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Schoolyard fight

(Graphic by Todd Kammer)

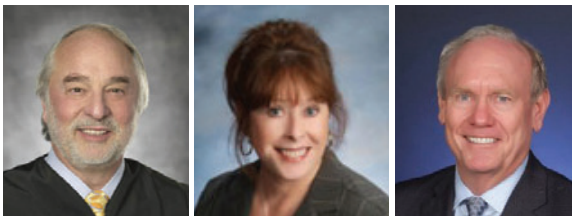
Courts issue counter rulings in Alpine lawsuit

Jeff Clemetson
Editor

A seemingly schizophrenic set of court rulings this month in the lawsuit for millions of dollars in bond money, brought on by backers of a new Alpine high school against Grossmont Union High School District, had both sides alternating claims of victory and defeat.

The lawsuit, which was filed by the Alpine Union School District and a group calling itself the Alpine Taxpayers for Bond Accountability, seeks to make GUHSD hold aside \$42 million for a new high school they say was promised in Propositions H and U. And after a court ruling in June that ordered GUHSD to set aside the bond money, it appeared the Alpine school backers were going to win — but then they didn't.

On Oct. 29, Superior Court Judge Joel Pressman reversed his own ruling and issued a tentative



(l to r) Judge Joel Pressman, GUHSD board member Priscilla Schreiber, Superintendent Ralf Swensen

decision to dismiss the Alpine lawsuit and cancel a hearing scheduled for early December. Following oral arguments made in court on Oct. 30, Pressman formally dismissed the lawsuit on Nov. 3.

In a press statement from GUHSD issued that day, Superintendent Ralf Swensen said the ruling was a "welcome end" to the lawsuit.

"Judge Pressman carefully evaluated the facts of the case and points of law and concluded that the Alpine district's case was without merit," Swensen said. "We wholeheartedly agree with his decision."

It appeared that GUHSD had won its case — but then that changed.

Just hours after Pressman issued his dismissal

See **LAWSUIT** page 5

La Mesa prepares for El Niño

J.S. Anderson

To a standing-room-only crowd at Fire Station 11 on Nov. 17, leaders of the Heartland Fire and Rescue Department, La Mesa Police Department, and La Mesa Public Works Department provided community members emergency preparedness information about this year's El Niño.

Forecasters from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Climate Prediction Center estimate this year's El Niño will be "among the strongest on record." NOAA predicts local temperatures could be 40 percent higher than normal and precipitation may 50 percent greater than usual in the period of December through March.

See **EL NIÑO** page 13



La Mesa Police Chief Walt Vasquez at a storm preparedness forum on Nov. 17. (Photo by J.S. Anderson)

College district approves PLA for Prop V work

Unions praise decision, taxpayer association pulls support

Jeff Clemetson
Editor

At its Nov. 17 meeting, the Grossmont Cuyamaca Community College District (GCCCD) board voted to approve a Project Labor Agreement (PLA) for the \$398 million Proposition V construction bond. The board authorized the PLA despite three big hurdles: a recall effort against one of its members; a threat from a local taxpayer association to pull its support for the bond measure; and a recommendation from the Citizens Bond Oversight Committee (CBOC) to not pursue a PLA.

PLAs are contracts that set terms and conditions for labor. Supporters point to stable pay, absence of work stoppages due to strike, and local hiring as reasons why they should be adopted for large construction projects. Critics say they drive up costs and prevent non-union contractors from bidding on projects.

At the board meeting, union workers in support of the PLA and open-shop workers against it both packed the board chamber and the Cuyamaca College Student Center lobby, where the overflow watched the proceedings on a video monitor. The workers cheered and booed as speakers from both sides took to the podium during public comments before the vote.

Gwenn Miller, chair of the CBOC, said the CBOC met on Nov. 12 to decide a recommendation for or against the PLA. The CBOC made the recommendation at the request the GCCCD board who, at its Oct. 20 meeting, postponed a scheduled vote on the PLA in order to get feedback from the oversight committee. The CBOC voted against recommending a PLA by a vote of 7 to 1 with one abstention.

"We believe that a PLA, if implemented with Prop V, would discourage competitive bidding and increase cost on how the bond money

See **PLA** page 2

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▶ PLA, from page 1

is used and undermine the district's efforts to maximize bond revenue and achieve cost savings," she said. "Also, it is apparent that under a PLA, local non-union workers, especially apprentices, will not be treated equally compared to union workers which constitute a violation of the board's prior bond resolution."

Miller also said a report the CBOC reviewed showed no significant issues with previous bond projects without a PLA, such as those built with Proposition R money.

"Therefore, there is no substantial taxpayer interest that could reasonably require the district to establish a PLA for all the Prop V projects," she said.

The CBOC also encouraged the board to be "open and transparent" on future bond measures and inform voters when the district is considering a PLA.

Ricardo Ochoa, a lawyer representing building trades unions, refuted the CBOC claim that union and non-union workers will not be treated equally under the PLA, citing a board resolution for Proposition V banning discrimination based on employment status, which the PLA is directed to follow.

"What you are being asked to do today, is to vote on a resolution that would keep the promise you made to the voters when they voted for Prop V," he said.

Theresa Andrews, interim president of the San Diego County Taxpayers Association (SDCTA), reminded the board that in 2012 it had come to the SDCTA for an endorsement of Prop V, promis-



Union workers wearing blue shirts celebrate the Grossmont Cuyamaca Community College District board's decision to adopt a Project Labor Agreement for Proposition V bond projects on Nov. 17 while non-union workers in orange shirts look on. (Photo by Jeff Clemetson)

ing it would promote "fair and open competition for all district construction projects."

"How can it be fair and open competition when you force non-union contractors to pay union dues?" she said. "Your promise of fair and open competition was made not only to the San Diego Taxpayer Association but also to taxpayers in this district. Breaking the promise is going to taint the trust the taxpayers put in you."

Andrews said research found PLAs increased labor and administrative costs and caused discrimination toward non-union bidders, especially among minority-owned businesses.

"The only positive the report found was the reduced risk of

work stoppages, but this benefit is minimized due to the lack of union shops in the county," she said.

Andrews told the board that if it moved ahead with the PLA, SDCTA would publicly revoke its support for Proposition V.

"Additionally... your decision will be factored into any type of support or non-support we give on future bond elections," Andrews said.

Former SDCTA president Scott Barnett told the GCCCD board that he was skeptical of PLAs while at SDCTA, but that the "feeling was ideological." He said he changed his mind while serving on the San Diego Unified School District board, where work projects with PLAs came in on time and under-budget.

"After seeing that result, I became confident that the facts are such that PLAs are good for the taxpayers," he said, adding that he supported putting a PLA into Proposition Z in 2012, which voters passed.

Eric Lund, general manager of the San Diego Chamber of Commerce, said that his organization won't support the PLA because "promises were made" to not have one.

"There may be good merits of [PLAs], there may be bad merits, but the bottom line is, you made a promise," he said.

After several more speakers, the board voted.

Mary Kay Rosinski voted in favor of the PLA, citing several examples of on-time and under-budget PLA projects in other school districts and the positive effect it will have on East County. "A PLA ensures that local tax dollars have the greatest impact on the local economy by creating quality jobs for local workers," she said.

Greg Barr said he "strongly believes" in unions and spoke of the benefits he's had over the years because of them.

"As educators, we are trying to educate our students into the value of what our views are and the value of taking a stand," he said. "Therefore, I would like to say that I take a stand and I'm going to vote yes."

Debbie Justeson said she was voting yes because of the many successful examples of large construction projects, like Petco Park and PacBell Park, that were built using a PLA.

Edwin Hiel abstained from

voting. He said he had been the "target of some personal attacks" following the Oct. 20 board meeting where he was handed recall papers by anti-PLA advocates that want to vote him off the board.

"I've learned that representing Santee has a price," he said.

"I recognize that the board passed a resolution that said there would be fair and open competition and those words generally mean no PLA," said GCCCD Board President Bill Garrett. "There are, however, laws that have been established that do require fair and open competition even when you have a PLA."

Garrett voiced concern over possible increases in administrative and labor costs associated with the PLA.

"That being said, however, because it has already been indicated that the vote is for the PLA, I am going to choose to abstain from the vote because of the vitriolic attacks that have been placed on this board," he said.

Garrett denounced the politics surrounding the PLA issue and defended the other board members as "good people who vote their conscience," before calling the vote in favor of adopting a PLA.

After the meeting, Andrews said she was "disappointed and frustrated" with the board's decision.

"The SDCTA will vote to revoke its support of Prop V," she said. "It's symbolic but it has never happened in our 70 years. It puts a stain on [the GCCCD's] record for breaking a promise."

—Write to Jeff Clemetson at jeff@sdcmn.com. ■

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NEWS BRIEFS

La Mesa’s own American Indian Heritage month ‘Local Hero’

In celebration of American Indian Heritage Month, KPBS and Union Bank are honoring two remarkable American Indian community and education advocates as Local Heroes.

La Mesa resident Vickie Gambala is a Cherokee Indian from Oklahoma, a devoted leader of Native education in San Diego County, community uniter, mother of three, and powwow veteran.

Gambala was nominated for the honor by Melisa Aleman of National City. In her submission, Aleman wrote:

“Vickie Gambala Cherokee has been involved with the urban Native community over 33-plus years. She serves as a great leader and elder of the Native community. Her biggest accomplishment is promoting higher education to urban Native students throughout the San Diego County. Even after retiring in 2011, she still continues to help Native students succeed by helping out every Wednesday at Soaring Eagles Family Night [where] she continues to preserve culture awareness and traditions. Vickie is a fine leader, a respected elder in San Diego as well as a role model to those who look up to her. In 1976, she was given the [opportunity to be] a director of the San Diego Unified School District Indian Education program. She is an asset to the Native community. She shows great dedication to cultural awareness, to preserve cultural traditions, and spiritual values.”

Gambala has led her communi-



Vickie Gambala is a KPBS ‘Local Hero’ for American Indian Heritage Month. (Courtesy of KPBS)

ties in various roles throughout her years. She has served on the San Diego Mayor’s Advisory Committee, the former San Diego American Indian Human Resource Center, and the Council of American Indian Organizations of San Diego — in all these capacities, the chief goal was to improve the quality of life for the Native community and preserve its culture. Gambala also founded various women’s gatherings in San Diego, as well

as the Soaring Eagles dance group. These groups aim to foster a stronger sense of tribal community within urban life.

“It’s a great honor to be chosen for this year. I appreciate the gesture from the community to nominate me,” Gambala said in response to the nomination. “Because it takes a community.”

Gambala said she hopes this collective gesture will continue to bring Native communities together in San Diego. ■

Local charter school honored with Baldrige Award

On Nov. 17, The Charter School of San Diego (CSSD) was awarded the Malcom Baldrige Quality Award. CSSD, which has campuses throughout San Diego County, including one in La Mesa, is the first school ever to receive the award in its 28-year history. The award is the highest honor recognizing performance excellence in innovation, improvement and visionary leadership.

CSSD was the first charter school in San Diego and serves students in sixth through 12th grades who are at risk of dropping out. The Baldrige Award recognizes the school’s achievement in improving the learning for these students.

Despite starting out three to four grade levels behind, 80 percent of CSSD students pass the California High School Exit Exam, a state-required assessment of student achievement. Between 94

percent and 98 percent of CSSD students have graduated from the school or have successfully transitioned back into a traditional public school. Student and parent satisfaction levels at CSSD have remained at nearly 100 percent over the past five years. CSSD has sustained a student retention rate above 80 percent over the past five years and has retained 80 to 90 percent of its instructional staff over the past six years. And audits of the school’s finances and operations for the past five years have shown sound business principles.

“This year’s Baldrige Award honorees have demonstrated an unwavering commitment to improving their performance in all facets of their organizations, and they have served as role models for others to follow,” said U.S. Commerce Secretary Penny Pritzker in a press statement. “As America’s Innovation Agency, the Commerce Department is honored to support innovators and job creators who power our economy and help keep America open for business.” ■

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Like other "For Sale by Owners", you'll be subjected to a hundred sales pitches from agents who will tell you how great they are and how you can't possibly sell your home by yourself. After all, without the proper information, selling a home isn't easy. Perhaps you've had your home on the market for several months with no offers from qualified buyers. This can be a very frustrating time, and many homeowners have given up their dreams of selling their homes themselves. But don't give up until you've read a new report entitled "Sell Your Own Home" which has been prepared especially for homesellers like you. You'll find that selling your home by yourself is entirely possible once you understand the process.

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Republican Women to present Action Track Chair to Wounded Warrior

Judy
McCarty



The event will take place at the SDCRWF County Biennial Convention Dec. 12 at the Town & Country Hotel

Rep. Darryl Issa (CA-49) will join Navajo Canyon Republican Women's Federated (NCRWF) members and San Diego County Republican Women Federated (SDCRWF) in presenting an Action Track Chair to a deserving wounded warrior who still craves action. The event will take place at the SDCRWF County Biennial Convention Dec. 12 at the Town & Country Hotel in Mission Valley. Following an invocation by state Sen. Joel Anderson and remarks by Issa, NCRWF member Kat Culkin will join Issa in presenting the chair to Army Staff Sergeant Tommy Rieman, Executive Director of The Independence Fund that works to heal severely wounded veterans. Rieman himself is a recipient of the Medal of Valor and was President George W. Bush's guest of honor at the State of the Union. Featured speaker for the afternoon session will

be Bill Whittle, a popular conservative speaker whose wit, satire and political philosophy can also be found on his website, billwhittle.com and on YouTube. Reservations for the convention, which runs from 8:15 a.m. to 2:20 p.m., can be made to SDCRWF at rosalia1947@att.net. Cost is \$35.

After a rip-roaring November meeting with Roger Hedgecock, NCRWF will celebrate the holidays and install their new officers for the coming year on Dec. 8 from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at the home of Ginny Wisely. Donations of toys and other

necessities will be collected for Military Outreach Ministries (MOM). San Diego MOM serves junior enlisted military families, typically headed by a 19-23 year old, with young children and away from home and trying to survive in our expensive economy on a low salary. We'd love to have you join us. Call Glenda for information and reservations at 619-284-9958 or email ncrwf99@gmail.com. And please bring a toy and a dish to share.

Sally Steele of El Cajon will be installed as the 2016 NCRWF president, succeeding Marjie Siekerka who has been an outstanding president for the past two years, keeping us motivated, informed and energized! Under Marjie's leadership, NCRWF has grown to become the largest RWF chapter in San Diego County. Waskah Whelan, a past president of NCRWF, has completed two years as president of the SDCRWF and has been key to the success of that organization. NCRWF prides itself on leadership development and creating a positive atmosphere for members. Next year, we will harness our energy towards activities that will further advance Republican values and success at the ballot box!

For more information on all our activities, visit us at navajocanyonrwf.org and also like us on Facebook!

—Judy McCarty is publicity chair of the Navajo Canyon Republican Women Federated. Write to her at jhmccarty@cox.net. ■



Roy Zimmerman returns to Dems' holiday party

Linda Armacost and
Jeff Benesch

Roy Zimmerman, America's premier political satirist, and guitar-strumming singer-songwriter — whose witty left-slanted commentary is primarily focused on social justice — will make a return appearance to headline the La Mesa Foothills Democratic Club's annual holiday gala. The festivities begin at 6 p.m., Wednesday, Dec. 2 at the La Mesa Community Center.

The LMFDC, representing the communities of San Carlos, Allied Gardens, Del Cerro, the College Area, La Mesa, Mt. Helix, Santee and other nearby East County communities, meets the first Wednesday of every month at 4975 Memorial Drive, just North of University Avenue in La Mesa.

Our large, progressive membership invites community members to join us at all our meetings and special events. Our December meeting is a robust festive meal, complete with roasted turkeys and ham, vegan dishes, traditional holiday fixings, plus appetizers and salads, beverages, and specially baked pies and desserts, all of which are supplied by the club and its members. Our holiday meeting is always one of the best attended, and with the

addition of Roy Zimmerman, this year's party should be especially memorable.

A native of Southern California, Zimmerman was the founder of the satirical folk quartet, The Foremen, which performed at the national conventions of both major American political parties in 1996. Continuing as a solo act, Roy explained the philosophy behind writing and performing humorous songs on increasingly political subjects.

"There's nothing funny about world peace. Social justice never killed at the Comedy Store. If we ever attain a worldwide consciousness of peace and justice, I'll be happily out of a job. But as long as there's poverty, war, bigotry, ignorance, greed, lust and paranoia, I've got a career."

Roy Zimmerman lives and works in Bay Area's Marin County with his wife and frequent collaborator, Melanie Harby, and their sons Joe and Sam. He'll have copies of his many hilarious and biting original songs and CDs for sale at the meeting. (Great holiday gifts, by the way.)

As part of our annual holiday commitment to provide for those less fortunate, our club's Holiday Gift Drive this year will benefit

See DEMS page 13

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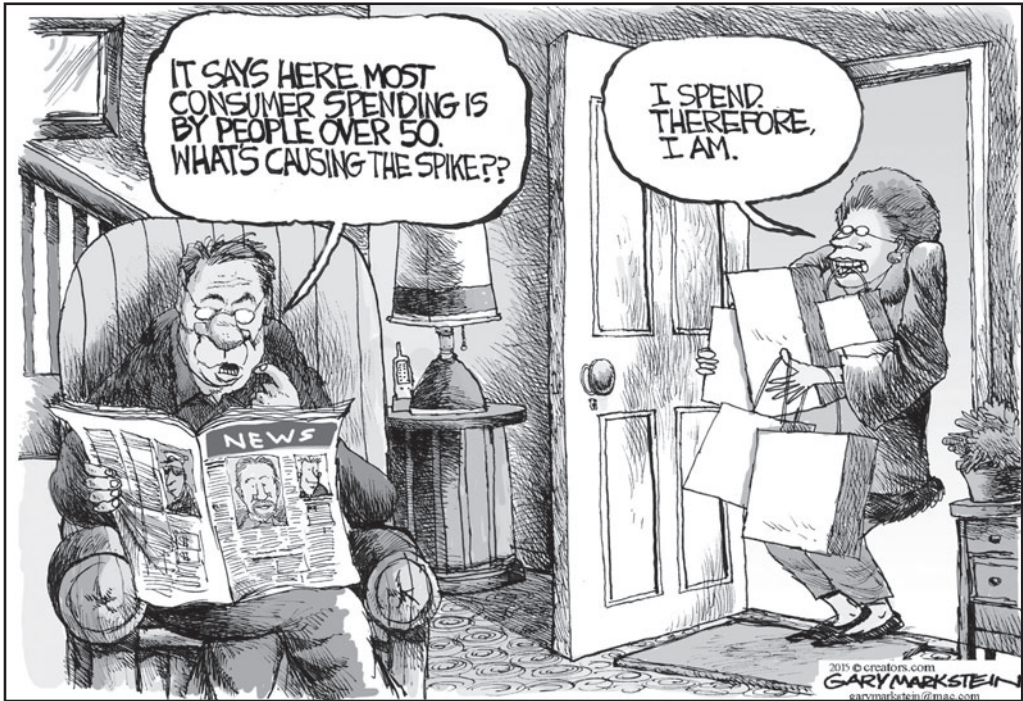
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EDITORIAL

La Mesa deserves a new library

Jeff Clemetson
Editor

On Nov. 18, I had the pleasure of moderating a discussion held by La Mesa Conversations and La Mesa Friends of the Library called “The Town Library: A Valuable Community Partner?”

The panel, which included Jose Aponte, director of San Diego County Library; Kimberly Gallo, executive director of First 5 San Diego; Betty Waznis, director of Chula Vista Public Library; and Lemon Grove Library Branch Manager Elizabeth Vagani, shared its passion for libraries and the programs they offer to the public. The panelists also discussed why it is important to invest in libraries. Specifically, why we should invest in a new library in La Mesa.

According to an agreement reached in 2005 between La Mesa and San Diego County, La Mesa will either have to build a permanent library or pay back San Diego County for the property that housed the old library and now houses the La Mesa police station.

Although the library was moved into its current space next to the La Mesa post office in 2008, La Mesa will still be on the hook for paying for the county land unless the city is able to attain funding for a permanent library by March 14, 2018. The cost of the property will be assessed at its 2018 value.

Building a library will cost money and so one way to look at the discussion we had was really to answer the question: Will it be worth it?

I believe the answer is: Yes.

La Mesans use their library in surprising numbers. The La Mesa Library is the busiest branch in the county in terms of traffic per square foot. The library has the the third

highest circulation of books in the San Diego County Library system, which is the fourth largest system in the country. And it would serve even more people if it was bigger.

Libraries today do more than just house books. Important programs such as literacy for adults, after-school activities for children, programs for seniors, parenting classes and more are all held at the library.

The problem with La Mesa’s current space is that it can only offer one program at a time. In a larger, permanent home, the library could have multiple programs throughout the day, making them easier to schedule for people to attend. A larger library could also be used for other civic functions like city meetings, police seminars and more.

Paying for a new library is a matter of political will and the panelists at the La Mesa Conversations discussion urged people who attended to be the “squeaky wheel” in order to get the grease needed to make funding a new library a priority.

There are many ways to fund building projects like libraries — partnerships with private entities, grants and endowments, for example. However, it is most likely that to build the library, there will need to be some kind of bond measure to ensure the funding will be there to satisfy the agreement between the La Mesa and the county.

Either way, La Mesa has less than three years to make a decision and get the funds it needs to build the library or it will still be paying for the one it has now. In essence, paying for a library building that was never designed to be one.

I would urge La Mesans to not be short-sighted and throw away the opportunity to build a library for the city that matches the use our branch already gets. We can either invest in the library of the future or pay for the library of the past.

—Write to Jeff Clemetson at jeff@sdcnn.com. ■

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Rate hikes and reuse

In response to your article on water rate hikes [Volume 5, Issue 10 or bit.ly/1P9XL8U], it seems to me that if the smaller water districts such as Helix and Padre Dam would consolidate their administrative staffs, that in and of itself would reduce administrative and duplicative costs. This idea was brought forward at Senator Joel Anderson’s recent town hall meeting in La Mesa.

As to the article on recycle/reuse [bit.ly/1jk2Flz], as an example of consolidation, your article mentions that a decision by Helix and Padre Dam needs to be made soon regarding the looming decision by EPA as to whether or not San Diego Metro needs to build a secondary treatment facility, as each needs to know what levels of flows each can expect from all the other water districts they serve. While I realized this was on the ballot once before, there needs to be an understanding of why it was defeated, as well as a look into the benefits. It was my comprehension at Senators Anderson’s meeting, that Padre Dam Water District is operating extremely efficiently.

Is it my understanding that Helix Water District is not operating as efficiently as Padre Dam? If not, why not?

Also, why does the recycle/reuse project require water to be pumped uphill (expensive) to Lake Jennings, when there are several smaller storage facilities in near proximity to the use — Harry Griffith Park, Mt. Helix’s two ‘private’ lakes or the Fletcher Hills storage tank which is shared with Padre Dam?

I do realize that no water district wants to surrender their rights to water, but if we don’t start consolidating the costs of administration and development of water treatment plants, our rates are going to rise.

Thank you for your unbiased reporting on a critical issue.

—Bob Janeczek, La Mesa

A barrel of solutions

While your article on the rise in water costs was interesting, I can’t see why anyone was surprised. Whenever people cut the amount of water they use, the water company raises the price. It’s been that way as long as I can remember.

There is a win-win solution — rain barrels.

First it would provide people with water they don’t have to pay the water company for. One inch of rainfall collects about a half-gallon of water per square foot of roof.

To calculate your rainfall potential, estimate the square footage of your roof. Divide that number by two. That’s how many gallons your roof will collect during a one-inch rainfall.

Second, adding rain barrels would prevent flood damage (maybe even mudslides). Last month it rained about 15 minutes – not even particularly hard – and we had three inches of water running down the gutter. Sure it spread out at the intersection, but if it had rained harder or longer, we could have had water running over the sidewalk.

True, it’s a pain checking the city requirements. But who wants to provide breeding grounds for mosquitoes? Malaria and West Nile Virus are not fun diseases. That’s why there is a requirement to make sure the rain barrel is properly seated and secured. You don’t want it leaking or falling (or being knocked) over.

Researching city requirements may lead to finding helpful hints about filters (you do not need leaves clogging things up), easy access (various spigots), and overflow setups (mostly standard hookups to soaker hoses).

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OPINIONS/LETTERS: La Mesa Courier encourages letters to the editor and guest editorials. Please email submissions to jeff@sdcnn.com and include your phone number and address for verification. We reserve the right to edit letters for brevity and accuracy. Letters and guest editorials do not necessarily reflect the views of the publisher or staff.

SUBMISSIONS/NEWS TIPS: Send press releases, tips, photos or story ideas to jeff@sdcnn.com.

For breaking news and investigative story ideas contact the editor by phone or email.

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La Mesa COURIER



Poll of the Month

Last Month’s Question:

Do you think the coming El Niño will produce:

- 51% Biblical floods
- 49% A pleasant rain and snow season
- 0% Barely a drizzle

This Month’s Question:

Where do you do the bulk of your holiday shopping?

- ☐ Box stores and shopping malls
- ☐ Local mom-and-pop shops
- ☐ Online retailers

To cast your vote, visit lamesacourier.com.



► Letters, from page 6

With sales and rebates, most of the cost will be in installing your rain barrels. Then there's the fun of choosing the size, style, and color.

Do you go with the standard industrial round drum? Perhaps a fancy Terra Cotta look (maybe with fake flowers)? There are oblong rain barrels that looks like a sideways water tank; ones that look like a modernist square; barrels shaped like a tall thin rock spire; temporary foldable ones that look like a large green trash bag; huge drums for commercial buildings; and even a water wall (that one looked interesting).

I had fun looking at them even though I live in an apartment building and there's no chance the owners will put up rain barrels. Their response to higher water costs is to raise the rent.

Even if we don't get as much rain as some of the predictions (I think 35 inches in five months is an exaggeration, but I also think we'll get more rain than most people expect and all at once), we're going to have flooding problems.

La Mesa is a lot of up and down. Without rain barrels catching water, anyone crossing University Avenue better count on the water being high enough to cause problems. Those old pickup trucks are going to come in handy. And while some of the older houses are built up high with stone retaining walls, most of the newer ones aren't. Got your sandbags ready?

Anyway, I enjoyed your article.

—Catherine Siebert, La Mesa

Bad traffic cop

My family has lived in La Mesa since 1971. I noticed an article in your paper about the traffic on Harbinson Avenue [Volume 4, Issue 3 or bit.ly/1MRPWd]. We have been experiencing the same issues and then some. We had a problem with cars traveling down our street at a high rate of speed, it is posted as 25 mph.

A few years ago, they installed the speed bumps that only cover half the street. They are supposed to slow traffic but are useless. Now, not only are people driving fast down our street, but they are also going down the middle of the road to avoid the speed bumps.

I have contacted La Mesa Police about this and was told by their "traffic cop" that there is nothing that can be done as they only have three traffic cops on the whole force. I think if they enforced the law on our street they would earn more than enough to hire more traffic cops.

I don't know if there is anything you can do but I would like it out there and documented as I am afraid there may be a fatality soon. I have witnessed a few accidents and the drivers have sped off before the police came. This is a street that has a school bus stop and I worry about the safety of the children on this street. Maybe a story about the lack of concern by LMPD would light a fire and get something done. Thank you for your time.

—Laurie Murray, La Mesa

Getting by

Unless you are pretty-faced (Hollywood); have an amazing, bionic body (pro athlete); or can sling hash like a politician, you are pretty much chopped-liver after 60 years in this world.

If you are lucky enough to have had a job, you have suffered stagnate wages since high school or college. Fixed income, you old guys, means your scratch has dried-up. Social Security is going backwards, the bear is in the market and interest rates are a gimmick for the banks. The costs of living — housing, food, phone, insurance, utilities (gas, electric, water, sewer), gasoline, basic cable, medical, education, taxes — have all sky-rocketed.

But please do not despair. What's more important, in my opinion, is family, friends, an education, volunteering, helping a neighbor and living in the best country ever. Enjoy! (You youngsters will understand this prattle in due time).

—Carlos Miller, La Mesa ■

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Foothiller Footsteps Remembering the Christmas Pageant

Connie and Lynn Baer

One of the most beloved traditions in Grossmont's history is the highly acclaimed Christmas Pageant, which was presented by Grossmont High School staff and students as an annual gift to the community from 1926-1989. The professionalism of the production made it an annual event for the community to circle on their calendars. From its beginnings, the performances were given to packed houses.

Free tickets for each night were issued beforehand to guarantee seats. Due to the pageant's popularity, the number of performances grew from two in the 1930s to three in the 1950s and then four in the 1960s and 1970s. Performances began at 8 p.m. except during WWII when they started at 6:30 p.m. to allow everyone time to return home before nighttime blackout rules took effect.



The Madonna Scene from the 1969 performance of Grossmont High School's "Christmas Pageant." (Courtesy of the GHS Museum)

The Christmas Pageant was the result of the vision of three women: long-time Red Robe Choir Director Merle Donahue; dedicated drama teacher Eva McCarthy Quicksall; and English teacher Dorothy Smith. Under their leadership these early productions inspired students, staff, and the community. Over its 63-year history, the pageant maintained its excellence due to the dedication of hundreds of GHS staff and community members.

The 1968 pageant rehearsal schedule reveals that for two weeks, students and staff rehearsed scenes during and after school, with a final nighttime dress rehearsal. Competition for parts for the various scenes was intense and tryouts took place weeks before rehearsals began. Students looked forward each year to being a member of the cast. No matter how large

or small the part, each student knew that he or she was a part of a memorable experience — a gift to the community.

The 1968 Christmas Pageant program lists 184 students in the three scenes plus the 87 members of the Red Robe Choir and the 42 members of the GHS Orchestra. Also, essential to the performances were the more than 40 members of the crew as well as the California Cadet Corps and the ASB class. That year, there were a total of more than 353 student participants guided by 30 committed members of the faculty.

While the pageant evolved over the years, by the 1940s it consisted of three main scenes. Alumnus Jim Warren, Class of 1973, remembers the evening beginning with Jim Nichols, orchestra director, "coming out in his black tuxedo, tapping on the music stand" before begin-

ning to direct. Barbara Smith McCluskey, Class of 1953, shares that the choir entering from the rear of the Old Gym in their red robes, "singing 'Oh, Come All Ye Faithful', always sent delicious chills" through her.

The first scene was an Old English Christmas complete with lords, ladies, ballerinas, jesters, and merrymakers. Due to his small size, Woodie Thomas, Class of 1959, as a freshman was selected to stand on the yule log and say: "Kindle the Christmas log and then 'til sunset let it burn." After Woodie grew taller, as a senior, he was the log man who swung the "little kid" off the Yule log after the toast.

The second scene was what many regard as the most moving. It begins with candle-bearers walking toward the stage with closed curtains while "Oh, Holy Night" is being

sung. As they reach the stage, the curtains fly open to reveal the Madonna, standing motionless for three minutes, and the candle-bearers kneel. Retired teacher Carol Lockwood recalls that the "curtain opened with a clash of the cymbals and the words, 'Fall on your knees.'" Julia Yale Salinas, who was one of the Madonnas in 1969, recalls hearing "a little girl in the front row asking her parents, 'Is that lady real?'"

The final scenes were the Nativity scenes, showing the shepherds and the wisemen following the star to the stables and Mary, Joseph, and the baby Jesus. During the scene, a student reads scripture from the King James Bible. Suzanne Geba Hawes, retired teacher, remembers stressing "the solemnity of these scenes and directing the students to create magical slow motion silhouettes of the familiar religious scenes to move and inspire the audience." The "Hallelujah Chorus", sung by the choir, accompanied by an organist and the orchestra, provided a dramatic finish.

Visit the Museum to see our collection of memorabilia that documents the dedication and love of students, staff, and community to a wonderfully memorable 63-year Foothiller tradition.

—Connie and Lynn Baer write on behalf of the GHS Museum. Call 619-668-6140, email ghs-museum@guhsd.net, or visit foothillermuseum.com for more information. ■

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Helix Highlights

Jennifer Osborn

As part of the Aspire Student Empowerment Youth Service Day, Helix High School students spent four hours on Saturday, Nov. 21 cleaning the campus and participating in projects to beautify the school. Aspire is a program at Helix that provides opportunities for students after school, including tutoring and remediation for classroom assignments, as well as enrichment and athletic programs. More than 300 students participate in the Aspire program each day.

Students from various Helix clubs and teams will be provid-

ing a gift-wrapping service at Grossmont Center this holiday season. On odd-numbered dates, visit the gift wrapping station near Santa's gazebo and Helix students will wrap your gifts. There is no set fee for this service — donations are accepted. Hours are 4 p.m. — 9 p.m. Monday through Friday; 9 a.m. — 9 p.m. Saturdays, and 10 a.m. — 6 p.m. on Sundays. Hours will be extended on Black Friday, and Dec. 21 and 23.

The Helix Boys and Girls Golf Programs will be selling discount tickets to the upcoming Farmer's Insurance Open golf tournament being played at Torrey Pines Golf Course, Jan. 28–31. Tickets are \$35 each for single day admission. The tickets will be available starting Dec. 2. Contact Frank Theroux at theroux@helixcharter.net or 619-644-1940, ext. 136 for more information.

This past summer, all incoming freshmen were provided with the book, "I am Malala" to read over the summer. The book is the story of an Afghani girl who was shot

by the Taliban for attempting to receive an education. Students were assigned projects on and had discussions about the book.

This term, all ninth graders went to see the film "He Named Me Malala." Over the course of two days, 650 Helix students saw the film at the Landmark Theater in Hillcrest. All field trip costs (buses and movie tickets) were paid for by the Malala Fund. Now, Helix First students are gathering used clothing that will be sold to benefit the Malala Fund, which supports girls' education projects around the world.

Helix staff kicked off the Helix Helping Helix program this month. Non-perishable food items and gift cards will be donated to selected Helix students and their families the last week of school in December. We have a goal of helping out 15 families this year. Staff and Students contribute to this drive by bringing in non-perishable food items into the class, which are then sorted and distributed to our selected families.

Ways to help: buying food items that are listed on the wish list (bit.ly/1MPdPHz); buying gift cards from popular stores; or writing a check payable to Helix Foundation (attention: Mark Demers, Holiday Drive). The monies will be used to buy gift cards. Checks and donations can be dropped off in the front office.

Helix will be closed for the winter holidays Dec. 21 – Jan. 5.

—Jennifer Osborn Writes on behalf of Helix Charter High School. Reach her at josborn@helixcharter.net. ■



(l to r) Mike Simpson, David Woerner, Ryan McDonald and Jillian Jones act out a scene from "Martians!" (Photo by Jeff Clemetson)

'Martians!' tours East County elementary schools

Jeff Clemetson
Editor

Since the middle of October, elementary schools throughout East County have been invaded by "Martians!" — an original performance for children by Grossmont College Theatre Arts Department's Traveling Troupe.

Now in its 19th year, the Traveling Troupe is a special program that brings fun and educational plays to elementary schools in the fall and high schools in the spring. This fall's produc-

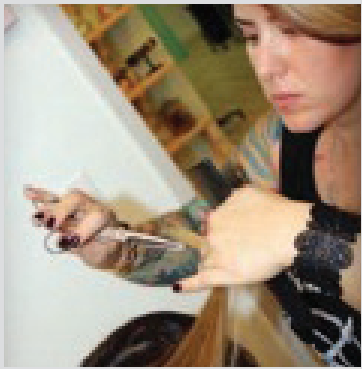
tion of "Martians!" is based off of a book by Meghan McCarthy called "Aliens Are Coming!" which tells the story of Orson Welles' 1938 Halloween night radio broadcast of "War of the Worlds."

"Martians!" was written and directed by Grossmont Theatre Arts professor Jerry Hager who said he "wanted to do something involving a radio show" after working on a recent SDSU production about a radio show. Because the fall tour program for elementary schools is always

See **MARTIANS** page 19 —————>

EXPERT ADVICE

Kimberly Creekmore
HairLoveDesignLLC
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Many of you have probably been faced with the challenge of finding a hairdresser. Maybe you, or your current stylist, have moved to another city, they no longer work at the salon you love, or you have made the decision to not return for any number of reasons. The dreaded day comes; your hair and you are in need of service. But how do you go about choosing the right person in which to place your trust? To read more about some great advice on how to find a new hairdresser, please visit lamesacourier.com/expert-advice.

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Christmas Past

Lamplighters Theatre recreates Orson Welles' 1939 'A Christmas Carol'

Jeff Clemetson
Editor

The Lamplighters Theatre wants to take you back in time for the holidays.

Starting Nov. 27 and running through Dec. 20 on Fridays and Saturdays at 8 p.m. and Sundays at 2 p.m., the theater is presenting a stage adaptation of a 1939 broadcast of "Orson Welles presents 'A Christmas Carol' Radio Show."

Although the stage show is recreating radio, director Robin Pollock said audiences shouldn't expect stiff performances from the actors.

"A major challenge of the show is making it interesting because if you hear a radio show, it is very alive because you are using total imagination to paint the picture," she said "We're doing a radio show with an audience, so we're trying to create as much of the characters as we can while they're doing the show. So it is a bit of a challenge for the actors because they go 'I'm a radio actor but I'm also sort of acting out the characters.' So it's about trying to find a balance to



(l to r) Danny Deuprey as Bob Cratchit; Max Patag as Tiny Tim; and AndreAna Canales as Martha; (below) Jeff Duncan stars as Scrooge. (Photos by Jeff Clemetson)

that so it's still entertaining for the audience to watch it. That's a huge challenge actually."

To find that balance, Pollock and the cast did their homework to find inspiration and make the stage production come alive.

"We all studied pictures of the radio actors so we could see that they don't just stand at the microphones and say their lines, they were emoting and doing gestures and body movements."

Unlike standard stage productions of "A Christmas Carol" that stick to the British accents and Victorian mannerisms of Charles Dickens' day when he wrote the book, Pollock said the Lamplighters production used the creative license of Welles' 1939 broadcast which the cast studied by listening to recordings.

"You can actually get online and

type in 'Orson Welles radio show 1939' and it's there," she said. "So you can hear it and it's Lionel Barrymore as Scrooge and it's really corny and so we're trying to keep the corniness and the campiness and have the actors in 1939 costumes and they're playing these Victorian-era characters."

Pollock said she wants audiences to experience what a show was like in radio days, which was very "organic" compared to the today's virtual entertainment of YouTube videos. One of the ways the production is recreating the organic nature of radio is the use of sound effects, emphasized by actor Robert Burton

"O u r

sound guy is hilarious, he's a total ham," she said. "He stands up and he's got the gong going and it sounds like church bells, but it's a tin bowl, and he's banging it. When Marley (played by Ray Lynch) is on, there are all these chain sounds with the wailing sounds, so it's a real in-the-now experience."

Remaking "A Christmas Carol" is nothing new. Recent examples include "Scrooged," starring Bill Murray and even an animated version by Disney, starring Jim Carrey. "There are so many versions of it. Anyone can do it and it's been done in so many ways and we're just putting a different spin on it," she said

Pollock's own spin on the classic story was partly out of necessity. "I had to add some scenes back in because the original radio show was only an hour," she said.

The end result is a unique take on a holiday classic, and that is what Pollock hopes audiences enjoy about the production the most.

"There's nothing bad in it. It's family entertainment," she said. "It's just all about Christmas. If you want to see a Christmassy show that's filled with Christmas, this is it."

"Orson Welles presents 'A Christmas Carol' Radio Show" stars Larry E. Fox as Orson Welles; Jeff Duncan as Scrooge; Danny Deuprey as Bob Cratchit; Max Patag as Tiny Tim; Sarah Williams as Belle and Mrs. Dibble; Donalee Brayman

as Ghost of Christmas Past and Mrs. Cratchit; Terrence J. Burke as Fred Dibble; Steve Jensen as Ghost of Christmas Present and Oscar; and many more.

The show runs from Nov. 27 through Dec. 20 on Fridays and Saturdays at 8 p.m. and Sundays at 2 p.m. at the Lamplighters Community Theatre located at 5915 Severin Drive in La Mesa. Tickets are \$20 for adults and \$17 for seniors, students and active military and can be purchased online at lamplighterslamesa.com or by calling 619-303-5092.

—Write to Jeff Clemetson at jeff@sdccn.com. ■

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Terra American Bistro began in Hillcrest May 1998 and has since moved to the east College district of Rolando.

Chef/Owner and cookbook author Jeff Rossman supports local food purveyors and sources all ingredients carefully, with a commitment to buy all products that are cultivated sustainably and humanely.

Terra specialties include Pumpkin Raviolis, Fried Brussels Sprouts and Lobster Macaroni 'n Cheese. This neighborhood bistro serves up farm-to-table fare, craft cocktails and local craft brew. The team's ambition is to create a relaxed and casual atmosphere to have a great experience.

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David Chiodo, co-founder of La Strada Trattoria and founder of Tiramisu Trattoria, is serving the people of La Mesa all week with the finest dishes from Italy. La Strada, located in the heart of the Gaslamp, was one of the premier Italian restaurants for over 20 years. Chiodo, taking with him his experience and concept of what an Italian restaurant should be, opened the doors of Tiramisu Trattoria in 2004 in the quaint downtown village of La Mesa.

Tiramisu's concept brings to life the feeling of walking into a restaurant in the corner of Italy. Chiodo achieved this by offering a unique blend of Italian wines, direct from the old country and an Italian-only menu catering delicious and authentic dishes. Chef Gabino takes pride in making every dish from scratch. All sauces, meatballs, pizza and other fare are made fresh each day. ■



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La Mesa's California Note Catchers will perform at the Paradise Village Liberty Theater in National City on Dec. 7. (Courtesy of California Note Catchers)

California Note Catchers to captivate audience with 'Holiday Harmonies'

Cynthia **Robertson**

You know it's Christmas time when you hear the La Mesa-based California Note Catchers practicing holiday music for their upcoming concert, "Holiday Harmonies; Jingle All the Way" on Dec. 7.

This women's barbershop harmony group has put on a holiday show for several years. It has grown in popularity so much that the concert now is held at a larger venue, at the Paradise Village Liberty Theater in National City.

"Our audience grows larger every year. Many of us also have dedicated family members and friends who look forward to coming every year, some for the past 20 years," said Note Catchers member Anne Ash.

Annette Draper, president of California Note Catchers, said that this year, 19 members will be singing along with three community singers.

"The community singers have been working on two holiday songs since the middle of September," Draper said.

The group will sing a selection of secular and more traditional holiday music, including songs celebrating Christmas in several languages, Hanukkah, and the theme of peace. In addition, there will be two quartets singing several songs. The holiday program will also include several songs in different languages.

"So we have to master new word sounds. In particular, we sing 'Mele Kalikimaka' in Hawaiian and 'Feliz Navidad' in Spanish. We also have several soloists performing in different languages during 'Silent Night,'" Ash said. "We attempt to bring a variety of music for the holidays, not just Christmas carols," Draper said.

In addition, this year's holiday show will include some audience participation as well.

"Over the years, our family and friends have requested a singalong so this year we are excited to have Mark Anthony and Terry John lead a singalong. They are both actors and directors," said Karen Hasman, a member of CNC since it began 20 years ago.

Unlike most choral groups, California Note Catchers' style is solely barbershop, a musical form that began in the 1930s with the Barbershop Revival Era. The ele-

ments of barbershop style and the names of the voice parts are the same for men and women.

Sweet Adelines and Harmony, Inc., the latter of which California Note Catchers are a part of, are two of the leading women's barbershop organizations.

Barbershop in and of itself is a difficult genre because of the close harmonies, and the fact that it is sung a cappella.

"So we are able to educate as well as entertain our audiences. They are usually surprised to discover that many 'traditional' songs can be arranged into a Barbershop style," Ash said.

To keep the audience pepped up, the Paradise Village staff will offer refreshments during intermission. After the show, the chorus will be able to greet friends and family.

Funds raised from the program assist California Note Catcher's general fund to help with their monthly rent for practices, assisting with annual dues to Harmony, Inc. and help offset the cost of the costumes. A big part of their budget each year is legally purchasing the music that they sing.

California Note Catchers also supports area charities through monetary contributions and occasional complimentary quartet and chorus performances such as Relay for Life and Grossmont Rehab.

Women of all ages are welcome to come to the rehearsals and do not need to know how to read music or sing barbershop style. "Once you start singing in four-part harmony, you'll love it," Hasman said.

Director Randy Parrish-Bell said music has a way of bringing people together.

"It affects the entire being — the body, soul and brain. It's a communication unlike any other form that will get to the emotional state of a person," she said.

The group practices every Monday evening from 7 to 9 p.m. in the Social Hall of the La Mesa First United Methodist Church, 4690 Palm Ave in La Mesa.

Tickets to "Holiday Harmonies; Jingle All the Way" are \$12 and may be purchased in advance or at the box office before the show. Call 619-889-0299 for tickets.

For more information about CNC, call 619-972-7879 or go to californianotecatchers.com.

—Write to Cynthia Robertson at c1g2robertson@gmail.com. ■

► **El Nino**, from page 1

After a welcome by Fire Chief Rick Sitta, La Mesa Assistant Public Works Director Leon Firsh spoke to how the city is preparing. For example, evaluating trees that are in danger of falling, trimming palm trees, checking storm drains and channels, readying equipment and materials and having supervisors on-call around the clock. Firsh said sand and sandbags are available for La Mesa residents (10 at a time) at the Public Works Operations site located at 8152 Commercial St.

Police Chief Walt Vasquez said the police department is increasing training for officers, staff and volunteers on emergency response for actions such as swift-water rescues and dealing with downed power lines. He said a call back system is in place to ramp up manning if needed.

The next speaker was Fire Department Division Chief Sweeney, who began by describing known and potential areas for flooding using a flood zone map that is available online at heartlandfire.org/el-nino.

Sweeney told the audience safety training for El Niño-related issues like swift-water rescue and collapsed-building rescue is a regional and team effort involving the fire department, police department, public works department, and SDG&E, which handles downed power lines during storms.

The department uses a "trigger point" approach in its response



Mona Freels, Heartland Fire and Rescue emergency preparedness coordinator, gives advice on how to be prepared before, during and after El Niño storms at Heartland Fire's community workshop on Nov. 17. (Photo by J.S. Anderson)

planning, Sweeney said. If a certain threshold is met, staffing will increase proactively. Sweeney also explained the Reverse 911 system, which would be used in emergencies, such as evacuations. For traditional telephone land lines, the service is automatic, however cellular phones need to be activated by signing up online at readysandiego.org/alertsandiego. For those whose telephone service is provided via their Internet provider, sign up by a process known as Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP).

Mona Freels, Heartland Fire and Rescue's Emergency Preparedness Coordinator, was the key speaker of the night's presentation, covering topics like preparation, response, and recovery planning for the expected weather changes.

ery planning for the expected weather changes.

One of the ways to prepare for El Niño, Freels said, is to get flood insurance, which is specific to damage from external sources of water and not damage from broken pipes. Under the National Flood Insurance Program, it takes 30 days for coverage to be effective, so now is a good time to obtain a policy. Contact your insurance agent or go to fema.gov/national-flood-insurance-program.

Before the rains is also the time to place valuables in a safe-deposit box and scan important papers and maintain those electronic files somewhere separate from your home or business, said Freels. Another way to prepare before the storms is to stock up

on items like sandbags, plywood, plastic sheeting, and other building materials for waterproofing. Just in case an evacuation is required, keep your vehicle fueled (at least a half-tank), because if electricity goes out, gas stations will not be able to pump fuel. Also, know your primary and alternate routes to depart your home, just in case.

During rainstorms, the first rule of caution is "Turn Around, Don't Drown," said Freels. Never attempt to cross water that is above your knees or drive across a flooded road where the water depth "is not obviously safe." Tune into local radio stations, Heartland Fire social media sites, and the San Diego Emergency App for emergency information. If advised to evacuate, follow the instructions of local authorities and quickly relocate yourself, family, and pets to a safe area.

If a sudden emergency were to require immediate evacuation of your home or business, Freels said to prepare in advance by designating a primary and alternate meeting place where a head count can be made to ensure everyone got out. Make sure everyone in the home or business knows these locations and what to do. Another good piece of advice Freels shared was to plan for notifying out-of-area family and friends in the event of an emergency.

In response to a question about shelters, Freels told the audience the city is partnered with the Red Cross and has identified twelve shelters for use in emergencies. Should evacuation be required,

authorities will identify which will be open. In case you are required to stay at a shelter, be prepared by gathering and staging basic supplies such as food, water, cash in small denominations (credit/debit cards may not work if the electricity is out), important documents, clothes and shoes, personal hygiene items, pet care supplies, personal needs items (medications and assistive devices), flash lights and batteries, and kits for the kids (toys, books).

Freels suggested keeping essentials in plastic or rubber buckets with secure lids, periodically rotating any perishables. Included in planning should be kits to take in the car if evacuation becomes necessary.

After the rain, if the gas has been shut off, do not attempt to turn it on — rely on SDG&E, Freels said. Also, follow all instructions regarding the safety of drinking water. If in doubt, boil it for at least a minute. Use common sense and avoid downed power lines and other hazards the weather may have caused. And stay tuned to radio, television, and social media for up to date information.

For additional information, go to the Heartland Fire and Rescue El Nino website heartlandfire.org/el-nino.

—J.S. Anderson is a freelance writer, a former Marine and a retired college administrator who worked at SDSU, UCSD and the Preuss school. Write to him at o6rider@gmail.com. ■



Roy Zimmerman brings his politically-charged folk music to the La Mesa Foothills Democratic Club's holiday gala on Dec. 2. (Courtesy LMFDC)

► **Dems**, from page 4

the Western Service Workers Association. The WSWA is an all-volunteer organization that has supported low-income service workers in San Diego County for the last 36 years. They are a special resource for health, housing, and legal matters that affect these thousands of workers and their families in primarily the hotel, restaurant, maintenance and hospitality industries. It is requested that each attendee bring an unwrapped new toy for a school-aged child, so that they may be distributed this holiday season to families of the WSWA. A monetary donation is also especially welcomed at this time of year.

Remember, the doors open early for this special meeting

and party. We request that each member and guest donate \$15 or whatever you can afford at the door to help offset the cost of our noted musical guest. Memberships for 2016 will also be for sale, at \$30, \$50, and \$60 levels. Check out our website, lamesafoothillsdemocraticclub.com, or visit and like us on Facebook. See you on Dec. 2! And you won't want to miss our Jan. 6 meeting and debate, where sparks are sure to fly. Club endorsements will also occur in the first few meetings of 2016.

—Linda Armacost is president and Jeff Benesch is vice president of programming for the La Mesa Foothills Democratic Club. Write to them at jeffbenesch@gmail.com. ■

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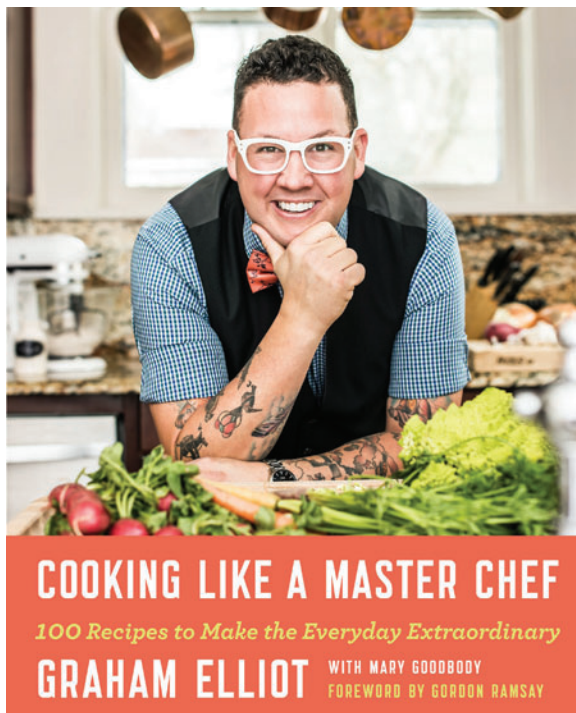
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La Mesa Reads: Cookbooks to heat up your holiday

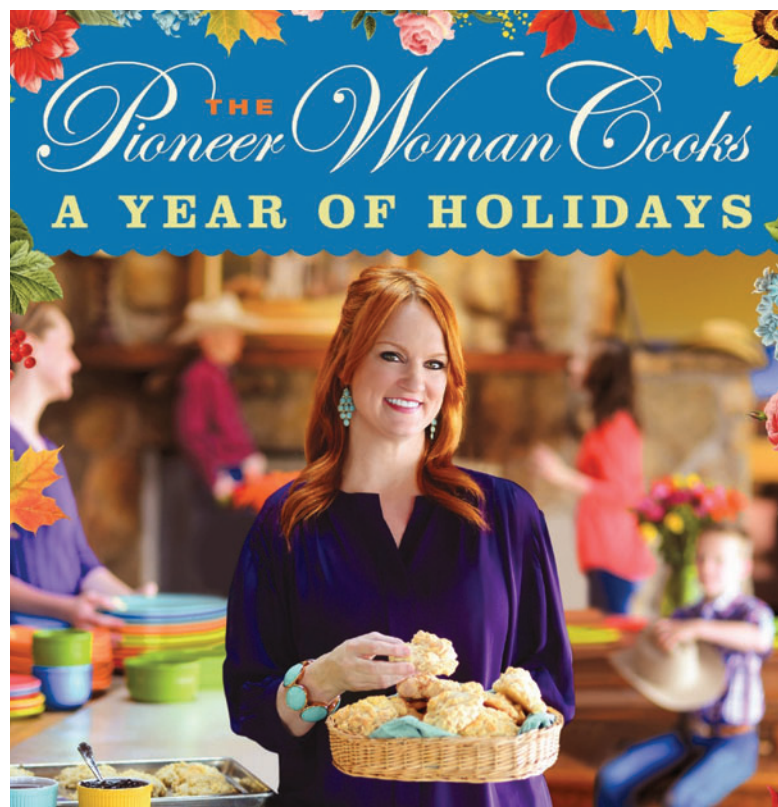


Jake
Sexton

We are headlong into the holiday season, with all the good and bad that entails. In concrete terms, "holidays" in America loosely translates into "food." Year's end is filled with all sorts of parties, potlucks, specialty drinks and desserts, food as gifts, and more. There are all manner of books out there that will help you with creative ways to prepare food, and an increasing number of those books pair with another American obsession — celebrities. So let's look at some recent and popular celebrity cookbooks.

First, you've got your actual celebrities who feel that they've got food knowledge to share with the world. Country singer Trisha Yearwood recently published her third cookbook, "Trisha's Table," focusing on healthy versions of Southern comfort foods. Actress Gwyneth Paltrow embarked on a secondary career as a health and lifestyle guru, recently publishing her latest "It's All Good," recipes that are free of dairy, eggs, sugar, gluten, and fish (try at your own risk). Even the late, lauded poet Maya Angelou wrote a few cookbooks, combining autobiographical anecdotes with recipes and health tips: "Hallelujah! The Welcome Table" and "Good Food, All Day Long."

Then, you've got books by the new field of celebrity chefs, who either became famous for their popular restaurants, or by starring on food-related TV reality shows. TV show "MasterChef" has put out a handful of cookbooks, including "Cooking Like a Master Chef" by avant-garde chef-turned-TV host Graham Elliot. Heavy on photos, this book focuses on recipes that mix common meals and comfort foods with unusual partners like truffled popcorn or cheddar cheese risotto. Elliot's rage-prone co-star Gordon Ramsay has also penned a number of cookbooks, such as "Gordon Ramsay's Home Cooking," which is noticeably more exotic in its dishes and



ingredients. (I presume Ramsay also writes with heavy use of caps lock). We can also expect a cookbook next year from our La Mesa culinary celebrity, Claudia Sandoval, who won the aforementioned "MasterChef" challenge for 2015. "Claudia's Cocina" is scheduled for release in May of next year.

Finally, we saw many, many cookbooks this year by people who became popular for their cooking-related blogs and YouTube videos. "Thug Kitchen" is a website by a couple of twenty-something vegans who spice up their prose with large doses of humor and profanity. This year they released two cookbooks of hipster-themed vegan dishes. Another blogger, Ree Drummond, started writing about her new life living in a rural town under the title "Pioneer Woman." The blog included some recipes and cooking tips, grew in popularity, until she got her own TV cooking show and has published almost half a dozen "Pioneer Woman Cooks" books. One last chef, Laura Vitale, was looking for a way to return to cooking after her family restaurant closed. She began a filming

a series of YouTube videos called "Laura in the Kitchen," focusing on traditional Italian dishes, which eventually led to Internet fame and a cookbook of the same name, published this fall. I guess the moral of the story is that if you like to cook, put yourself online so that maybe you too can become rich and famous.

For another holiday treat, you can try our latest library venture, Library to Go. These are library tote bags containing a hand-selected variety of books, CDs and DVDs on a popular theme or movie/TV series, and they can be checked out for a three week period. Themes will include "Star Wars," "I Lie for a Living, Crime and Punishment," and "Downton Abbey." If you're in a hurry, this is a great way to borrow a range of entertaining titles on a topic you enjoy (or to discover something new). Ask for Library to Go at the library's service desk.

—Jake Sexton is librarian at the La Mesa branch of the San Diego County Library. Call the library at 619-469-2151, visit in person at 8074 Allison Ave. or get information online at sdcl.org. ■



What's Cooking

with *Julie*

Pumpkin Coffee Cake

Julie **White**

This moist, delicious coffee cake will be a highlight at your holiday breakfasts and brunches. The spicy pumpkin filling is unusual. Best of everything to you this wonderful time of the year!

Streusel topping:

- 1 cup of brown sugar
- 1/4 cup of all-purpose flour
- 1/3 cup of cold butter
- 1 teaspoon of cinnamon
- 2 teaspoon of pumpkin pie spice
- 1 cup of chopped walnuts, or you can use pecans

Batter:

- 3/4 cup of sugar
- 3 large eggs beaten
- 1/2 cup (1 stick) softened butter
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 2 cups of all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 cup of plain Greek yogurt (you can substitute sour cream)

Filling:

- 1 can (15-ounce) solid-pack pumpkin
- 1/3 cup sugar
- 1 large egg, beaten
- 1 teaspoon pumpkin pie spice

Preheat oven to 325 degrees.

Combine streusel ingredients in a small bowl and mix until crumbly.

In a separate bowl, cream the butter and sugar until fluffy and then add your eggs. Combine the rest of the batter ingredients until well mixed.

In a third bowl, mix the filling ingredients.

In a greased 13-by-9-inch greased baking dish, spread half of the batter, sprinkle with half of the streusel and top with the filling mixture. Spread evenly. Top with the remaining batter and the last of the remaining streusel.

Bake for about 45-50 minutes or until a toothpick comes out clean. Enjoy! ■

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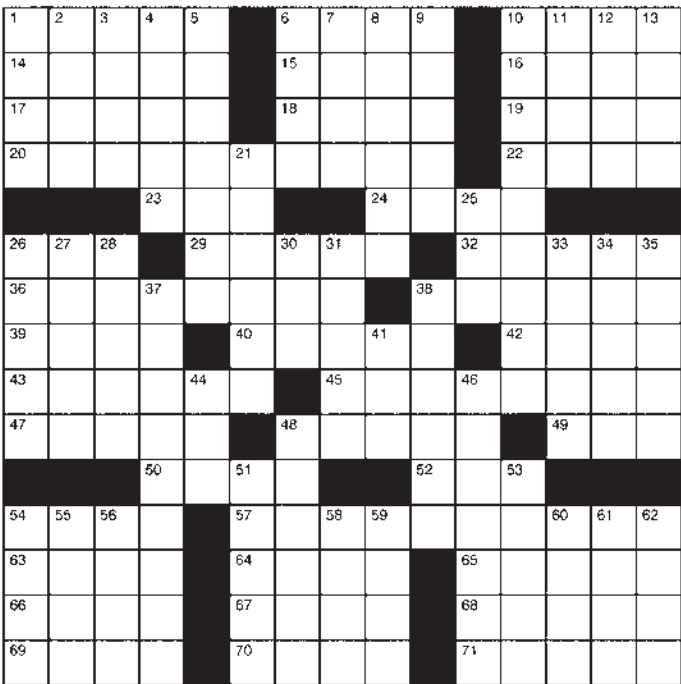
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PUZZLES | ANSWERS ON PAGE 5

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- 18 Soprano Te Kanawa
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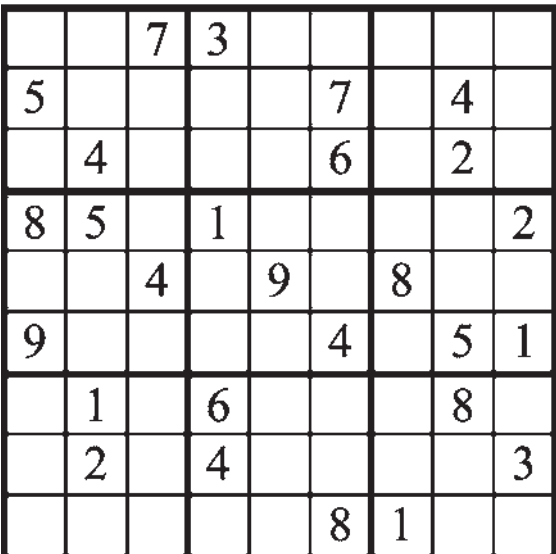
DOWN

- 1 Reading aid
- 2 Kazan, of Hollywood
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- 4 Wanted-poster word
- 5 Saddle part
- 6 Shark
- 7 Tennessee's state flower
- 8 Life's work
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- 10 "Steel" flowers
- 11 *Peter and the Wolf* duck
- 12 Adagio: mus.
- 13 Omar's output

- 21 Dwell
- 25 Belgian resort
- 26 Ascorbic and boric, e.g.
- 27 Dale Earnhardt's number
- 28 Texas school
- 30 Millet's *Man with the* ____
- 31 Computer command
- 33 *Tomorrow* musical
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- 37 "Man-in-the-Moon" flowers
- 38 Grimm heroine
- 41 Big bird
- 44 Actress Balin
- 46 Overhaul
- 48 Most azure
- 51 Edition
- 53 Promised
- 54 Miss D'Urberville
- 55 Pledge
- 56 Partner of tried
- 58 Houston agcy.
- 59 Roll up
- 60 Castrogiovanni, today
- 61 Tim, of WKRP in Cincinnati
- 62 Observes

SUDOKU

Fill in the blank cells using numbers 1 to 9. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and 3x3 block. Use logic and process elimination to solve the puzzle.



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- Billiards
- Breakfast
- Brunch
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- Burrito
- Business Lunch
- Casino
- Casino Buffet
- Casual Dining
- Chinese Cuisine
- Cocktail
- Coffee Shop
- Comfort Food
- Dance Club
- Deli
- Dessert
- Dinner
- Donut Shop
- Family Restaurant
- Farmers Market
- Fast Food
- Fine Dining
- French Cuisine
- Greek Cuisine

- Happy Hour
- Health Food Store
- Hot Wings
- Indian Cuisine
- Irish Pub
- Italian Cuisine
- Japanese Cuisine
- Jazz Bar
- Late Night Dining
- Live Music Venue
- Lunch
- Margarita
- Martini
- Mexican Cuisine
- Micro Brewery
- New Restaurant
- Nightclub
- Outdoor Dining
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- Pizza
- Romantic Dining
- Rooftop Lounge
- Salad
- Sandwich
- SD County Winery
- Seafood
- Sports Bar
- Steakhouse
- Sushi
- Thai Cuisine

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- Wine Bar

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- Acupuncture
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- Art Gallery
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- Auto Repair Shop
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- Barber
- Bicycle Shop
- Bookstore
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- Car Wash
- Chiropractor
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- Consignment/Resale
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- Credit Union
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- Dentist
- Discount Store
- Doctor
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- Financial Planner
- Florist

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- Gym/Health Club
- Hair Salon
- Home Improvement
- Hospital
- Hotel
- Insurance Broker
- Jeweler
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- Men's Apparel
- Museum
- New Business
- Optometrist
- Pawn Shop
- Personal Trainer
- Pet Boarding
- Pet Grooming
- Plumber
- Preschool
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- Real Estate Agent
- Real Estate Office
- Retirement Living
- Tanning Salon
- Tattoo/Piercing
- Tuxedo Shop
- Veterinarian
- Wedding Venue
- Women's Apparel
- Yoga Studio

Dianne's Corner: News from County Supervisor Dianne Jacob

Dianne Jacob



El Niño ready?

With forecasters expecting a wet winter, due to El Niño, county officials are asking residents to get ready. Make sure you have prepared for possible flooding and have a family disaster preparedness plan. For assistance, go to readysandiego.org.

The county is offering free sand and bags to residents and businesses in unincorporated communities. Bags are available at many locations, including the Alpine Fire Protection District station, 1364 Tavern Road, the Cal Fire station at 24462 San Vicente Road in Ramona and the Cal Fire station at 1587 Highway 78 in Julian.

Human trafficking

I recently joined Sheriff Bill Gore, District Attorney Bonnie Dumanis and others to release a troubling study that documents the prevalence of human trafficking in our region. It's hard to believe this form of modern-day slavery is going on.

Combating this horrible crime is a major public safety priority for the county – and will remain so on my watch. In recent years, I have helped lead efforts to address this issue. The county has established a 10 p.m. curfew in unincorporated communities, staged curfew sweeps and taken steps to safeguard victims, many of them high school-age girls. We have also created a human trafficking task force, made up of local, state and federal law enforcement officials.

Attacking Alzheimer's

I was honored to recently stand with San Diego Mayor Kevin Faulconer, philanthropist Darlene Shiley and the region's world-class researchers to announce our efforts to expand the search for a cure to Alzheimer's disease, through a research initiative called Collaboration4Cure. Those interested in donating to the initiative can go to alzsd.org. The local research fund is an outgrowth of the county-led Alzheimer's Project.

For more District 2 news, go to diannejacob.com or follow me on Facebook and Twitter. If I can assist with a county issue, please call my office at 619-531-5522 or email dianne.jacob@sdcounty.ca.gov. Have a great East County day!

—Dianne Jacob is County Supervisor for District 2. Write to her at Dianne.jacob@sdcounty.gov. ■

Massage therapists receive recognition

Claudia Ramirez Chavez

Rob and Clarissa Dickson are the owners of Integrated Therapeutix, a massage therapy business located in La Mesa. The Dicksons are licensed to practice physical therapy and have been certified by the National Certification Board for Therapeutic Massage and Bodywork. With determination and positive attitude, the couple has been serving La Mesans and visitors while raising a family in Santee since last year.

Integrated Therapeutix recently celebrated their one-year anniversary and California state Sen. Joel Anderson, who represents La Mesa, recently provided them a Senate Certificate of Recognition.

"It takes dedication and hard work to keep a small business going and I am always honored to celebrate our district's businesses' milestones with them," said Anderson. "I am glad they chose to open their business in La Mesa and thrilled to learn that



(l to r) Rob Dickson and Clarissa Dickson receive a Senate Certificate of Recognition from Claudia Ramirez Chavez, legislative intern for Sen. Joel Anderson. (Courtesy of Sen. Anderson's office)

they have had a successful year since opening their doors."

The Dicksons especially enjoy having their business in La Mesa because "La Mesa is often a center of events," said Clarissa. She also referred to La Mesa as having "a small town feel, [an] up-and-coming community." Their passion and devotion to giving back to the community is why they chose La Mesa to open their business. Integrated Therapeutix

gives discounts to military, law enforcement, fire department and anyone that works for, protects, or serves the county—all as a way of giving back. The Dicksons plan on continuing their business in La Mesa and working on renovation projects to make their place even more welcoming.

—Claudia Ramirez Chavez is a Legislative Intern for California state Sen. Joel Anderson. ■

Sycuan Vets honored



In honor of Veterans Day, Sycuan Casino commemorated all its team members who served time in the military at a special luncheon on Nov. 10. Attendees received a special one-of-a-kind military pin that can be worn on their uniforms to signify their time served. (Courtesy of Sycuan Casino)

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MUSIC NOTES

Jazz

Wednesdays: Boss Jazz with Jason Hanna and friends at Riviera Supper Club. Free. 8 p.m. 7777 University Ave., La Mesa. RivieraSupperClub.com.

Fridays: Charlie Arbelaez Trio at The Rook Bar. Free. 9 p.m. 7745 University Ave., La Mesa. TheRookBar.com.

Saturdays: Jazz with George and Alan at Bistro Sixty. Free. 6:30 – 9:30 p.m. 5987 El Cajon Blvd., College Area. BistroSixtySD.com.

Dec. 26: P4 Jazz Trio at San Pasqual Winery Tasting Room. Free. 7 – 10 p.m. 8364 La Mesa Blvd., La Mesa. SanPasqualWinery.com.

Pop

Dec. 5: Baja Bugs at Riviera Supper Club. Free. 9 p.m. 7777 University Ave., La Mesa. RivieraSupperClub.com.

Dec. 12: Sock Monkeys at San Pasqual Winery Tasting Room. Free. 7 – 10 p.m. 8364 La Mesa Blvd., La Mesa. SanPasqualWinery.com.

Classical

Dec. 6: Grossmont Gospel Choir at Trinity Baptist Church. Free will offering. 6 – 7 p.m. 1150 Merritt Drive, El Cajon. Grossmont.edu/music.

Dec. 13: Robert Wetzels at Cuyamaca College. \$10 general admission; \$8 for seniors and faculty; \$5 for students. 8 p.m. 900 Rancho San Diego Road, Rancho San Diego. Cuyamaca.edu/performingarts

Dec. 15: “An American Christmas” by San Diego Concert Band at Joan Kroc Theater. \$12 - \$15. 7 p.m. 6611 University Ave., Rolando. SanDiegoConcertBand.com.

Alternative / Rock

Nov. 28: Little Kings at Hooley's. Free. 9 p.m. 5500 Grossmont Center Drive, La Mesa. Hooleys.com.

Dec. 5: Bi-Polar Express at Chico Club. Free. 8:30 p.m. 7366 El Cajon Blvd., La Mesa. ChicoClub1940.com.

Dec. 19: Ruben Delgado (Spanish and classical guitar) at San Pasqual Winery Tasting Room. Free. 7 – 10 p.m. 8364 La Mesa Blvd., La Mesa. SanPasqualWinery.com.

Other

Nov. 28: Fred Benedetti (guitar) at Mission Trails Regional Park Visitor Center Auditorium. Free. 3 – 4 p.m. 1 Father Junipero Serra Trail, San Carlos. MTRP.org.

Dec. 4: Winter Wonder Jam at Cuyamaca College. \$8 general admission; \$5 for seniors and students. 7 pm. 900 Rancho San Diego Road, Rancho San Diego. Cuyamaca.edu/performingarts

Dec. 5: George Miladin performing solo “Advent Piano Concert” at New Life Presbyterian Church. Free. 2 p.m. 5333 Lake Murray Blvd, La Mesa. on.fb.me/1My4X97.

Dec. 19: Homesick Hitchers at Bolt Brewery. Free. 7 p.m. 8179 Center St., La Mesa. BoltBrewery.com.

Compiled by Jen Van Tieghem. Bands, venues and music lovers: please send music calendar listings to jen@sdcnn.com. ■

DEC 5 'Listen to Love' concert
Saturday, Dec. 5

This special concert features pianist, composer, teacher and retired Presbyterian pastor George Miladin performing at New Life Presbyterian Church (5333 Lake Murray Blvd., La Mesa). The solo piano concert begins at 2 p.m. and will feature classical tunes, ballads, sacred songs and Christmas favorites. Learn more about Miladin at pianotips4u.com. And visit newlifelamesa.org for more on the concert.

DEC 9 La Mesa Shimmer - Downtown Village Streetscape Opening
Wednesday, Dec. 9

On this day, the City of La Mesa will celebrate the \$5 million renovation of the streetscape along La Mesa Boulevard in the Downtown Village. The updated shopping district features new sidewalks, new street trees and street furniture, pedestrian friendly crosswalks, new lighting including decorative string lights at the gateways and major intersections. La Mesa Shimmer will feature a lighting ceremony at 4:30 p.m. at La Mesa Boulevard and Palm Avenue. The La Mesa City Council will “turn on the string lights” for the first time at this location. Live music and refreshments will be featured until 6 p.m. along the Boulevard to encourage visitors to shop, dine, and explore the new Downtown Village surroundings. Free tickets to holiday events will be given away during the event. For more information, call 619-667-1333.

DEC 10 'Holiday Legislative Open House'
Wednesday, Dec. 10

State Senator Joel Anderson invites families to attend a holiday open house. Individuals will have the chance to receive a 2015 legislative update and submit ideas for improving state government. The event runs from 6 – 8 p.m. at Toyota of El Cajon (965 Arnele Ave., El Cajon). It is free and open to the public. There will be food and refreshments.



Local Food and Toy Drives

Salvation Army Toy Drive

• Salvation Army centers throughout San Diego will be collecting toys via their Angel Giving Trees. These trees contain “angel” tags that correspond to a child in need. The paper “angel” will have the child's first name, age and sex. Shoppers can select an angel, buy gift(s) accordingly and return them to the angel tree. See locations at bit.ly/1PqOWaO.

• All 27 Massage Envy Spa locations throughout San Diego will be collecting toys for the Salvation Army through Dec. 16.

• Businesses, schools, churches, service groups, and others can sign up for an Angel Giving Tree at bit.ly/1ksxt5c.

The Giving Tree

From Nov. 27 – Dec. 18 The Headquarters at Seaport (849 West Harbor Drive, Downtown) will have its beautiful Giving Tree on display in the central courtyard. During that time community members are invited to drop off gifts, for children up to 18 years of age, and monetary donations for the USO San Diego at the Giving Tree or at Geppetto's Toys (located at The Headquarters). The Giving Tree season will kick off with a tree-lighting ceremony on Friday, Nov. 27 at 6:30 p.m. featuring performances by the All American Boys Chorus, complimentary hot chocolate and a chance to visit with Santa Claus.

Visit bit.ly/1MTjo6T for more information.

RSVP by calling Senator Anderson's office at 619-596-3136 or online at sen.ca.gov/anderson.

DEC 13 Holiday stories, singalong and music
Sunday, Dec. 13

Betty Grant and Mary Holma from Storytellers of San Diego will be telling classic holiday stories along with tales of peace and funny pieces as well, starting at 3 p.m. There will also be a singalong portion with “Jingle Bells” and other favorites. Musicians from The School of African Arts will be performing toe-tapping and clapping music from Zimbabwe. The festivities will be held in the indoor theater of the Visitor Center at Mission Trails Regional Park (1 Father Junipero Serra Trail). Donations appreciated. Visit mtrp.org for more information.

DEC 16 Seniors on the Go trip to Golden Acorn Casino
Wednesday, Dec. 16

A group trip to Golden Acorn Casino in Campo will depart from La Mesa Enrichment Center (8450 La Mesa Blvd., La Mesa) at 8:30 a.m. and return at 3:30 p.m. The bus ride will cost \$7 (\$5 for members) and includes a \$20 free credit at the casino. There will also be a prime rib meal available at the casino for \$7.77. For more information, call the Center at 619-667-1322.

DEC 19 Self-defense course, Pilates class and holiday gift fair
Saturday, Dec. 19

Today will be a busy day at the La Mesa Adult Enrichment Center (8450 La Mesa Blvd.) starting at 10 a.m. A free women's self-defense course will be followed by a free Pilates class by Kwai Sun Studio (reserve a spot by calling 619-713-5566). There will also be a holiday gift fair featuring products by Mary Kay, Doterra Essential Oils, Exquisite Cuisine by Casey and more. ■

La Mesa Chamber senior project

The La Mesa Chamber adopts 22 seniors each year during the holiday season and creates large gift baskets for them. The baskets are delivered with a hot turkey dinner, complete with trimmings, by La Mesa RSVP members. This year's delivery date is Friday, Dec. 18. The Chamber will be collecting items for the basket through Friday, Dec. 11. Some items that are suggested to be purchased for donation:

- 22 canned soups
- 22 canned vegetables
- 22 canned fruits
- 22 packets of crackers
- 22 packets of pasta or macaroni and cheese
- 22 pens and pads of paper
- 18 slipper socks for women, 4 pairs of men's socks
- Gift cards in any denomination to: Target, Walmart or any grocery store

• Other items you think would make these seniors smile are welcome.

Please deliver donations to the La Mesa Chamber office: 8080 La Mesa Blvd., Suite 202.

Contact Mary England with questions at 619-251-7730 or maryengland@lamesachamber.com. ■



BUSINESS SPOTLIGHT

SDSU School of Theater

The SDSU School of Theater, Television, and Film combines the arts with the traditional roles of the university by teaching the theory, history, literature, and crafts of theater and film.

The school works to benefit the community by providing educational and entertaining arts performances, particularly to San Diego youth.

Utilizing innovative curriculum, interdisciplinary initiatives, and research into evolving technologies, the school is committed to preparing the next gen-

eration of entertainment arts professionals.

Don't miss Gertrude Stein's “Doctor Faustus Lights the Lights” on the Don Powell Stage, Dec. 2 – 6. In Stein's poetic retelling of the classic Faust myth, an Edison-like Dr. Faustus has made a deal with the devil: He's sold his soul for electric light.

A collaboration with the schools of Music and Dance and Art and Design, this production brings together elements of dance, music, film, art, and theater to create the multi-layered universe. For more info, visit ttf.sdsu.edu.

► **Martians**, from page 9

accompanied with a book, Hager searched until he found "Aliens Are Coming!" and knew he had the right material for a fun and educational performance.

"We use threads of the book in our plays so when children read the book they say, 'oh yeah, I remember that from the show.'"

The educational experience isn't just for the elementary students, the student performers from Grossmont College get a lot out of the program as well. "Young actors need to be taught the uniqueness of a touring show," said Hager, explaining most high school or college theater productions are around eight performances over a couple of weeks, but the Traveling Troupe shows are around 30 performances over several weeks.

"It looks good on a resume and it's a fantastic experience," he said.

"Martians" is Jillian Jones' second trip with Grossmont College's Traveling Troupe. Last year she said she toured with the group's high school tour called "Inside the Actor's Process."

Elementary school students and

high school students bring different challenges but it is experience that she hopes will make her a better performer. "The show teaches us to work in any circumstance," she said, adding that even the stages are sometimes a challenge because they are rarely the same shape or size. "We have a 'yes we can' attitude and we make the best of what we have to work with," she said.

The Traveling Troupe has been to Vista La Mesa Academy for the last five years, said Assistant Principal Laurel Dehnel. "Martians" was performed at Vista on Nov. 10.

"These performances are prioritized to bring to the school, given our experience with them," she said. Prior performances at Vista included a mime show and historical plays.

The elementary school tour is sponsored by the Rice Family Foundation and the performances cost the school \$200 for two assemblies and, according to Dehnel, are well worth it. "This is an incredible outreach program and it costs money," she said, adding that she likes to encourage people to donate to the arts programs at Grossmont College so that these types of performances will continue. Dehnel said that her students get a lot from the performances because they get to be inspired by college students and, because Vista is a STEM school, exposure to theater is especially rewarding.

The feeling is mutual for the performers.

"The kids are amazing," said Jones. "Seeing them smile and laugh is just so rewarding to me."

If your child's school wasn't visited by "Martians" this fall, or if it was and you want to experience the show with them yourself, the Grossmont College Stagehouse Theatre will be presenting performances on Dec. 4 and 5 at 7:30 p.m. and a matinee on Dec. 5 at 2 p.m. Tickets are \$10 and can be purchased at the Stagehouse box office, online at bit.ly/1RM7sYK or by calling 619-644-7234.

—Write to Jeff Clemetson at jeff@sdcnn.com ■

Gen-X in a Millennial World A baby's first Christmas

Genevieve Suzuki



When my husband, Derek, and I had our daughter more than six years ago, we knew our holidays were going to be that much more special. Our first child was going to re-infuse magic into our Easers, Halloweens and Christmases—we would have adorable photos of her in bunny ears, a mini-me in a witch costume and a reason to hang and fill stockings.

And when it comes to the biggest holiday of the year, nothing says "newbie parents" like the delusional beliefs and efforts of two people striving to give an infant the perfect Christmas.

Because Quinn was born in February, she was around 10 months on her first Christmas. As any experienced parent will tell you, at that age, she was most excited about mashed bananas, bright lights and Daddy saying, "Wee-dee-wee-dee-wooh!" while tickling her tummy.

But I just knew her first Christmas was going to be special. I bought the cheeriest primary-colored toys, decorated them with the prettiest wrap and ribbons, and stuffed her stocking with a handful of genius baby gadgets.

On Christmas morning, we woke Quinn up with a "Merry Christmas!" deciding her everyday smile was extra special that day. When we walked downstairs, we enthused, "Wow! Look who came for you last night! Santa came last night! And check out your stocking! It's full of gifts from Santa!"

We may as well have dressed a cat up like an elf and paraded it around our homey winter wonderland, asking it how it liked its gifts from Santa. Quinn looked around the room, searching for her mashed-banana breakfast.

Unwrapping her presents was an even bigger dose of reality. As we ripped open each gift and talked up each toy, she gleefully reached for the cardboard boxes, discarded paper and ribbons on the floor.

"No, Quinn, look at this bright choo-choo train that recites the alphabet in 10 languages! Watch Elmo freak out and dance like crazy! Look at this baby genius rubber ball!"

She'd look up for a few seconds before judging us insane and returning to the awesome cardboard boxes, discarded paper and ribbons on the floor.

"Too soon, Gen, too soon," said Derek, sympathetically patting me on the back before turning to Quinn and saying, "Wee-dee-wee-dee-wooh!"

I realized then that Quinn's first Christmas wasn't special because it was her first Christmas. Rather, it was extraordinary because it was our first Christmas with her.

Six years later, our Quinn appreciates the glory of Christmas morning. She looks forward to the special mass at St. Martin of Tours with Father Jim and understands that good behavior during the year translates into a full stocking and gifts under the tree from Santa Claus.

"Mommy, I can't wait to see what Santa brings Deacon," she said, confident jolly old Saint Nick wouldn't let her new baby brother down.

Alas, Santa learned a hard lesson with baby Quinn that likely won't be repeated with poor Deacon. Other than a couple of toys wrapped for him under the tree and a few odds and ends in his stocking, Deacon may just find a few empty boxes with his name on it under the tree. After all, nothing makes a baby's first Christmas like cardboard boxes, discarded paper and ribbons.

—Genevieve A. Suzuki is a La Mesa resident who practices family law. Find out more on her website, sdlawyersuzuki.com. ■

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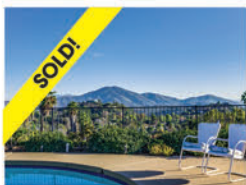
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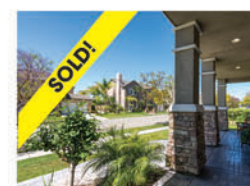
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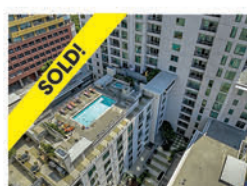
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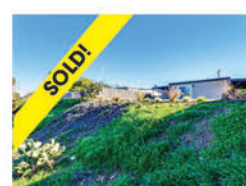
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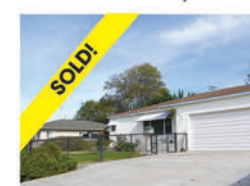
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Spring Valley



College



Lemon Grove



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