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THIS WEEK



Pacific Beach entrepreneur has it made in the shades
SEE PAGE 10



Massive Mavericks Beach Club set to open on March 1
SEE PAGE 5



Barnard Elementary welcomed the Year of the Dog in grand fashion
SEE PAGE 11



Northbound traffic on the Ingraham Street bridge has been reduced to one lane for months, with no end in sight. THOMAS MELVILLE / BEACH & BAY PRESS

The City of San Diego project to replace and rehabilitate aging water and sewer infrastructure is causing pollution, parking problems and multiple road closures throughout Pacific Beach, and residents are fed up.

STORY CONTINUES ON PAGE 4

Beachgoers flock to new trend on Bird scooters

By DAVE SCHWAB | BEACH & BAY PRESS

Heard of car or bike share? Now there's scooter share in Pacific Beach.

Black-hued "Bird" Segway Kickscooter ES1 Electric Scooters, retailing for \$399, are seemingly everywhere these days along the beachfront.

The 30- to 40-pound dockless electric scooters, capable of speeds up to 15 mph, are available through a scooter-share service via a smartphone app.

The scooter-share startup, Bird, was begun by Travis VanderZan-

den, who was previously an executive with Uber and Lyft ride sharing.

Launched in September 2017, tens of thousands of people have already ridden Bird. The company started in Los Angeles, and has since spread from Venice Beach down to San Diego. Bird plans to branch out to dozens of other markets this year.

In Pacific Beach and elsewhere along the San Diego coast, the new mode of transportation played to mostly mixed reviews.



A beachgoer rides down the boardwalk near the Crystal Pier on a Bird scooter on Friday, Feb. 16.
THOMAS MELVILLE / BEACH & BAY PRESS

SEE BIRD, Page 12

Man who robbed Pacific Beach tourists receives 12-year prison term

A man who held up five tourists in Pacific Beach and a woman in La Jolla, was recently sentenced to 12 years in state prison. Ephraim Jacob Byers, 21, was denied probation by San Diego Superior Court Judge Michael Groch, who ordered him to pay \$870 to three victims.

Byers' accomplice, Kyle James Holland, 20, was sentenced to one year in jail on terms of three years probation. He was ordered to pay the victims.

Holland received credit for serving 413 days in jail, which exceeds the 1-year term and he was expected to be released from jail Thursday or Friday.

Groch suspended a 6-year prison term for Holland which he won't have to serve if he follows all the rules on probation. He was also fined.

Byers had a 2015 assault conviction for which he received probation. He was also convicted of being a felon in possession of ammunition in another case, said Deputy District Attorney Lucille Yturralde.

Yturralde asked for 20 years for him. Byers faced a maximum term of 21 years and six months in prison because he admitted to personally using a gun when he held up the La Jolla woman on Coast Boulevard on May 12 at night. The gun allegation carried a 10-year sentence.

Byers pleaded guilty to more charges than Holland, who also pleaded guilty to committing multiple rob-

beries. The men pleaded guilty to making a criminal threat to one victim.

Groch indicated he was going to limit the prison term for Byers to be between 11-14 years. The prosecutor then sought a 14-year term.

Byers also pleaded guilty to petty theft in an incident at a Pacific Beach business in which an employee's iPhone was stolen last March after he was distracted in the store.

Some of the victims had not submitted their paperwork to the court as to their losses, so Groch ruled that he could impose additional restitution later against both men.

Both Byers and Holland were identified by most of the witnesses in a preliminary hearing on Oct. 19.

Three women who were vacationing together from Arizona and an Arizona couple were held up in two incidents in Pacific Beach in which their cell phones and other items were taken.

Detective Stephanie Audette testified she interviewed Holland after his July 24 arrest and he told her he "was acting as a lookout." She said Holland admitted Byers gave him some money for helping him in the hold-ups.

Parker convicted of first-degree murder

A jury recently convicted a man of first-degree murder in the death of Joaquin Tuttle, who was beaten to death in a motel in Pacific Beach last year.

The eight-woman, four-man jury

convicted Cameron Matthew Parker, 29, after deliberating eight hours over two days.

San Diego Superior Court Judge Ken So set sentencing for March 9. Parker, who showed no reaction to the verdict, remains in jail without bail.

Deputy District Attorney Melissa Vasel said Parker faces a sentence of 26 years to life in prison. First-degree murder carries 25 years to life and Parker faces an extra year as the jury determined he personally used a knife in a homicide.

Parker's attorney, Roland Haddad, afterwards declined comment about the verdict.

A co-defendant, Samantha Grace Passmore, 24, pleaded guilty to voluntary manslaughter and was sentenced Jan. 11 to seven years in prison.

Passmore was ordered to pay for \$2,741 in costs of the funeral for Tuttle, 40, who died a week after he was injured by Parker on April 14, 2017, at the San Diego Motel on Mission Bay Drive.

Passmore received credits for 301 days in jail and was fined \$2,324 by Judge Michael Groch.

Tuttle formerly owned a bike store in Pacific Beach and was also an artist.

A security camera at the San Diego Motel at 4780 Mission Bay Drive caught a glimpse of Passmore looking into Tuttle's motel room before turning away, according to testimony at a preliminary hearing.

—Neal Putnam

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Anti-‘McMansion’ group lobbies for stricter building regulations in PB

By DAVE SCHWAB | BEACH & BAY PRESS

A grassroots, anti-“McMansion” movement is branching out from La Jolla to environs including Pacific Beach.

Some PB homeowners, like Laurel Miller of Crown Point, are becoming increasingly concerned about neighbors’ alleged overbuilding.

Miller cited the former community garden space at Shasta and Roosevelt streets near Crown Point Elementary, currently being redeveloped, as one example.

“We’re looking at 30 new homes that will replace the garden,” said Miller. “Developers are using the city’s municipal code and reinterpreting it to fit their own needs. The city is saying, ‘Ok, you can do that.’ People don’t know what to do to fight them.”

The expanding movement opposing “mansionization,” of which Miller is a part, has formed a group called Citizens for Responsible Coastal Development.

One solution, proposed by CRCD, to overbuilding is to create an incentive-based revision to current coastal residential development codes. Specifically targeted is the “50-percent rule” in single-family zones. The rule mandates builders leave 50 percent or more of existing structure walls to qualify for “remodel” permits, rather than undergo a more costly coastal development permit.

Recently, CRCD has been busy lobbying La Jolla, Pacific Beach and Peninsula planning groups. All three were generally supportive of CCRD’s proposed reforms.

CRCD visited Pacific Beach Planning Group Jan. 24. Group chair Henish Pulickal said planners are taking a wait-and-see attitude on land-use code reform.

“We heard CRCD present their case to us, and we’ll be reviewing the specifics in more detail, and determine what our position will be as a group,” Pulickal said. “The general consensus is we support the concept. But we need to understand the details better, before we can send out an official support letter.”

The development community seems divided on land-use reform.

La Jolla architect Paul Benton, for one, is of the opinion the 50-percent rule is worthwhile if not misapplied. However, Benton noted he and other colleagues acknowledge the rule can cause “unintended consequences” that probably should be addressed.

“The 50-percent rule started out with the best of intentions,” he said. “It’s a good rule meant to be an escape valve for smaller remodels.”

Benton said the 50-percent rule helps small remodelers “escape the time-consuming, costly and complex problem” of going through additional layers of public review.

READ MORE ONLINE AT sdnews.com



Traffic was reduced to one lane and backed up on Grand Avenue on Friday, Feb. 16 as the pipeline project continues.

THOMAS MELVILLE / BEACH & BAY PRESS

PB’s problems with the pipeline project

By DAVE SCHWAB | BEACH & BAY PRESS

Some Pacific Beach residents are becoming increasingly perturbed by alleged collateral damage from an infrastructure project that has the beach community torn up from seemingly endless construction.

At issue is the ongoing Pacific Beach Pipeline South and West Projects, which are replacing nearly 39,000 linear feet of water main, and nearly 6,800 feet of sewer main, with new, 16-inch PVC mains. The project, which began July 2016 and is scheduled to conclude October 2019, at a total projected cost of slightly more than \$34 million, is estimated to take 55 months to complete.

TC Construction Co. is executing the construction project on Ingraham Street, which cuts across the Pacific Beach, Midway-Pacific Highway and Mission Bay Park areas.

Next Door social media in Pacific Beach has been lit up lately with complaints/questions about pipeline construction and its alleged negative impacts to the community.

“The pipe dig/installation schedule is ridiculous, but my real question is why the street resurfacing after the pipe installation takes so long?” asked Rick Burroughs of PB North. “It seems pretty obvious this project is lacking oversight. Ingraham through Crown Point has been torn up for years ... It’s dangerous and embarrassing.”

“I realized they have to change the pipes,” said Erik Eisenhardt. “But it would be nice if, when [the contractor] finished in one area, they would pave the streets and move to the next. It’s just a nightmare. All the streets are torn up.”

“The patchwork is terrible,” said Dan Bernard. “Ingraham felt like the Belmont roller coaster.”

Russell Watson of PB North

Bay Drive, and install the last segment of pipe in West Point Loma Boulevard.”

Not all public reaction to pipeline construction has been negative.

Crown Point Drive resident Anabelle described construction workers as “courteous, polite and very caring. They have been working in front of my house for over a month and display professionalism

‘I realized they have to change the pipes. It’s just a nightmare. All the streets are torn up’

ERIC EISENHARDT
PACIFIC BEACH RESIDENT

Shore Highlands concurred.

“The worst road work I’ve ever seen,” Watson said. “The repair work is horrible. They should be doing the whole street instead of patchwork.”

City spokesman Alec Phillipp discussed the pipeline project’s budget and timeline.

“We are currently on schedule to have the project completed in late 2019, but this schedule is subject to change,” Phillipp said. “The project is still on budget, with the full construction contract amount being \$34.2 million.”

Phillipp said the contractor is “currently installing pipe on Ingraham Street between the two bridges near Vacation Island, and continuing work on the north bridge.”

Phillipp added, “Looking forward, the contractor will continue pipe installation in West Mission

... accommodate our three kids constantly ... offered my in-laws ear plugs ... They work hard and really know what they are doing.”

“All these cast-iron pipes need to be replaced in the street and on our properties and the whole city is facing the same problem,” said David Clausson in east PB. “Just so happens that time is now.”

Marilyn Link in southwest PB has also been impressed by pipeline work being done on east/west side streets.

“They get in there, and get it done,” Link said. “The detours are minor ... their notifications to residents have given ample warning, and the engineering and planning for such a massive project is mind boggling.”

But there have been problems other than excessive dust, noise and traffic dislocation caused by ongoing pipeline replacement.

D. Pierce, a seasonal resident in the 1400 block of Thomas Avenue, said, “We have yet to see a street sweeper in the past three months ... The traffic barricades are in my driveway ... I called the city street sweeping department and they admit that they cannot do the job when there are temporary water lines. Obviously, the parking enforcement people didn’t get the memo.”

Added Pierce, “It would be interesting to see how much money the city has collected in parking tickets based on the fact that there was no need to enforce the laws, as the streets were never swept due to the construction.”

According to city spokesman Anthony Santacroce, there is not a “temporary suspension” of the street-sweeping service and residents should heed posted signs and not park during prohibited days and hours.

PB resident Matt Phillips of Crown Point North has also taken action, and is actively collecting signatures on the 1500 block of Oliver Avenue and Haines Street demanding the removal of equipment to reclaim lost parking spaces from pipeline work.

Speaking for many on pipeline construction, Sean Brew noted: “I live in Crown Point and there is a ton of major construction projects that seem endless — streets dug up, Ingraham Street bridge, a big barge in Mission Bay. It would be great to have more info on what they are doing, and when they plan to finish.”

Massive Mavericks Beach Club riding waves of anticipation for March opening

By PAIGE FULFER | BEACH & BAY PRESS

The community said goodbye to Pacific Beach Bar and Grill a few years ago, and it's about time to welcome a new and improved entertainment venue to Garnet Avenue. Located on a 15,000-square-foot property, Mavericks Beach Club will provide both daytime and nighttime amusement for PBers.

"We've created Mavericks to pay homage to California's largest surf break and one of the world's top surfing destinations. Mavericks captures and celebrates California's infectious beach and surf culture," said Eric Lingenfelder of Verant Group. He has teamed up with Mark Cirillo and David Cohen to bring the new neighborhood attraction to life.

After purchasing the former PB Bar and Grill in spring 2015, the building was completely torn down for a full remodel. With a brand new design and architecture plan headed by Bluemotif Architecture, Mavericks' two-story party playground is filled with ample space for dancing, dining, and drinking. Visitors can expect outdoor games, cocktails, food, flat screen TVs, sports, a

MAVERICKS BEACH CLUB

What: New indoor/outdoor restaurant and entertainment venue on the site of the former Pacific Beach Bar and Grill. The grand opening is scheduled for March 1.

Where: 860 Garnet Ave.

Info: maverickssd.com, 858-999-0348.

dance club, and plenty of open-air seating.

Verant Group is no stranger to the bustling bar / restaurant scene in San Diego. Their other locations around town include Barleymash, Tavern at the Beach, Sandbar Sports Grill, True North Tavern, Westroot, The Smoking Gun, and a downtown coffee shop. Bluemotif Architecture has also been the mastermind behind San Diego favorites Kettner Exchange, The Crack Shack, Queensborough, and the newly popular Green Acre/ Campus Pointe.

With the expertise and experience of the Verant Group and Bluemotif collaboration, it's no surprise Mavericks looks like a Hamptons beach getaway retreat, basking in modern luxury design. The venue's crisp white architecture radiates a light and airy feel, while the market-

lights add an intimate, cozy appeal to the giant space.

Decked out with contemporary coastal decor and community seating via round tables, the bar presents a laid-back, but still sophisticated, local vibe. Visiting during the cooler months? Don't fret- there are plenty of cozy spots around the fireplaces located outside.

Mavericks Beach Club is set to be an ultimate party destination, dawning five full bars and Baja-inspired lunch and dinner menus. Think tacos (of course), burgers, sandwiches, entrees, and small plates paired with kombuchas, craft beers, wines, and freshly curated cocktails.

Lingenfelder also points out that the venue will offer live entertainment and other various events, which sets it apart from most venues in PB. "We have an exciting lineup of entertainment events planned for 2018, including block parties with DJs and national touring bands."

Perhaps one of the coolest parts about Mavericks? It has a bike valet. Enough said! The community is ready to stop by for a cocktail... or two.



Mavericks crisp white architecture radiates a light and airy feel.

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Passing of the guard at Fitness West in PB. From left are Peter and Paul Dufour, Shari Simpson, and Brian Curry.
DAVE SCHWAB / BEACH & BAY PRESS

New owners of Fitness West vow to keep core values

By DAVE SCHWAB | BEACH & BAY PRESS

The new owners of Fitness West vow to retain the old-school approach and charm that has made the gym a fixture in Pacific Beach for more than 30 years.

Both longtime members of the fitness center, new co-owners Brian Curry and Shari Simpson recently took over operation of the facility, on the second floor at 1880 Garnet Ave. in Pacific Plaza II Shopping Center. They bought it from Paul and Peter Dufour, who'd run the gym since 1985.

"It's a gym for locals, it's not corporate and it's always been family owned," said Curry, of the profile of the 1,200-member fitness center. "People come here because it's more than just a gym: It's a social thing."

"It took years," joked previous owner Paul Dufour, about he and his brother selling the club to Simpson-Curry.

"Some days I'd just come in here and say, 'Hey guys, when do you want to sell?,'" said Curry. "It went on for years, no high pressure. I'd had one year of retirement, not working, and then it worked out perfectly. [The Dufours] finally came out and said, 'We're ready.' So on Jan. 1, we did it."

"It was time," said Paul Dufour of relinquishing ownership.

"This was their baby," pointed out Simpson.

Of their stewardship of the gym, Paul Dufour, said: "We tried to make it comfortable for everyone. Those serious could come in here and get a serious workout. We'd also spend a lot of time with the people just starting out."

About the gym's trademark collegiality, Simpson commented: "A good example is a Zumba class here. We also have a broad range of all ages, all types. It's just a really friendly gym. And there's a strong sense of community within the walls."

"If you ask any member what they like about it, they'll probably say, 'We just like the people,'" said Curry. "That's what it's about."

Fitness West has a wide assortment of exercise equipment including elliptical machines, treadmills, stairclimbers, Lifecycles, rowing machines, free weights and a complete collection of Nautilus equipment.

The fitness studio also offers group exercise classes, such as: boot camp cross training, yoga, spinning cycling, core and strength training, Zumba and Pilates.

The gym has no long-term contracts, offering month-to-month memberships instead. Personal training is available.

Working in the real estate industry for 30 years, Curry said it was time for a change for him too. "The only gym I wanted to buy was this one," he said. "I wanted it in PB."

Of Fitness West and its drawing power, Simpson predicted continuity is what will keep the gym going.

"[The Dufours] had been in business for more than 30 years and they'd seen so many trends come and go," she said. "It's a neighborhood gym. We have the basics. We have the standards. We have the community. We keep the classes up to date. We always keep it fresh."

"We're the same gym, the same brand," said Curry. "We're going to be here for a while."

Wesley Palms renovation honored

Merit shop contractors working on projects ranging from retail stores to retirement communities, military installations, hospitals, schools, libraries, and office buildings were recently honored for their work at the 2017 Associated Builders and Contractors San Diego Chapter Excellence in Construction Awards.

Projects were judged by an independent panel of judges based on a set criteria of safety, innovation, quality of construction, and owner satisfaction.

One of the evening's top awards were presented to Nuera Construction LP, winner of Top Pro-

ject by a General Contractor for the Wesley Palms Retirement Community Renovation.

Originally developed at a cost of \$5 million in 1962, owner Front Porch Retirement Communities initiated the first complete infrastructure replacement and modernization of Wesley Palms, starting with the \$14 million renovation of its 122-unit apartment complex in Pacific Beach.

Nuera Construction LP completed all work on the main building on schedule and within budget despite a 20 percent scope increase due to numerous unforeseen conditions.



Pictured left to right is Becky Kosen (Annabelle's teacher), Annabelle Johnson, Willow Wilkinson, Jillian Lea (Willow's teacher), Liliana Nelson, and Jennifer Macker (Liliana's teacher).

ANNABELLE JOHNSON, WILLOW WILKINSON, AND LILIANA NELSON "Kiwanis Student of the Month"

Annabelle Jonson from Kate Sessions Elem., Willow Wilkinson, Pacific Beach Elem., and Liliana Nelson from Crownpoint Jr Music Academy are the Kiwanis Students of the Month. These students represent outstanding leadership in their classroom. Annabelle was chosen because of her incredible growth being reflective, caring, and principled in her time spent with teacher Becky Kosen. Willow was chosen because she is a Focused, Inquisitive student who treats everyone she meets with kindness. Liliana was chosen because she is motivated, bright, and encourages everyone around her to be the best versions of themselves. They were honored by the Kiwanis Club of Pacific Beach and Brian McMullen of Allstate P.B. with breakfast at the Broken Yolk.

CONGRATULATIONS!

9 Round Kickbox Fitness opens in PB

By PAIGE FULFER | BEACH & BAY PRESS

San Diego native Eli Himelstein knew it was time for a career change after 15 years as a civil rights lawyer. "I love fighting for people, but I was tired of all the backlash," says Himelstein. Getting back to his boxing roots, he realized he was happiest when working out, so Himelstein decided to dive into the fitness franchise world and open San Diego's newest 9 Round location.

9 Round is a specialized kickboxing fitness center with no specific class times. The program consists of nine challenging workout stations, performed for 3 minutes at a time, totaling a 30-minute full-body workout. Members are able to show up at their convenience, jump into the circuit, and are always guaranteed one-on-one training by a 9 Round certified trainer. "The trainers are here to demo, explain, correct, and push you," says Himelstein.

While the all red- and black- color-schemed gym filled with heavy duty punching bags and stacked weights may appear daunting to kickboxing newcomers, Himelstein urges people of all fitness levels to join the workout. Each person is encouraged to go at their own pace, and is reminded that progress is more important than perfection. "You will be surprised how quickly you improve," he says.

"We want to emphasize this is a fitness gym, not a fight gym," says owner Himelstein. The gym's envi-



9 Round certified trainers breaking in the facility set to open March 1.

PAIGE FULFER / BEACH & BAY PRESS

9 ROUND KICKBOX FITNESS

Where: 1416-A Garnet Ave.

Info: Opening March 1, 9round.com.

ronment will definitely be challenging, but more importantly, fun. "Train like a fighter, but never get hit," he explains.

Similar to many other fitness studios, the 9 Round workout incorporates heart rate monitors into their training. With two massive screens displaying each boxer's heart rates throughout their entire workout, this shows them if they need to kick it up a notch or take it down a bit. "You want to be in the green and yellow zones for the most part," Himelstein explains. "This enables you to work smarter, rather than harder."

Set to open March 1, 9 Round is

offering a special charter membership deal. For the first 100 people to sign up for a membership, it will be \$89 a month for unlimited workouts. "Come twice a day, six days a week. When we say unlimited, we really mean it," says Himelstein. Along with this comes a \$25 registration fee (usually \$99) that includes wraps, gloves, a heart rate monitor, and other 9 Round swag.

InTents Conference returns to Mission Bay to help farmers grow

The second annual InTents Conference is returning to the Marina Village Conference Center in Mission Bay on Monday, Feb. 26 and Tuesday, Feb. 27, with bonus sessions for vendor and market start-ups on Sunday, Feb. 25.

The InTents Conference, directed by farmer's market influencer and food expert Catt Fields White, brings together small farmers, artisan food makers, farmer's market managers and more for a two-day conference of educational panels, speakers, roundtables and networking oppor-

tunities that teaches skills and provides resources to small businesses on achieving financial sustainability.

The conference focuses on helping small-business owners grow their company to be stronger and more profitable and help prospective entrepreneurs get their ideas off the ground.

"InTents Conference educates farmers, small food makers and farmers' market managers on how to maximize their profit, all while navigating the rules and regulations of the markets," said Fields White,

InTents Conference founder and director. "InTents Conference brings all of these groups together to spark conversation, network and compare notes on ways for micro-entrepreneurs and small businesses to launch a project at a market, maintain a profit and grow in an encouraging space."

The conference also includes the InTents Flavors event on Feb. 26, from 6 to 9 p.m. InTents Flavors will team-up chefs and farmers at tasting stations to bring guests local, farm fresh bites.

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Breakfast Republic in Pacific Beach temporarily closes for electrical upgrades

By DAVE SCHWAB | BEACH & BAY PRESS

Recently opened Breakfast Republic in Pacific Beach has closed temporarily for electrical kitchen upgrades.

Formerly Miller's Field at 4465 Mission Blvd., Breakfast Republic opened after a building remodel in December.

Spokesperson Casey Sorrell of Alt-strategies said the eatery closed its doors Feb. 5, but not to worry, it isn't permanent.

Sorrell noted the temporary closure has nothing to do with the new restaurant's business volume.

"It became quickly one of the busiest of the seven existing locations," said Sorrell, who pointed out the remodel was done quickly because the company was eager to open.

"They [owners] quickly realized the space, formerly a bar, needed some upgrades, that it was [at present] unfit to handle high volumes of business," Sorrell said. "What was really needed to make

things work was electrical upgrades in the kitchen."

Sorrell assured the restaurant "is not closed for good." But she couldn't estimate how long permitting and repairs will take — or when the breakfast eatery will reopen.

Sorrell pointed out an electrical refit is a complicated undertaking.

"Just think of all the machines they had to bring in that were not previously in Miller's kitchen," she said. "So they closed, and are making changes to get everything up to

speed and up and running as soon as possible."

Sorrell added the restaurant chain, Rise & Shine Restaurant Group, is "heavily invested in this site with its brand."

Owned by Swedish native Johan Engman, Rise & Shine Restaurant Group began in 2008 with Fig Tree Cafe in Pacific Beach. Fig Tree now has two other locations in Liberty Station and Hillcrest.

Born and raised in northern Sweden until age 16, Engman first came

to the United States with his mother, originally planning only to stay for a year. He entered the restaurant industry after high school as a dishwasher in a small Italian restaurant.

Engman then moved on to bussing tables at a local hotel before working as a server at a number of local restaurants. He made it his goal to open a restaurant of his own, nurturing his desire to offer a home-style, friendly breakfast option for local diners.

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Pueblo's new executive chef returns to his authentic Mexican roots

By VICTORIA DAVIS | BEACH & BAY PRESS

Decorated with sombreros and succulents, and with an array of traditional Hispanic plates on display, Pueblo has attracted customers looking for both a classy and casual place to dine.

The two-story seafood and Mexican restaurant has a primary dining area with an attached outdoor patio, decorated with blue, green and yellow lights at ground level. The second floor is an outdoor bar where guests can sip on their mezcal and watch the sunset. Here, the modern, coastal atmosphere is strong, but the excess in dining traffic is mostly due to the authentic Baja cuisine.

Elio Mendoza was hired as Pueblo's new executive chef two months ago and has been working hard to make sure guests' taste buds receive the same spicy and saucy thrill as when they were on get-away trips in Cabos or Cancun.

"People come back from those vacations and they expect to have a place that serves that kind of food," said Mendoza. "The goal is to make it 100 percent authentic. As soon as I came in [to Pueblo] I just started

changing all the ingredients, all the produce. I think we're at 90 percent authentic now. We're all doing a great job in the kitchen to make it happen."

Courtney, who has been a server at Pueblo since last May, added: "We got a lot busier when Elio came. The food became more approachable and people are just so impressed by the dishes."

Mendoza first started as a prep cook at age 19 at a hotel's restaurant in Tijuana. He says he "peeled potatoes, washed dishes... everything they didn't want to do." But Mendoza's 23-year-long love affair with food first began at home.

"Since I have memory, I remember my mom cooking in the house," said Mendoza. "Every Sunday in my house was like a big party. As soon as I wake up, I see that big table full of food. That's when I remember thinking, 'This will be my career.'"

That passion-driven career has taken Mendoza and his family around the world, allowing them to see what rich tastes other cultures have to offer. Right before he was hired at Pueblo, Mendoza returned from a trip to Yantai where he cooked at an intercultural exchange



Chef Elio Mendoza and Pueblo owner Mark Oliver.

VICTORIA DAVIS / BEACH & BAY PRESS

between Mexico and China. The chef also attended a food fair in Colombia a couple of years ago to cook and give a presentation on the President cheese brand.

Today, Mendoza and his wife, Linda, own a small restaurant in Tijuana called L'Pozzole, which serves homemade Italian and

French cuisine, inspired by their various trips to Europe.

"I really love Italian culture and spent a lot of time cooking Italian cuisine because I fell in love with Italian food," said Mendoza, who just spent two weeks cooking in Italy last April. "My roots are Mexican, but the cooking is really similar.

PUEBLO

Where: 877 Hornblend St.

Hours: Lunch 11:30 a.m. to 3:45 p.m. daily; dinner 4 to 9 p.m. Sundays-Thursdays, 4 to 10 p.m. Fridays-Saturdays.

Info: pueblopb.com, 858-412-3312.

They use a lot of tomato like us, as well as a lot of onions, and they use a lot of sauces like us. My first job in the U.S. was working for an Italian restaurant downtown on Fifth Avenue."

Now, Mendoza is back to his roots, cooking the food that inspired him as a child. His most popular dishes are the salmon al pastor with pan seared salmon, grilled pineapple, avocado crema and pastor marinade, and the daily market fish fillet with bacon-wrapped red snapper fish with market vegetables and poblano sauce.

"I have a lot of customers that will try my food and say, 'Oh, I already tried this in Mexico.' And this is what I want people to think," said Mendoza. "In this restaurant, you'll find anything from really nice lobster or lamb, to a plate of enchiladas. I like to keep it traditional. I want to keep it real."

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Pacific Beach entrepreneur has it made in the shades

By SAVANAH DUFFY | BEACH & BAY PRESS

If you live in San Diego, you probably recognize a few required living essentials: sunscreen, swimsuits, sandals and, according to San Diego State University graduate and entrepreneur Chase Fisher, you must have “a good pair of shades.”

But sunglasses that are both affordable and of good quality can be hard to come by—a challenge met with enthusiasm by Fisher’s Pacific Beach-based business.



Chase Fisher

Since 2012, his sunglasses company Blenders Eyewear has been selling “fresh, vibrant, comfortable” shades and goggles in store and online. According to Fisher, it’s the active lifestyle of San Diego that inspires the product.

Their motto, “Founded on Fun. Designed for Adventure. Priced to Party,” says it all.

Blender Eyewear’s sunglasses are priced between about \$20 and \$65 and are made to be light-weight with maximum comfortability. The polycarbonate lenses, all of which are UV-protected, can bend without breaking so they’re convenient to wear for any occasion.

“We try to get the best stuff at the best price we can, and bring the best value,” Fisher said.

Fisher says he was inspired to



Models show off the popular Fifth Ave. Flash and SunshineWild style sunglasses from Blenders Eyewear.

open the business by the gear he saw others wearing when he surfed competitively in his home town of Santa Barbara. The active San Diego lifestyle also inspired the products.

But the true “ah-ha” moment, as Fisher puts it, was when he was in a night club sporting \$5 neon green sunglasses. According to him, his cheap glasses attracted as much attention as they would have if they’d been expensive name brand

glasses, sparking his business idea for quality shades that wouldn’t require customers to “spend their entire bank account.”

Blenders offers a diverse line of styles to fit everyone’s taste, from the bold tropical patterned Kate Forest sunglasses with blue and green lenses to the more subtle Surfliner sunglasses with the light blue rims and black lenses.

Often times, the most popular

sunglasses will sell out quickly, but being out of stock doesn’t tend to pose a problem, says customer success manager Lexi Horn. A different pair rises up immediately to become the new favorite.

“I’m really confident in our brand,” she says.

On each pair of sunglasses is the company’s logo: a pair of stripes “//,” which symbolizes “life in forward motion.”

BLENDERS EYEWEAR

Where: 1940 Garnet Ave. Suite 240.

Hours: 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. weekdays, closed weekends.

Info: blenderseyewear.com.

“It’s following your passion, whatever that might be,” said Fisher about the logo’s meaning. “We try to design our glasses around any possible lifestyle.”

The company promotes fun and adventure, but sunglasses sales aren’t without their challenges.

According to Fisher, it’s a competitive market with continuously shifting trends that are difficult to keep up with. With production timelines taking between 90 and 120 days, he says the changes in popular styles aren’t something that can be easily planned for.

Horn adds that the company commonly has to “fix things on the fly,” but that the customers have remained loyal through the adjustments.

For the Blenders Eyewear team, the rewards of the business outshine the challenges.

“For me, the most fulfilling thing is just adding value to people’s lives,” says Fisher. “I think our product really allows people to express themselves.”

The future of Blenders Eyewear will include a new kids line, limited-edition projects, and an expansion of both the snow goggles and sunglasses line, according to Fisher.

The Blenders Eyewear office is located in Pacific Beach at 1940 Garnet Ave.

Gina Champion-Cain keeps expanding empire with corporate hospitality

By DAVE SCHWAB | BEACH & BAY PRESS

Beach entrepreneur Gina Champion-Cain’s “realm” includes beach rentals, a surf boutique, restaurants and a steakhouse, a coffee company, a chocolatier, a pizzeria and two specialty gourmet markets.

Now you can add hospitality to that ever-expanding list.

The Mission Beach-based merchant’s newest business venture is Corporate Hospitality, a division of American National Investments. The division offers world-class service specializing in creating and developing premier branding.

Lucas Reeve, vice president of brand development for The Patio Group, discussed what the company’s new corporate hospitality division is all about.

“The hierarchical organization, The Patio Group, operates a number of businesses in Mission and Pacific beaches, and now we have a restaurant hospitality arm under the ANI umbrella,” said Reeve. “So we’ve got a real estate component to the restaurants that have been growing for the last few years.”

Reeve noted Champion-Cain has no shortage of “lifestyle branding”

issues to deal with, what with all her disparate businesses, which include beach apparel and vacation rentals in Mission Beach.

“Our hospitality division, it’s kind of the confluence of real estate and hospitality coming together in this new business line that we foresee growing rapidly in partnering with our real estate-backed partners, along with local real estate groups, to develop hospitality amenities for their large real estate properties.”

Reeve added the new hospitality division is looking to partner with entities like hotels and large corporate campuses.

“We’ll work with them to develop hospitality amenities that add value to their projects, everything from the ability to attract great tenants to attracting best-quality employees. We see it as an opportunity to work with them, partnering to provide hospitality amenities.”

Added Reeve, “What really might be interesting, and significant, is that through branding we’re leveraging the identities of our newest patio marketplace location, a cafe/coffee place open almost a year now in the Aventine building (in La Jolla) in the UTC neighborhood.”

The daughter of a Michigan real estate developer, Champion-Cain grew up surrounded by the business she later embraced. She started out in the apartment industry in the late 1980s, managing and redeveloping distressed assets spun off by the Resolution Trust Co.

Her big break came in 1994 when she joined a team redeveloping La Jolla Square Shopping Center, formerly an enclosed mall home to old May Company and I. Magnin stores. That earned her a reputation for rebuilding distressed malls, flipping them from distress to success.

In 1997, Champion-Cain went out on her own starting ANI. Passionate about urban areas, she bought and rehabbed a rundown Woolworth store, eventually bringing the House of Blues to San Diego to fill the space.

She got into the restaurant business by chance when she purchased Pacific Beach’s Lamont Street Grill. Expecting to tear it down and redevelop it, bowing to community requests, she instead retained the restaurant, reinventing it as The Patio.

A beach and animal lover, Champion-Cain started her network of



Gina Champion-Cain’s ever-expanding The Patio Group company has started a new corporate hospitality division.

about 10 pet-friendly up-scale Mission Beach vacation rentals when she found no one welcomed her golden retrievers or her elderly cat at a beach rental. Her two Luv Surf apparel companies sprang from requests from her vacation rental

guests, while Swell, her coffee company, Andrea’s Truffles, her hand-made chocolatier, and Luxury Farms, two specialty gourmet markets in Mission Hills and Coronado, were natural evolutions of her restaurants.

EDUCATION NOTEBOOK>>

Mission Bay High

■ This year's Pops Concert at Mission Bay High will take place 7 p.m. Thursday, March 8 in the auditorium. The Concert Band, Swing Choir, String and Full Orchestra will perform music from favorite films, musicals and pop standards: "Hamilton," "Star Wars," "Moana," "Guardians of the Galaxy," "Slumdog Millionaire," "Spider Man" and more. Tickets \$5, kids/students free.

■ Boys basketball coach Marshawn Cherry has provided an inspiring focus on academics and character development by teaming up with MBHS teacher, Dr. Ron Lancia, in a program called ASAP, ACES Student Athlete Program. The team has been studying every day for the past two years and reached their goal of a team GPA above a 3.0 with every player on the team academically eligible. "ACES has greatly improved my work ethic, on and off the court, making sure I get things done correctly and on time," said forward Michael Barcia. "It has helped me with communicating with teammates and it has brought us closer."

The program provides consistent academic support Mondays through Thursdays in the Mission Bay library. Established in 2013, the program provides assistance in English, history, math, science and special populations, including English language learners, special education, IB and art, and access to technology resources. ACES furnishes an array of holistic services, including social-emotional support, college readiness and self-advocacy through leadership-building seminars, workshops on health-related topics and access to school counselors. With a record of 24-5 in the Western League, boys basketball is entering CIF playoffs this week.

Pacific Beach Middle

■ A parent tour will take place 8 a.m. Monday, March 1. Sign in at the front office and join parents in



SESSIONS JOG-A-THON

Sessions' annual Jog-a-thon was a great success, with students running laps around the school track while listening to rockin' tunes. The biggest fundraiser of the year raised money for programs that are no longer district-funded, such as music, art and the library. The school would like to thank community sponsors: Itan, for their contribution toward shirts, and Dominos, who offered a deal on pizzas.

the PBMS media center to meet Principal Meng and International Baccalaureate coordinator Jennifer Sims to learn about the academic and athletic programs at PBMS.

Barnard Elementary

■ Barnard Mandarin Magnet Elementary School welcomed the Year of the Dog in grand fashion. The festivities began the week of Feb. 5, with traditional Chinese lion dancers, a beloved ritual at Barnard that never loses its magic. On Feb. 9, students from each classroom staged elaborate cultural performances that highlighted a variety of Chinese arts, including poetry, martial arts, and dance. The show drew rave reviews from parents, district officials, and the school's long-time Mandarin education partners at the Confucius Institute at SDSU.

Barnard held its annual free, community-wide Chinese New Year celebration on Feb. 10, festival attendees enjoying food, hours of entertainment, and fun games throughout the day. "I am so proud and grateful to be a Barnard parent," said Deval Zaveri, who has two students enrolled at the school.

Next up is the downtown Chinese New Year Festival on Feb. 24 and 25, where Barnard's recitation and dance troupes will take to the main stage each day. Barnard will also be represented by its student ambas-

sadors at a nearby booth. Stop by to learn more about the school and to speak (in Mandarin) with the people who know it best: the students.

CPJMA

■ Crown Point Junior Music Academy, in partnership with the San Diego Yokohama Sister Society, will be bringing the community free monthly multicultural performances including dances and musical demonstrations from the Philippines, Brazil, Spain, and Taiwan. Open to the community, the first concert will take place 2:15 to 3:25 p.m. Thursday, Feb. 22 in the auditorium.



PBMS TALENT SHOW

The winners of Pacific Beach Middle School's Talent Show from Friday, Feb. 9 are former students from Pacific Beach Elementary and they are all children of teachers in the Mission Bay Cluster of San Diego Unified School District. These talented kids performed 'Sunday Bloody Sunday' by U2. Trevor Sandler (drums), Jacob Sloan (guitar), Rhett Warner (bass guitar), and Roxy Borg (vocals).



MBHS ACES/ASAP PROGRAM

MBHS teacher Dr. Ron Lancia stands with members of the boys basketball team: Captain Boogie Ellis, Michael Barcia, Jay Norton, and Andre Scott in front of the Mission Bay ACES/ASAP program.

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CONT. FROM PG. 1

“Bird scooters could be a unique
opportunity to offer an alternative
transportation model, and last-
mile commutes that align with our
eco-district principles, while miti-
gating some of Pacific Beach’s
parking and traffic issues,” said
Sara Berns, executive director of
Discover PB, the community’s
business improvement district.“However, we want to ensure
that the company and its ridership
are adhering to public safety con-
cerns, and that of our merchants.“We have reached out to work
with the company to help allevi-
ate some of those issues to ensure
they are not impeding on our exist-
ing business community, but
rather enhancing it,” she said. “We
look forward to them working with
us and the community at-large.”

Dan Michaels, a Pacific Beach

business owner, turned his thumbs
down on the new alternative ride
share service.“These new electric scooters for
rent all over PB is getting annoy-
ing,” said Michaels on the Next
Door social media site. “They are
leaving them everywhere and
[they’re] allowed to operate with-
out a business license. Riders are
intoxicated renting them, under
age, and don’t obey any laws of the
road. Then when finished, they are
leaving them in front of doors,
ramps, etc.”Michaels pointed out Pacific
Beach has “fought hard to remove
bike share stations (Deco renamed
DiscoverBike) from the boardwalk.
This company thinks they can just
establish these in the same places.
What can we do next to stop this
before someone gets hurt.”There are numerous rules in the
California Vehicle Codes applying
to the safe and proper use of elec-tric scooters like Bird. Police warn
they will issue citations for a range
of violations, costing between
\$197 and \$367, for non-lawful
operation of such scooters.Citable scooter offenses include:
driving while intoxicated, not hav-
ing headlights and reflectors at
night, not riding on the right-hand
edge of roadways, exiting bike
lanes without signaling, not hav-
ing brakes, riders not wearing
mandatory bicycle helmets, and
not allowing passengers, among
other restrictions.When finished, Bird users lock
them in place at their end destina-
tion. Scooters employ GPS and an
electric lock restricting wheel
movement. If tampered with, an
alarm is triggered on the vehicle
locking its wheels in place and
making them unridable.For more information about
vehicle codes applying to Bird
scooters visit, codes.findlaw.com.LA JOLLA VILLAGE NEWS
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The Sleepwalkers bring rock-a-billy and Mexican cumbia to Tio Leo's

By BART MENDOZA | BEACH & BAY PRESS

The hottest band in San Diego right now just may be The Sleepwalkers. Appearing at Tio Leo's on Feb. 24, their mix of rock-a-billy, roots rock and Mexican cumbia, continues to draw big crowds and, more importantly, get them dancing from the first notes. This band is great live, with a terrific frontman in Johnny Valenzuela and incendiary guitar playing from Ritchie Orduño, matched by a rock solid rhythm section of drummer Bob Osuna and bassist Paul Denton. Making the night a must for rock-a-billy fans, the band will be joined by Johnny Ramos, Jaalene De Leon and Kid Ramos, formerly of the Fabulous Thunderbirds.

The Sleepwalkers: Saturday, Feb. 24 at Tio Leo's, 5302 Napa St. 8 p.m. 21 and up. Cover TBD.

It's no secret that a lot of major talent has emerged from Java Joe's. A multitude of local and international household names got their start at the beloved nightspot, with their open mic nights a popular way to try out new material for veterans and newbies alike. The venue's current open mic takes place Tuesday evenings and is hosted by singer-songwriter Bobo Czarnowski, who holds the night together with songs and humor, giving the event the feel of a homespun variety show. You never know who might take the stage, or what new talent you might discover at a Java Joe's concert.

Java Joe's Open Mic: Tuesdays, at Java Joe's, 2611 Congress St. 6:30 p.m. javajoesd.com.

There is nothing quite like the music made by musicians who are family. Such is the case with the

Benedetti Trio, who perform at Dizzy's on Feb. 25 in their annual "George Harrison's Birthday Celebration" show. Based around the virtuoso guitar work of Fred Benedetti, alongside his singing daughters, Regina Moomjean and Julia Picone, the interplay between the musicians is warm and engaging, with the vocal harmonies a particular highlight. The night's playlist will include the best of Harrison's solo work as well as his songs from the Beatles.

The Benedetti Trio: Sunday, Feb. 25, at Dizzy's at Arias Hall, 1717 Morena Blvd. 8 p.m. dizzys-jazz.com.

Award-winning vocal group, The San Diego Chorus of Sweet Adelines, performs at the Pacific Beach Library on Feb. 25. Part of an international group of women singers, founded in 1945, the a capella

ensemble specializes in four-part harmonies, barbershop quartet arrangements and vintage tunes from the pre rock 'n' roll era, making this a concert with crossover appeal.

San Diego Chorus of Sweet Adelines: Sunday, Feb. 25, at Pacific Beach Library, 4275 Cass St. 2 p.m. All ages. Free. pblibraryfriends.org.


On Feb. 24, the 710 Beach Club will hold a fundraiser for the Feeding the Homeless organization called "Punk Goes '90s Pop." "We asked five punk/pop punk bands to stretch their boundaries and cover two '90s pop songs; think Christina, Britney, boy bands," said show organizer Rosina Guerra. The night will feature performances from Alive & Well, Nights Like Thieves, Punk Yacht Club, Hard To Hit and The Rough. Who is performing what

tune is a closely guarded secret, but you can expect loud, manic rock 'n' roll with the added bonus of your attendance helping others less fortunate than ourselves.

Punk Goes '90s Pop: Saturday, Feb. 24, at the 710 Beach Club, 710 Garnet Ave. 7 p.m. 21 and up. 710bc.com.

Although considered a smooth jazz artist, Keiko Matsui's music is much more expansive than that. Appearing at Humphrey's Backstage Live on March 3, for two shows, Matsui has recorded dozens of instrumental albums since she made her debut in 1980, across genres, from new age to blues.

Keiko Matsui: Saturday, March 3, at Humphrey's Backstage Live, 2241 Shelter Island Drive. 6:30 and 8:30 p.m. humphreysbackstagelive.com.



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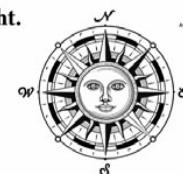
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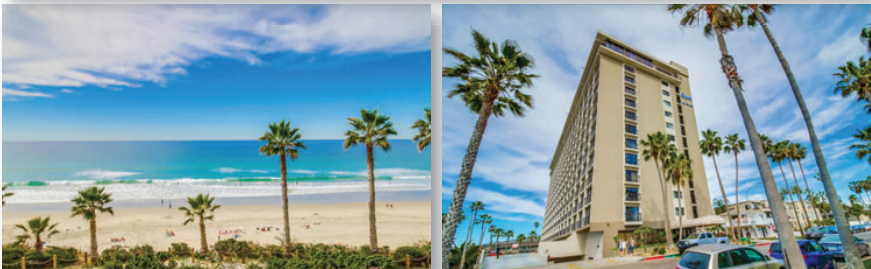
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