevada, and asked for help drafting a will.



The Rev. Danny Daniels of First Southern Baptist Church, in Arturo's skull that resulted from a hammer attack.



Arturo and his sons wore matching shoes on Sept. 12, the day Arturo had a portion of his skull repaired.



Arturo and Alejandro walk into Valley Hospital for Arturo's cranioplasty. Doctors put off the surgery on the back of his skull as long as possible, but after being plagued by headaches all summer, Arturo went in for the procedure.

GRACE THROUGH GRIEF

A SHATTERED FAMILY RECOVERS



left, leads a prayer for Arturo Martinez-Sanchez, center, before he goes into surgery at Valley Hospital in Las Vegas. Dr. Logan Douds performed a cranioplasty to repair an indentation



Registered nurse Manny Elumba wheels Arturo past Alejandro and sister-in-law Lupita Olmeda.



Doctors didn't think Arturo's injuries were life threatening, but Arturo, 39, prepared a will before the cranioplasty.



Douds, right, performed all three surgeries Arturo needed after he and his family were attacked.

Despite his sister's pleas, Arturo insists on driving himself to Valley Hospital for the surgery. The boys pile into his red Ford Escape, which bears the marking of a parent: a decal on the back window depicting five stick figures, one for each family member.

Gaudia follows in her own car but, before leaving, posts one last call for prayers on her Facebook account.

"On the way to the hospital ... God with us and us with his grace."

It's 10:30 p.m., the message she has posted on the social-networking site. Her first message the previous night announced Arturo's surgery and elicited an outpouring of support from friends and family in Las Vegas and beyond — another small reminder of strength in numbers.

Alejandro grabs his father's hand as the family walks its way through the off-white hospital hallways. The pre-surgery waiting room is quiet when they arrive.

Gaudia envelops her brother in a long embrace before they sit down. The waiting begins, interrupted every so often by the arrival of more relatives.

Eventually, the double doors next to the room open and a nurse summons Arturo for pre-surgery preparations. About 15 minutes later, nurses give the family the all-clear to enter room No. 20 in the pre-op area.

Arturo is lying in a bed dressed in a hospital gown, with a heated blanket over his body and an IV in his arm.

This is not the man his sons are accustomed to seeing — the one clad in athletic gear and Puma sneakers, or jeans and cowboy boots.

"Always lookin' for trouble," Arturo says.

He makes the sign of the cross over his youngest child's face as Alejandro begrudgingly relinquishes his hand-held video game.

A nurse enters the room to outfit Arturo with special socks to prevent blood clots, but first she must squeeze her way past the eight family members and friends filling the tight room. Two of them are Arturo's sons: Cristopher, 11, and Danny Daniels, a family friend and senior pastor at First Southern Baptist Church south of downtown, who leads the group in prayer.

"We pray for you by Arturo,"² Daniels begins.

"We pray to you, God, give the doctors strength and wisdom."

"Amen," the group murmurs.

It's 2:15 p.m.

"I'm too hungry," Arturo says. "I need In-N-Out."

As if on cue, Douds arrives and explains the cranioplasty. He reiterates the surgery's biggest risk: removing the deformed skull fragment.

Afterward, family and friends step into the hallway, leaving Arturo alone with his two sons. He whispers to them as they huddle next

to his bed.

"You have to understand," he says. "You have to keep going until you become big men and do what you need to do."

He caps the short, man-to-little-man speech with high-fives for each boy. Cristopher, the older of the two, leans forward, resting his head in his dad's arms. Alejandro just smiles.

Soon after, Manny Elumba, the operating room nurse, enters and rattles off a checklist of room instructions:

"How are you doing today?"

"Are you allergic to any medicine?"

"Do you have anything to eat or drink today?"

His last question, which is really more of a statement, is directed at Gaudia, who is standing in a corner of the room, fear etched on her face.

"We'll take good care of Mr. Martinez, all right?"

"Thank you," she says.

Elumba clips the IV bag to Arturo's hospital bed. The bed frames go up.

Arturo gives his sons another hug. This time, Cristopher and Alejandro trace their hands from his head to his chest and side to side, creating two invisible crosses over their surviving parent.

Then Elumba wheels Arturo out of his room and turns the corner, bound for operating room No. 1.

[See Grace, Page 8]



PHOTOS BY LEILA NAVIDI

Arturo Martinez-Sanchez is knocked out by the anesthesia before his surgery, which involved removing the dented bone, flipping it over and putting it back.

FROM PAGE 5:

Blue cloth obscures the identity of the patient lying face down on the operating table, covered almost entirely. The problem spot — in this case, the back of a skull — peaks through an opening.

But before the first cut or even the first touch, Elumba reads aloud patient facts as other members

of the six-person medical team listen intently.

Patient: Arturo Martinez-Sanchez

Birthdate: Dec. 11, 1972

Procedure: Cranioplasty

Allergies: None

The brain trust surrounding Arturo — a neurosurgeon, an anesthesiologist, a physician's assistant, two scrub techs and an operating-room nurse — agrees in unison.

"Time out at fifteen forty-nine," Elumba says. It's 3:49 p.m.

Douglas injects a local anesthetic and the indentation on the back of Arturo's head. Next, he slices the scalp and attaches green clamps to the skin tissue, following the path he made earlier.

Blood seeps out. Just as quickly, however, the physician assistant clears the incision line with a suction tube.

The pair work in unison. Slice, clamp, suction. Slice, clamp, suction.

The incision complete, Douds peels back the 3-inch-by-3-inch flap of skin covering Arturo's skull and repositions the overhead light for closer examination.

"Please make sure the blood is actually available," Bruce Burnett, the anesthesiologist, reminds the scrub techs. "Thank you."

The polite statement underscores the vulnerability of the operation. At any point, something could go wrong, so the team must prepare for the unexpected, such as a blood transfusion.

Douds clutches instruments in both hands and alternates back and forth, clearing soft tissue from the fractured bone below. Meanwhile, a scrub tech gracefully follows the surgeon's moves and anticipates what he needs next. The rhythm continues until Douds — his white plastic gloves stained with blood — steps toward a computer displaying scanned images of Arturo's skull

and brain.

Returning to the operating table, Douds drills small holes around the deformity and removes the fractured skull in several pieces.

The removal does not disrupt the large, underlying vein. The team can take a deep breath. Now it's all about cosmetics — turning those fragments into a more normal-looking skull.

"It's not like repairing a car part," Douds says as he watches Douds examine the fractured bone. "Everyone is different."

In this case, the solution lies in simply flipping the fractured segment. Like a puzzle piece, Douds pieces the inverted fragments together on a sterile instrument table across the room.

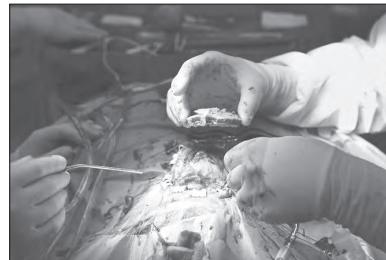
Several snowflake-shaped titanium plates, two-hole straight plates, and 36 tiny screws ultimately hold the refurbished skull fragments together.

Douds gently places the now-whole fragment in the gaping hole in Arturo's skull and glides a drill with a

burr over the bone, smoothing any rough edges.

The more-normal bone shape should take pressure off the covering of the brain, reducing the number of headaches. And the dent on the back of his head should be largely nonexistent, aside from some scarring.

At 4:49 p.m., exactly one hour since Elumba called "time out," Douds folds the skin flap back over the opening. He grabs thread and starts tying.



The familiar face pauses at the hospital room doorway and does a double take.

Arturo, the man who could barely speak when he entered the Nevada Community Enrichment Program, is sitting up in a hospital bed, chatting with his sister.

The two look eyes and for a moment, stare at each other in a mixture of surprise and delight. Dawn Zito, an admissions coordinator at the rehabilitation center, was the first person Arturo met when he enrolled in the physical- and occupational-therapy program in early August.

He graduated from the program Aug. 23.

"How's it going?" Zito says, smiling broadly as she steps into the room.

"It's going," Arturo says, bowing his head to show her the new scars from his surgery two days ago.

The two reminisce about the day they first met. He could only give yes or no answers. Anything more was stunted by his brain injury.

"You've come a long way since then," she says.

Arturo nods in agreement, yet lingering impediment

frustrates him. He still confuses words or can't find the right word altogether. And his memory falters more often than not. He can remember his childhood but forgets the things a doctor told him an hour ago.

"It's more getting it out of you," Zito says. "You have to remember stories. You just can't get it out."

"That's the problem," he says, sighing and wrinkling his face.

It doesn't take long for his frustrations to become evident. Zito bids him goodbye and says it was nice to see him.

"Nice to meet you, too," Arturo says. He squirms as his sister must certain she did. "I mean to you."

His family shares his worries about a physical recovery. Will he regain lost vision in his right eye? Will his speech ever flow in uninterrupted sentences again? And will the frequent throbbing in his head gradually subside?

Arturo voices these worries most often. His family, on the other hand, fears for his emotional well-being, perhaps to a greater extent.

Arturo's stubborn and fiercely independent spirit never missed a beat. He made that clear dur-

ing his initial hospitalization: As their father, Christopher and Alejandro would live with him, he told his lawyer. End of discussion.

But would the fun-loving and hard-working man who enjoyed motorcycles, boxing and impromptu dances with his wife ever return? A certain amount of uncertainty remained.

Until this morning.

That's when Gaudin says she saw a sign of hope — courtesy of a Kit Kat bar tempting her from across the hospital room. There were three on a table. She wanted just one.

Her brother immediately denied her request, then pulled her closer with a mischievous look in his eye. She lunged for the candy bar. He grabbed it first and taunted her.

Finally, he gave her the Kit Kat. And laughed.

And, for a moment, Gaudin wondered if maybe, just maybe, her older brother was coming back.

"I'm guessing he got this mood because he knows everything went well with the surgery," she says while Arturo takes a shower in preparation for his hospital discharge. "He was so worried. It's like one more step."

LAS VEGAS SUN

LOCALLY OWNED AND INDEPENDENT | THURSDAY, APRIL 18, 2013

GRACE THROUGH GRIEF

A SHATTERED FAMILY RECOVERS

A year ago this week, a young family was torn apart by unspeakable evil. Continuing today, the Sun presents an intimate, seven-chapter serial chronicling how the survivors have moved forward. The series is also online at lasvegassun.com/grace-through-grief.



Arturo Martinez-Sanchez takes his sons Cristopher, left, 10, and Alejandro, 5, through a haunted house while trick-or-treating with friends from his old neighborhood in Las Vegas on Oct. 31. Six months earlier, in April 2012, an intruder entered the family's home and killed Arturo's wife and 10-year-old daughter.

HEALING ASSISTED BY COMFORT OF FRIENDS, AID FROM STRANGERS

STORY BY JACKIE VALLEY | PHOTOS BY LEILA NAVIDI

and no vision. ¶ But it can still cry. ¶ Now vision from his right eye is compromised, too, after an intruder broke into his family's home, raping and killing his wife and daughter and severely injuring him. The couple's two youngest children, Cristopher and Alejandro, slept through the attack. ¶ The head injuries inflicted upon him stole vision in the bottom left quadrant of his right eye. It's not a life-altering setback. His central vision, the most crucial spot, was untouched, but for a man without sight in one eye, it represents another frustration on top of monumental grief. ¶ "OK, you see those four lights? In the center, there will be a blinking light," says Tess Reyes, a diagnostic technician at Westfield Eye Center in Las Vegas, who is testing his peripheral vision. "Press the button every time you see the blinking light." ¶ Arturo leans forward and peers through a glass lens into the machine. As if playing a video game, his finger jabs a button each time the light blinks. ¶ *Click.* Two seconds pass. *Click.* Five seconds pass. *Click.* ¶ Each time Arturo, 39, misses a blinking light, the machine notes the location with a dark mark, thereby creating a map showing where he has lost vision. ¶ A half-hour later, he meets with his ophthalmologist, Dr. Kenneth Houchin, who compares the test results with those from July. ¶ "It appears to be just about the same, although there could be some lightening in this area that might be encouraging," Houchin says, pointing to a dark blob in the troubled lower left quadrant close to his nose.

[See *Grace*, Page 4]

The technicians at his eye appointment tell Arturo Martinez-Sanchez to be sure to use lubricating eye drops — artificial tears, as they're called — if his eyes feel dry. ¶ That's not a problem, he says. ¶ "I could cry any time," he says. ¶ Arturo's left iris and pupil are gone, the result of a childhood accident — a shard of glass from a soda bottle damaged his retina, leaving behind a milky gray circle

CHAPTER ONE Waking up to the inconceivable AVAILABLE ONLINE	CHAPTER TWO Unimaginable grief, unimaginable grace AVAILABLE ONLINE	CHAPTER THREE The boys' refuge: the father's hell AVAILABLE ONLINE	CHAPTER FOUR Repairing the blow of a hammer AVAILABLE ONLINE	CHAPTER FIVE Comfort of friends, compassion of strangers TODAY	CHAPTER SIX Prayers for yesterday, hope for tomorrow COMING FRIDAY	CHAPTER SEVEN Old memories, new dreams COMING SUNDAY
---	---	--	--	--	--	--

BUSINESS

It's wrong, but 1 in 4 don't mind a little insurance fraud

By Richard N. Velotta
This story first appeared on vegasinc.com at 1:55 a.m. Monday.

As insurance fraud prosecutions go, this one was a textbook case.

Thirty-one-year-old Las Vegas resident Shantita Flax pleaded guilty last month to a scheme in which she received money from women undergoing cosmetic breast implant procedures but ordered their implants as though they were part of breast cancer treatments.

Flax, a civilian contractor at O'Callaghan Federal Hospital at Nellis Air

Force Base, pocketed the cash she collected from the women, then billed Air Force insurers for the implants.

Health care fraud investigators say the deceit is common. Fraudulent billings are a lucrative tactic for scammers.

In 2009, when Flax was committing her scheme, health care fraud, including bogus Medicare claims and kickbacks for

worthless treatments, reached upward of \$175 billion. Today, the problem is even worse.

During the first eight months of 2011, the Justice Department prosecuted 903 cases of health care fraud — more than for all of 2010.

Because Nevada's population is so small, the number of local prosecutions is

relatively low. Industry sources say there were fewer than 100 health care fraud cases here in 2012.

Despite the low numbers, the percentage of successful prosecutions is high, mainly because the state's health insurance industry, law enforcement and prosecutors are organized and on the same page about the cases to pursue and the approaches to take.

"One of the things Nevada has going for it is that it has a very active U.S. Attorney's Office that is concerned about health care issues," said Gary Auer, director of the Special Investigations Unit for health insurer [See *Fraud*, Page 6]

A SHATTERED FAMILY RECOVERS

Editor's note: The information presented in this series is based on the reporter's direct observations, conversations, interviews and public records including the Metro Police arrest report, the grand jury transcripts of testimony by Cristopher Martinez, teacher Candace Wagner and various law enforcement officers. The reporter did not ask brothers Cristopher or Alejandro Martinez to recollect their memories of April 15, 2012.

For more photos and videos, visit: lasvegassun.com/grace-through-grief.

FROM PAGE 5:

"We'll know within a year. Whatever is still lost in a year's time after the injury will likely be permanent." ¶ Today is Oct. 15 — six months since Arturo lost much more than his vision.

He's wearing a white T-shirt with images of his wife and daughter that says, "In Loving Memory of Yadira Martinez & Karla Martinez."

•••

Arturo keeps his days as structured as possible. He puts off Cristopher, 10, and Alejandro, 5, at school, then heads to the boxing gym he reopened in July. Paperwork and finance await him. He pumps up tempo music from his iPhone over the speakers. Occasionally, his coaches stop by, sometimes with their children, for a workout before activity picks up toward evening.

Later, he checks his phone calendar, careful not to miss appointments with his lawyer, doctors, family or the state program that helps crime victims cover medical bills. It could easily feel overwhelming for a newly single father with a brain injury.

"Every day I have something to do," he says. "Every single day."

At 3 p.m., for instance, he picks up his boys from school and brings them to the gym.

And it becomes apparent to Arturo that, for all the people helping him piece back together his life, he can use his gym — his passion — to help others. This is a place where he feels needed versus needy. It gives him purpose.

Arturo is telling a 19-year-old who aspires to become a professional boxer how to balance on two strapped hand weights.

"Your feet have to be parallel," he says, motioning with his hands.

Then Arturo turns his attention to a 23-year-old who just started coming to the gym. Arturo flashes him a thumbs-up when the young man punches cleanly and



Arturo Martinez-Sanchez's vision is tested at Westfield Eye Center on Dec. 17. The attack left him with a blind spot.

quickly into the air. Quick instructions follow: an elbow adjustment here, a stance tweak there.

Arturo's teaching look natural, wending his way through the gym — past hanging punching bags, over mats, around the boxing ring — dishing constructive criticism and bits of praise where necessary. He's in his element. It's therapy.

But it's not the only therapy he needs.

That's why he regularly escapes the gym for a couple hours a week with Cristopher and Alejandro, attends counseling sessions.

Arturo knows therapy won't erase Cristopher's memory of what he saw. But he does what he can. He lavishes the boy with more kisses, a sentiment he learned from his wife, but affection alone is not enough. Words hold power, and sometimes simply talking through feelings soothes pain.

Arturo says his kids need counseling more than he does, but then he pauses to ponder the question: Is counseling helping? "It's good for me," Arturo says. "That's why I'm doing it."

With his therapist, Arturo discusses the past, present and future. The boys sometimes draw pictures to express their emotions. An underlying theme, Arturo says, is about moving forward.

If he and the boys discuss what happened to their family, it's often within the confines of his red Ford Escape — after they leave counseling and drive back to the boxing gym. That's their quiet time for reflection.



Arturo Martinez-Sanchez carries a flashlight in a dark room.



PHOTOS BY LELA NAVIDI

Arturo trains boxer Luis Lara, 19, at his gym, Real KO Boxing Club, in North Las Vegas on Oct. 5. He reopened the gym in July.



A shoe, candy and other items are seen on Oct. 26 on the floor of the home on Robin Street where Arturo was brutally attacked and his wife and daughter were killed.



Candles are placed inside the room where Yadira Martinez was killed. Echoes of her palm prints are left behind in stains from chemical cleaners.



Dark splotches are visible below the light switch where blood was cleaned up inside the home. The chemicals used to remove bloodstains leave behind blue stains.



light as he walks through his home on Robin Street. "Every time I come to this place and I see this," he says, pausing, "I don't know. It's just crazy."



The windows of the house on Robin Street are boarded up. Arturo has no plans to ever again live in the home where he invested money and sweat for his young family.



Arturo walks through the Robin Street home's kitchen. It's the fourth time he has visited the house since the killings.

Arturo invested money and sweat into the home at 1016 Robin St., updating the bathrooms and kitchen and painting bedrooms for his young family. But it wasn't what he needed to raise his family. Built in 1957, with a polka-dot fruitless mulberry out front, the home is not far from a rough neighborhood.

In July 2007, the couple bought a new, much larger home in a North Las Vegas neighborhood with freshly poured sidewalks, young trees, parks and landscaped streets. Two weeks after Alejandro was born, they moved in.

Arturo and Yady bought their kids a trampoline for the backyard. They bonded with neighbors, enjoying cookouts and holidays together. It was their dream home.

But, like tens of thousands of other Las Vegans, the family found themselves saddled with a house they could not afford. They sold it to a friend, their neighbor and friend, they lost their home.

The family returned to its Robin Street house, which Arturo had been renting out, in December 2011, four months before it would become a crime scene.

Arturo has no plans to ever live there again. For now, he is living with his sister and her family.

In October, he shows the Robin Street house to two commercial real estate agents whom he had recently met.

"Just come on in," Arturo says, turning toward the front door.

The phrase rolls off his tongue with ease, like a seasoned homeowner welcoming guests.

Plywood covers four front windows; piles of leaves surround two abandoned garbage cans on the side of the house. Arturo reluctantly does two long strides from the doorway and goes inside, joined by Brendan Keating and Sean Margolis.

The two were moved by his story splashed across newscasts immediately after the killings: Devout Catholic man, severely wounded in a hammer attack, forgives man suspected of killing his wife and daughter.

The two men, Bishop Gorman High School grads, offered him a few hundred dollars to pay a bill and, more important, a standing offer of help in any way going forward.

The men's generosity is not unique. The savagery of the attacks triggered an outpouring of support, eliciting prayers worldwide and surprise deliveries in the mail.

A man from Washington state sent Arturo a bottle of wine and a note: "I read your tragic and heart-breaking story. I can't imagine your pain. However, as a Christian myself, I was awed by your capacity for forgiveness. Your story to me is a true example of walking in the word. Please accept some of my wine as a fellow Christian."

An elderly woman living in Las Vegas began sending checks addressed to the "Arturo Martinez Family" with "donation" written in the bottom left corner. A retired man now living in Las Vegas called homicide detectives and asked how he could give workout equipment to Arturo's gym.

Others have donated time and labor.

Later, a wealthy Henderson couple would establish funds for Cristopher and Alejandro that they can access after they graduate high school, perhaps to pay for college.

And then there's Barbara Buckley, director of the Legal Aid Center of Southern Nevada, who took Arturo as a pro-bono client after receiving a call from the Mexican consulate. She has been helping him sort out legal matters in the aftermath of the tragedy, such as applying for a U Visa, which extends temporary legal status for immigrant victims of crime.

"He has agreed with Arturo that he should consult with someone in the real estate business to figure out what to do with the house."

That leads to today and the tour of the house he's giving these two real estate agents. He wants advice about what to do with it. He carries a flashlight and points out blue splotches covering the walls. They were left behind by chemicals used to remove bloodstains.

"There was blood right here," Arturo says, pointing to a wall in the master bedroom near where his wife died. "There were two or three palms — her palms."

This is Arturo's fourth time visiting the house since the killings. It's eerie, devoid of almost any sunlight. But Arturo has most markings memorized, such as this one: the faint outline of a cross within a blue stain. He theorizes it's the handwork

[See Grace, Page 8]



Crime scene markings line the walls of the Robin Street home Oct. 26. Arturo Martinez-Sanchez gave a pair of commercial real estate agents a tour to elicit their advice.

FROM PAGE 5:

of the cleaning crew who entered after investigating the house.

The tour seems almost mechanical, and maybe it's a defense mechanism.

"Every time I come to this place and I see this," he says, pausing. "I don't know. It's just crazy."

In the backyard, Arturo shows them a balance beam he bought his daughter. He yearns now for a new home for him and his boys.

"I'm having trouble finding a girl — In 20 days," Keating tells Arturo. "Walking through the house evokes a lot of emotions, so I want to do anything that I can help you."

The comment about pending fatherhood lights up Arturo, who rushes off. No manly moment should expect lots of coying the first few months, followed by toddlers trying to grab everything in reach. He smiles broadly while reminiscing.

"It's something that is incredible," he says. "Every time my kids were born, it was amazing."

As the trio heads back to the front yard, Arturo sees Cristopher and Alejandro skateboarding on a neighbor's driveway. A car is approaching north on Robin Street.

"Watch the car! Watch the car!" he yells.



Alejandro Martinez, 5, dressed as Spider-Man for Halloween, carries a "Cars"-themed bucket to collect his haul of candy while trick-or-treating.

PHOTOS BY LEILA NAVOID

The time-honored tradition comes each Oct. 31 as opposing forces unite, darting up and down streets on a common mission. Goblins run with princesses. Witches confer with superheroes. And, under darkened skies, the line between good and evil blurs.

Christopher and Alejandro know horror.

Alejandro dons a Spider-Man costume. His older brother, who will attend middle school next year, wears his regular clothes.

"Oh my gosh, all these lights," Christopher laments, as parents snap photo after photo.

The group calls itself the Junction Peak family, an ode to the North Las Vegas street they lived on before foreclosures splintered their tight-knit community. Last year, Arturo

and Yady dressed as pirates as the families went trick-or-treating.

As this Halloween approached, Arturo's former neighbor, Heather Zmak, sent him a text message: *"I know tomorrow is going to be hard for you, but all I can think about is every year we were trick-or-treating together."*

That's all it took. Tonight, four families, including the Martinezs, meet at the north-west valley house of his other former neighbors, Fred and Tessa Haas. The kids fan out to different homes as the adults follow.

Zmak and Fred Haas lag behind for a minute as they watch their friend Arturo interact with his boys. They are assessing him.

"He's going to be a great dad," Zmak says.

"Yeah, he sounds good too," Fred Haas says.

Arturo releases a deep, from-the-belly laugh as he watches Christopher and Alejandro scramble between homes, then check their loot after each stop.

"Candy, candy, candy," the young Spider-Man murmurs as he crosses a street.

The scene is festive. Orange lights adorn homes. Giant, inflatable pumpkins fill yards,

along with light-up skulls and fake spiders.

Meanwhile, a man dressed as Michael Myers, the terror-inciting character in the "Halloween" movies, walks ominously around the neighborhood, silently staring from behind a white mask.

His shtick works. Zmak's 6-year-old daughter, Joleigh Courtney, jumps and wraps her arms around him.

"Don't worry about it," he says. "You're safe."

Up the street, there's a garage converted to a haunted house. The kids run toward it, but Alejandro backs off, frightened.

Arturo scoops Spider-Man into his arms and carries him through the dark space offset by streaks of orange and red. "There's nothing to fear. It's just a few pretend zombies," Alejandro whispers the entire time, softening only when they exit.

"See, I told you," Christopher says. "It's not scary."

As the group reconvenes outside, the Michael Myers imposter tries again. He makes a beeline toward them, but it's of no use. The children and parents feign blood-curdling screams and laugh.

A SHATTERED FAMILY RECOVERS

Editor's note: The information presented in this series is based on the reporter's direct observations, conversations, interviews and public records including the Metro Police arrest report, the grand jury transcripts of testimony by Christopher Martinez, teacher Candace Wagner and various law enforcement officers. The reporter did not ask brothers Christopher or Alejandro Martinez to recollect their memories of April 15, 2012.

For more photos and videos, visit: lasvegassun.com/grace-through-grief.

FROM PAGE 1:

...

Before Arturo packs his two boys in the car and headed to his brother-in-law's home for the day, he posted a quick message on his Facebook page.

He posts a good word to bless family and friends — including his fellow union members — who helped him reopen his boxing gym. It's his place of familiar refuge.

Today he's sitting on his brother-in-law's sofa, holding a newborn nephew.

"I forgot how to cradle little babies," Arturo says as he snaps his fingers above the baby's head to grab his attention. "But now I kind of remember."

A mound of food is growing on portable tables in the middle of the living room. The early arrivals from the kitchen: smoked turkey with Mexican-style stuffing, bread with a chipotle and mayonnaise dipping sauce, and *cochinita pibil* — pork marinated in too many spices.

By 7:30 p.m., the table is complete and the kids emerge from the back bedroom. They jockey for seats near one another as their parents, aunts and uncles join them, forming a circle around the table. There are 21 adults and chil-



Arturo Martinez-Sanchez holds his 2-month-old nephew, Sebastian Olmedo, during an emotional family Thanksgiving.

dren in the home this evening. Pictures of Karla and Yadu hang on the wall.

Everyone links hands and bows their heads, asking God to watch over the souls of Karla and Yadu.

With his sons on either side of him, Arturo continues the prayer, pausing to say the words. In Spanish, he prays for all who cannot be with their families on this day and, perhaps speaking from inner pain, asks for them to be well *por los siglos de los siglos* — forever and ever.

With the prayer of petition complete and as little ones squirm in metal chairs, now comes the prayer of thanksgiving.

For allowing us to be united on this night even though two important people are missing.

For my husband's job, for the health of all of us.

For all the blessings like a roof over our heads, our food, our clothing.

For giving me a sister and a niece who are so special.

Napkins wipe away tears. Wives comfort husbands. Arturo embraces his boys. And, after the final family member finishes speaking, they recite the Lord's Prayer.

At its conclusion, a clap echoes, followed by more. The applause crescendos, and everyone is smiling.

...



The Thanksgiving prayer turns somber as the family — 21 members in the home for the holiday — remembers Arturo's slain wife Yadira and daughter Karla.

PHOTOS BY LELA NAVIDI

At his chiropractor's office, Arturo lies on his back atop a leather therapy bed that is rumbling with the sounds of massaging rollers. With his eyes closed, his chest rising and falling, he is the picture of tranquility.

It's early December and Arturo has been coming here several times each week for more than a month, focused on a single goal: being able to jump rope again. For that to happen, he needs to be mostly free of back pain and numbness in his fingertips, left hand and leg.

After 20 minutes, he moves to a back room and flops down on a bed-like contraption that will stretch his spine and help mend a compressed nerve.

Chiropractor Nancy Fallon adjusts the table's setting, moving it two inches around Arturo, that are attached to pulleys. Most patients think the gentle tugging feels good and either fall asleep or chat on the phone, she says.

As the treatment begins, Arturo pulls out his iPhone and checks his voicemail. The message is from a debt collector, jolting Arturo out of his relaxation.

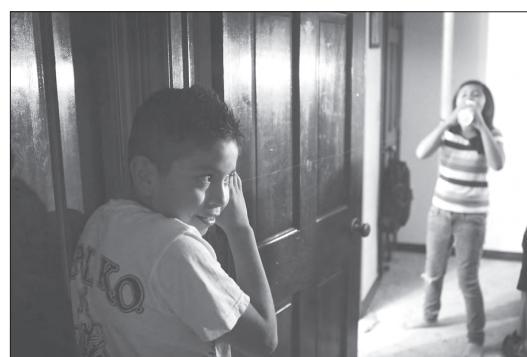
He answers the phone and sits at the table.

"You guys are making me stressed!" he tells the lady on the other end of the line. "I don't owe you any money. They already talked to me last week."

Arturo explains a state-funded program that helps victims of crime is covering the bill in question. The debt collector wants more details, such as the date of the police report.

"The day was April 16, 2012," he says.

The call is over and Arturo tries again to relax.



Cristopher Martinez, 10, plays a game with his cousin after Thanksgiving dinner.



The Rev. Julio Alberto Alzate spends time with Arturo, Christopher and Alejandro after Christmas Eve Mass at St. Christopher Catholic Church. Arturo's faith helps him cope with the deaths of his wife and daughter.

With little fanfare, Arturo bids goodbye to his 30s, surrounded by family and friends in his boxing gym. He's alone.

A friend gives him a gold rosemary, now dangling from his neck. It joins the small crucifix he carries in his wallet.

He relies on his faith to cope with the unnatural, gruesome death of his wife and daughter. This week, television monitors remind him that he is not alone.

Some 2,500 miles away in a postcard-perfect place called Newtown, Conn., dozens of families have joined Arturo's nightmare after a gunman ended an elementary school day, needlessly killing 20 first-graders and six staff members. Cruel is the word Arturo uses to describe the massacre.

Arturo knows something about what the families of the Newtown victims will discover: Full healing seems a Herculean task, but time will help. Hours elapse into days and weeks into months. Progress comes with setbacks, but life does not stop, hence the onslaught of Christmas decorations covering walls and shelves everywhere he goes.

On Dec. 14, Arturo changes his relationship status on Facebook from "married to Yadira Martinez" to "single." There's a reason: Arturo is taking one of those proverbial steps forward. A month earlier, Arturo had



Cristopher and Alejandro pause for a photo in their superhero masks with their cousin, Jesus Vazquez, 14, in rear, during a family Christmas celebration.

asked an old family friend, Gisela Cordero, if she wanted to re-employ her company, she enjoyed his so they continue seeing each other.

Arturo understands others might question his decision to start dating eight months after he lost his wife. He says only he knows when the time feels right. He and Gisela are still in courtship. Arturo shares the news with perhaps his toughest critics: Cristopher and Alejandro.

"What are you going to do if I'm single all your life?" Arturo asks.

Cristopher, who is more vocal about missing his mother than his younger brother, ponders the question in silence but doesn't object.

The conversation with his boys wasn't entirely spontaneous. Arturo had asked them about marriage, perhaps after a near-miss on the highway or a particularly frightening story on the evening news. What would happen if one of us dies unexpectedly? Would the children be OK? What about finances? And should the surviving spouse seek love again?

Arturo and Yady didn't dwell on these grim questions, but Yady made clear one request: "If you find someone that fits you, the first thing you have to think about is the children."

Arturo believes his sons deserve a father who is happy — not the man prone to tears they have observed since April. A good relationship breeds happiness.

jects many couples broach during marriage, perhaps after a near-miss on the highway or a particularly frightening story on the evening news. What would happen if one of us dies unexpectedly? Would the children be OK? What about finances? And should the surviving spouse seek love again?

Arturo and Yady didn't dwell on these grim questions, but Yady made clear one request: "If you find someone that fits you, the first thing you have to think about is the children."

Arturo believes his sons deserve a father who is happy — not the man prone to tears they have observed since April. A good relationship breeds happiness.



Arturo, center, and his sons celebrate Christmas dinner with a family prayer and toast. "I love Christmas," says Arturo, who insists on a real tree for his sister and brother-in-law's home.

The poor Christmas tree sitting in a northwest valley home doesn't know it has an enemy, but across town, Arturo is plotting its ouster.

His sister, Gaudia Martinez-Sanchez, bought the fake tree for her house, where Arturo and his sons have been living. But there's a problem: It's not real.

"I love Christmas," says Arturo, a fiercely stubborn man who stands by his principles — in this case, a real tree. "My Christmas tree is better."

Christmas trees should cast an evergreen glow in the room. They should be trimmed with different decorations each year — with one exception: a train circling the trunk.

Arturo has started buying gifts for Cristopher and Alejandro, and now he's adding a tree to the list. It will help this Christmas.

LAS VEGAS SUN

LOCALLY OWNED AND INDEPENDENT | SUNDAY, APRIL 21, 2013

GRACE THROUGH GRIEF

A SHATTERED FAMILY RECOVERS

A year ago April 15, a young family was torn apart by unspeakable evil. Today, the Sun presents the final chapter of an intimate serial chronicling how the survivors have moved forward. The entire series is also online at lasvegasun.com/grace-through-grief.



Arturo Martinez-Sanchez runs on a track at the Cheyenne Sports Complex in North Las Vegas on March 8. Because of a traumatic brain injury in April 2012 — which he suffered the same night his wife and daughter were killed by an intruder in their home — he has only recently begun running again.

HONORING THE PAST, SURVIVING THE PAIN, PURSUING NEW DREAMS

STORY BY JACKIE VALLEY | PHOTOS BY LEILA NAVIDI

every bend and narrow lane leading to the gravesite shared by his wife and daughter, having visited the cemetery on a weekly basis for months. ¶ They come less often now, every couple of weeks. ¶ “Every time we come, we bring flowers,” he says. ¶ It’s a chilly Sunday morning in early February. As a gust of wind sweeps across the cemetery, Arturo kneels and removes the two old bouquets with the attached balloon. His girlfriend, Gisela Corral, fills the cylindrical hole with fresh red roses while 10-year-old Cristopher Martinez fetches water. ¶ Yady’s birthday was Feb. 1. She would have turned 39.

¶ “I like to have roses because her favorite color was red,” Arturo says. ¶ The wind ruffles a piece of paper in his hand.

The heart-shaped, helium balloon is sagging and the flowers have wilted and turned crunchy, but still their presence makes this disturbed plot of earth at Woodlawn Cemetery noticeable. ¶ A headstone is absent. That will come later. ¶ Arturo Martinez-Sanchez doesn’t need an engraved slab of stone to mark where his beloved Yady and Karla rest. He can sketch a map of the cemetery, pinpointing it’s a homemade card for his wife from a niece. Underneath a giant sun are three stick figures: Yady, the niece and Karla. ¶ Standing at the gravesite, Arturo, his two sons and Gisela hold hands. This is Gisela’s second time here. The first was for the burial, months before she and Arturo quietly began dating. In a small circle with their heads bowed, they pray for Yady and Karla, whose coffins are buried on top of each other, to rest in peace. ¶ Five-year-old Alejandro pulls away, flops down and kisses the ground.

[See Grace, Page 8]



Arturo and his son, Alejandro, 5, visit the gravesite of Arturo's wife, Yadyra, and daughter, Karla, who are buried together at Woodlawn Cemetery, on Feb. 10. Yady and Karla were killed April 15, 2012.

CHAPTER
ONE
Waking up to
the inconceivable
AVAILABLE ONLINE

CHAPTER
TWO
Unimaginable grief,
unimaginable grace
AVAILABLE ONLINE

CHAPTER
THREE
The boys' refuge;
the father's hell
AVAILABLE ONLINE

CHAPTER
FOUR
Repairing the blow
of a hammer
AVAILABLE ONLINE

CHAPTER
FIVE
Comfort of friends,
compassion of strangers
AVAILABLE ONLINE

CHAPTER
SIX
Prayers for yesterday,
hope for tomorrow
AVAILABLE ONLINE
TODAY

CHAPTER
SEVEN
Old memories,
new dreams
TODAY

Editor's note: The information presented in this series is based on the reporter's direct observations, conversations, interviews and public records including the Metro Police arrest report, the grand jury transcripts of testimony by Christopher Martinez, teacher Candace Wagner and various law enforcement officers. The reporter did not ask brothers Christopher or Alejandro Martinez to recollect their memories of April 15, 2012.

For more photos and videos, visit: lasvegassun.com/grace-through-grief.

FROM PAGE 1:

The children, they grow up so quickly. And parents worry so about what their future holds.

Christopher, for instance, enjoys science, particularly chemistry and biology, but he's not a huge fan of reading or writing. Those were his sister's favorite school subjects.

His mom, parents and teachers all want to play for the Chicago Bulls, just like his sports hero Michael Jordan.

In the fall, Christopher will enter middle school — a place where time seems to accelerate, transforming children into teens.

So many unknowns.

On this day, the future becomes a bit more sure. Arturo and his boys are meeting Bobby Ellis, owner of Snap Towing, and his wife, Sandy — the couple who, without ever meeting Arturo or his sons, donated \$5,000 to help him start over. Today, they'll say "thank you."

"I'm so glad you could get together," says Barbara Buckley, director of the Legal Aid Center of Southern Nevada, as she welcomes the strangers. "You were so generous, and I wanted Arturo to get a chance to meet you."

Wearing blue jeans, black boots and a red UNLV jacket, Bobby Ellis explains he and his wife, both 70 years old, have known good times and bad, but they persevered through the challenges and now enjoy giving to people in need.

They hope others flush with cash might follow suit in helping Arturo's sons.

Sandy Ellis, looking at Arturo, says the couple were mortified by what happened last year.

"Hopefully, it's a little something to help your family," she says kindly.

Arturo points to his sons seated across the table.



PHOTOS BY LEILA NAVIDI

Alejandro Martinez, left, and his older brother, Christopher, pass the time together while waiting for their father at the Legal Aid Center of Southern Nevada.

"The money you guys give to us is for them," he says. "If something happened to me, they're going to be alone. That's how I am guaranteeing their future."

Arturo lists the couple's expertise as an electrician — the only way he says he knows how to repay them — as his boys hug them.

Arturo thanks Buckley, who has been helping him with an assortment of legal matters since the killings of his wife and daughter. From there, the conversation turns to friendly chitchat, as Arturo talks about his daily routine keeping his boxing gym open.

"Do you keep real busy over there?" Sandy Ellis asks.

"In the afternoons, it's really busy," he says.

But busy doesn't necessarily mean profitable. Arturo spends roughly \$1,700 each month operating the Real KO Boxing Club. Child members pay \$40 per month. Adults pay \$55, but attendance fluctuates.

"There are some people who come here and don't pay," Arturo says. He's on the watch for them.

He doesn't make any money from the gym. At best, he breaks even.

Doctors haven't cleared him to return to work as an electrician. He agrees with their assessment. Cognitively, he's not quite there yet. He struggles with simple math like multiplying 12 by 12.

"I have to think what that is," he says. "It is frustrating."

With it comes to his job, however, that's one math problem he knows without hesitation: Working as an electrician will provide more income for his family. And he likes the trade. He doesn't want to be a plumber or a framer.

"I want to go back to work," he says. "I definitely want to get back to work, but my health is just kind of..."

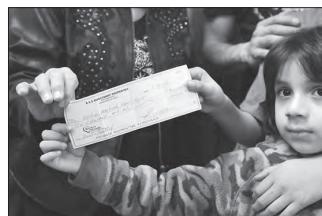
He doesn't finish the sentence.



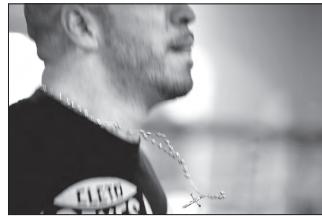
Arturo Martinez-Sanchez, his sons Christopher and Alejandro, and his fiancée, Gisela Corral, visit the gravesite of Yadira and Karla on Feb. 10. The family was back at the



Arturo Martinez-Sanchez, right, talks with lawyer Barbara Buckley, left, who is providing free legal aid, and Bobby Ellis, background, who has donated money to fund college for Arturo's sons.



Alejandro Martinez holds a check to fund his college education donated by Ellis at the Legal Aid Center of Southern Nevada.



Arturo works out at his gym, Real KO Boxing Club, in North Las Vegas, on Jan. 31.



Arturo is in his sister's garage this afternoon in March, on the hunt for a particular box. It is brimming with family photos.

Also in the box: 11 rolls of film waiting to be developed and sure to trigger a flood of fresh memories of Yady and Karla. For now, he can only wonder what they will show.

But the printed photos, they are real. His smile grows as he fumbles through pictures of his children as babies, of family barbecues, of him and Yady as college students. In a sense, this box is his life timeline — orderly in some parts, messy in others. In other words, real.

"That's my Karla," he murmurs.

"That's my Christopher."

"That's my wife."

At one point, he grabs a professional-grade photo and holds it up. In it, Karla is smiling with all her teeth showing, surrounded by her girlfriends.

"See this picture?" he says. "That was

Karla."

Perhaps some of these photos will decorate walls one day, just like photos did in his Robin Street house. He's not sure where that new home will be.

In January, Bank of America bestowed Arturo with a late Christmas gift: The bank deeded his Robin Street house to him, releasing him from any further mortgage payments. The

bank also gave him \$20,000.

"They have a long row to hoe," says George W. Smith, president of Bank of America-Nevada, explaining the financial institution's simple rationale for the gift. "We're pulling for them."

Arturo plans to rent out the Robin Street home as an extra source of income. Family and friends have helped him fix up the inside, erasing any visible scars.

He wants to buy another house — a new start in a different neighborhood. He's ready to turn a house into a home again.

On Valentine's Day, he proposed to Gisela, while visiting her family in Florida. She said yes.

He thinks Yady would be happy for him and pleased he chose someone familiar with their family. Plus, they share the Catholic faith and Arturo likes how she interacts with children despite not having any of her own.

His love for Gisela comes with a caveat, though: He has deep pain, the kind that burrows into the soul and might never leave. Listening to him talk about his boxing gym can reduce him to tears.

Whoever loves him in return needs to understand and accept that, he says.

"If you love people, you cannot forget right away," he says. "I still miss Karla. I still miss Yady."

"I was married for a long time, and I would like to be married again."

Arturo and Gisela have not set a wedding date.



gravesite last week following a memorial Mass.

Arturo is panting. He's sweating.

Arturo is running at the Cheyenne Sports Complex in North Las Vegas, following the faded white lines on a track.

It's 50 degrees and drizzling on this Friday morning in early March. Arturo is alone, aside from two seemingly misplaced seagulls.

The one-time sprinter who competed in a state competition at age 11 started running again two weeks ago. His reason: "I was feeling good."

His headaches have largely gone away — so he's off those meds — and the numbness in his limbs has subsided. He can jump rope again and sometimes throw rapid punches into a hanging speed bag at the boxing gym.

These physical improvements don't make up for his lingering cognitive difficulties, but they're a start. His ophthalmologist would deliver more good news later in March: His lost vision in the bottom-left quadrant of his right eye had continued coming back. It's not a full recovery, but it's evidence that recovery has not stopped.

Even the puffy, red scars on his scalp have faded slightly thanks to a series of laser treatments. In April, he will undergo a minor surgical procedure to further minimize scarring and doctors will repair his nose, which was injured a year earlier in a football game.

Today, under the cloudy, gray skies, Arturo jogs 2 miles without stopping.

As he walks a cool-down lap, he says he feels good.

"It's just up and up and up," he says of his recovery.

[See Grace, Page 10]



Arturo kisses the gravesite of Yadira and Karla, who are buried together at Woodlawn Cemetery in Las Vegas. A new headstone was delivered for the grave in March.

A SHATTERED FAMILY RECOVERS

FROM PAGE 9:

After tragic misfortune or evil strikes a home, police officers, firefighters or paramedics respond, followed by detectives and in the worst cases, coroner's investigators.

Stoically, these first responders take each day as it comes and move on.

But not every memory is easy to shake, especially those from inside 1016 Robin St.

For Noreen Charlton, the mental images would return in the dark of night — Karla and Yadira begging, pleading for help. The mother and her look-alike daughter were unable to escape from the shadowy figures bent on destruction.

But it was too late. It would always be too late.

Amid their cries for help, Charlton would startle awake. This pattern would continue for months, stirring a sense of helplessness.

Charlton is a senior crime scene analyst for Metro Police.

As one of the first responders who converged on this family's home, Charlton had been there before. She also befriended Yady's two surviving children, Christopher and Alejandro.

"You realize you have to desensitize yourself," Charlton says. "You can't be attached to scenes, and you can't be attached to victims ... but I just couldn't. These were my little friends now."

"I could not separate myself from what they had just been through. That was my biggest struggle over the next course of days, months, to this day. I just wanted them to do so well, especially Christopher, because he was old enough to know what was going on."

Christopher, another senior crime scene analyst, turned to his creative outlet — writing poetry — after attending autopsies for Karla and Yadira and touring the family's home.

It was a cruel juxtaposition: He watched medical examiners collect evi-

HOW TO HELP

A fund has been created for people interested in financially helping Arturo Martinez-Sanchez and his sons.

Checks should be made out to Construction Industry Workers Charitable Foundation; the memo line should read Arturo Martinez Donation Fund. They can be sent to Bank of Nevada, 2700 W. Sahara Ave., Las Vegas, NV 89102.

dence from the little girl's bludgeoned body. The next day, he saw photos of Karla proudly hung on the walls.

And so the burly man with a shaved head and black-rimmed glasses sat down and started writing. He called one poem "My Vulnerabilities," which ends:

*I don't do well in rainy time
Always living in the crime
I cry because I am afraid
No one understands my tough facade*

Patrol Sgt. Bobby Johnson, who initially took charge of the scene, also turned to writing, but for a different purpose. He wrote notes describing the day and added them to his officer personnel files.

The notes would be used to honor the squad for its team effort at the scene April 16.

As Johnson walked through the front door of his home that night, he contemplated where to begin: Should he tell his wife about the horrors of the crime scene or his overwhelming pride watching his officers pull together?

He did both. Johnson teaches a class about emotional survival and preaches the value of talking through an experience as a coping mechanism.

"It was horrific," he says of the killings. "Just a typical suburban family. They come and go to work and school and the store and — I don't know — maybe the movie theater or park like everybody else. One night they decide to go to bed, and they come under attack."

It still haunts him.

"I truly believe that Karla died knowing that monsters are real," he says.

As for Charlton, her nightmares have become less frequent over time, but her subconscious encounters with Karla and Yadira haven't ended.

"They come to me in dreams, and I'll see them," she says. "And they're OK now."



Arturo Martinez-Sanchez arranges purple and red flowers in a vase attached to the headstone for his wife, Yadira Martinez, and his daughter, Karla Martinez, on April 16 — a year after the two were found dead in their Las Vegas home — at Woodlawn Cemetery.

The message lives among Arturo's list of reminders on his iPhone: It's from Oct. 10, 2010 — an ordinary day when Karla, like she often did, snagged his cellphone and typed a note.

He saved it. Now, it's April 15, exactly one year since his wife and daughter were killed, and he's reading it again.

I love you. I'm (your) only little girl and I'll always be your baby. :)

This is how he wants to remember his daughter, his Karlita. She was his sidekick, his pal. She was his fiercely competitive and athletically gifted child. When she was happy, she was beaming. When she was mad, you knew it — like the time she pouted for a whole day because Arturo gave Cristopher a ride on his motorcycle. She'd complain only when Arturo told her he would take her on two laps.

Karla inherited her smile from her mother. Yadira was the family member who looked for the good in every situation. If there was a joke to tell, she would find it.

"I loved her for that," Arturo says. And the reverent way of her cooking makes Arturo hungrier. He's been forced to eat more lately.

What if their killer knew this? Maybe the outcome would be different, he says. Instead, the intruder on April 15, 2012, destroyed my family.

"He didn't even think for a moment what was about to be done when he decided to kill my wife and daughter. He didn't even know us. I [sic] he knew a little bit about us, he might have thought about it."

Arturo didn't know who it was, he says, but he knew the intruder.

Later today he will attend a memorial Mass for his wife and daughter, where the Rev. Julio Alberto Alzate will ask family and friends to celebrate their lives in heaven and remember their good times on Earth.

"It's hard, but I'm here," Arturo says, looking back on the past year. And that might suggest that Arturo sees himself as a survivor.



Arturo holds his sons Cristopher, left, and Alejandro during a blessing of the headstone at the gravesite.

MARTINEZ

But he offers no false bravado when discussing the future: "I'm scared."

The admission seems almost unnatural coming from Arturo, the man who risked all coming to the United States, but he's being realistic, especially because he's raising two young boys.

He draws strength from his wife and daughter, who are still present in his life.

"Even Yadira and Karla, they want them to grow up well," he says. "That's what I think. They help me out a lot."

The reality is that this is no longer a family of five, six if you count the puppy.

A year ago, their dog KO had been taken to an animal shelter. A rescuer orchestrated his release and the American bulldog now has a new home: a family with young boys.

Yadira and Karla's gravesite is marked by an upright headstone that was delivered in March. An angel carved in stone cradles a black, granite heart engraved with their names. A color image of the mother and daughter is set in the heart.

On Tuesday, the day after the one-year anniversary of their deaths, family and friends stand in front of the headstone as Alzate offers a blessing and sprinkles water over the grave.

"Every time we come here, may we be smiley, happy, full of hope and optimism," Alzate prays in Spanish. "May they enlighten our lives to give us strength and to walk joyfully while the Lord allows us to be here and, one day, enjoy with them peace of the heart."

After the blessing, Arturo unwraps two bouquets of flowers and carefully arranges them in a vase strapped to the headstone, a perfect mix of red and purple. And the boy around the base — it's just not right. He fiddles with the red ribbon, which wind has loosened.

Finally satisfied, he calls for Cristopher and Alejandro.

They stand behind the headstone and smile for a camera. This is their version of a family photo.

To join a conversation about this story, from 3 to 5 p.m. Monday, visit lasvegassun.com/grace-through-grief/discussion.

Writer: Jackie Valley | **Photographer/Videographer:** Leila Navidi | **Editor:** Tom Gorman | **Designer:** Elizabeth Brown | **Digital Projects Editor:** Kyle B. Hansen
Digital Developers: Mo Conley, Tim Thiele | **Graphic Designer:** Megan Capriego | **Photo Coordinator:** Yasmina Chavez
Copy Editors: Ellen Wager, Craig Peterson, Dave Mondt, Jamie Gentner, Brian Deka | **Managing Editor:** Ric Anderson