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### CONTACT US

Editorial / Letters  
(619) 961-1969  
jeff@sdccnn.com

Advertising  
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## A whale of a field trip

### H&M Landing adds whale watching to school program

(above) Tourists sighting a grey whale from an H & M Landing boat (Courtesy of H&M Landing); (inset) Frank Ursitti, managing partner of H&M Landing (Photo by Jeff Clemetson)

Jeff Clemetson  
Editor

When La Mesa resident Frank Ursitti became the managing partner of Point Loma-based H&M Landing in April, he had already been in the sportfishing and ecotourism business for 39 years.

"I've been a career Southern California sportfishing guy," he said. "It's been an incredible ride, that's for sure."

As the man who is now in charge of the day-to-day operations of the West Coast's largest and most diversified fleet of sportfishing boats, Ursitti is

already making changes to grow H&M by expanding its school whale-watching program to San Diego.

Ursitti founded Channel Islands Whale Watching in 2000 which offered whale watching and natural tours around Channel Islands National Park.

"Our business is hugely successful up north and now given the opportunity here as managing partner of H&M, we're going to put some of those programs in place — i.e. our school program for whale watching."

The whale-watching school program will offer teachers both pre- and post-trip curriculum that meets state standards so their students will be well-

See **WHALE** page 14

## La Mesa reaffirms medical marijuana ban

### Activist calls new ordinances ineffective

Jeff Clemetson  
Editor

On Dec. 8, the La Mesa City Council unanimously voted to adopt two ordinances that maintain a ban on medical marijuana in the city. The first ordinance confirmed the prohibition of cultivating marijuana in the city and the second prohibits mobile dispensing and delivery of marijuana in the city.

City Attorney Glenn Sabine told the council that new ordinances were necessary because the recently-passed state laws known as the Medical Marijuana Regulation and Safety Act created new guidelines for cities to follow if they wish to maintain bans on dispensaries.



Vey Linville of Americans for Safe Access addresses the La Mesa City Council. (Photo by Jeff Clemetson)

"In summary, the act governs the licensing and controls all medical marijuana businesses in the state and provides criminal immunity for all licensees," he said. "However, cities under the law may retain regulatory control, including complete bans of medical marijuana dispensaries and related uses if certain actions

are taken."

La Mesa's permissive building code, coupled with the state law that says dispensaries must obtain both state and city licenses to operate legal dispensaries, has maintained a legal basis for La Mesa's ban on dispensaries. The

See **MARIJUANA** page 14

## Small cities struggle with big climate choices

Maya Srikrishnan  
Voice of San Diego

The city of San Diego received a lot of attention for its climate action plan, a bundle of policies to lower the city's carbon footprint. The county of San Diego lost a lawsuit over its plan and needs to redo it. But smaller cities across the county are slowly pulling together their own versions, too.

The county and 18 cities either already have a plan or are working to pass one. For small cities like La Mesa and Santee, the process is forcing tough choices. Fundamentally, they're choosing between two paths: one from the city of San Diego, which is pursuing a policy that would open it to lawsuits if greenhouse gas reduction targets aren't met; or one from the county of San Diego, which lost in court after adopting a plan that set targets with no commitment to meet them.

La Mesa has drafted a plan and is reaching out to the community for feedback, but so far it follows the county's lead by setting targets that aren't legally enforceable. Santee is still in the early stages of drafting a plan.

"I think this [climate action plan] is catered to La Mesa," said the city's planning director, Chris Jacobs. "So far we haven't had anyone express concerns about a specific measure." La Mesa's current sketch calls for a 15 percent cut in greenhouse gas emissions by 2020, from where they were in 2010.

Without implementing the plan, the city's emissions are expected to increase 8 percent per year from the 2010 level.

It gets its cuts from stuff like planting trees around buildings to increase shade and reduce the need for air conditioning, urging citizens to install rooftop solar panels and encouraging building repairs to make them more energy-efficient.

But environmental advocates say the plan itself is vulnerable to a lawsuit, since it doesn't commit the city to reducing its emissions levels.

See **CLIMATE** page 12

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# Best-dressed tresses at new, unusual La Mesa salon

Cynthia Robertson

It has a funny name, this brand-new business located at 8806 Grossmont Boulevard. Blo La Mesa is a franchise salon featuring on-the-go beauty for women's hair, nails and face.

The grand opening for the blow dry bar took place the weekend of Dec. 11 through Dec. 13. Women were lining up to get the best-dressed tresses they always dreamed of.

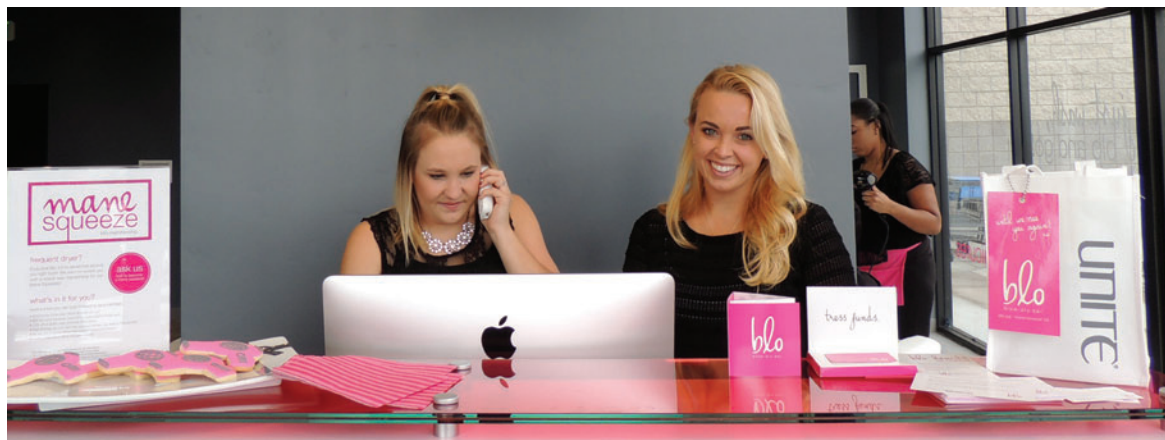
Along with "Blo Boss" Jenna Madsen, owners Marina and Shelby Wilson, a mother-daughter team, greeted their new customers at the blow dry bar.

Most of the women had made appointments for what is called a blow-out, a method of blow-drying and taming the hair into waves, curls or sleek, shiny locks. The salon offers hair styling, manicures and makeup, but no hair color or cuts.

"It's a fabulous concept, with a 'you're not cheating on your hairdresser' philosophy," said Wilson.

Wilson explained that as a woman with naturally curly hair, she had always craved an hour to have someone blow-dry her hair because she could never achieve on her own that sleek look with a bit of curl on the end. Nor did she want to spend the time doing so.

The only blow-dry bar locations in San Diego were in downtown's Gaslamp District and Carlsbad.



(above) Co-owner Shelby Wilson (left) with "Blo Boss" Jenna Madsen; (right) stylist Kylee Colclasure puts curls in Kendal Tapio's normally straight hair (Photos by Cynthia Robertson)

"East County San Diego had nothing like this and I hated having to drive 30 minutes to another location," Wilson said.

So with her daughter, she opened her own salon.

"We decided why not? Let's do this," Wilson said.

A certified makeup artist, Shelby Wilson had attended Make-Up Designory (MUD) in Los Angeles. She would always practice styling her mother's hair, giving her the sleek look she had always wanted. It was the perfect opportunity for Wilson to hone her skills.

When she did decide with her mother to look for a location for East County's first Blo Blow Dry salon, Wilson was ecstatic with the site between Ross and Hobby Lobby.

"My mom and I wanted to have a location in La Mesa because it's



our hometown and it's sort of in the middle of East County. And we love this spot because the foot traffic is very good around all these stores," Wilson said.

On Dec. 11, Jamul resident Kendall Tapio had made an appointment for a blow-out and styling by Kylee Colclasure, a

stylist with a certification from the Bellus Academy.

Her hair normally straight, Tapio said she was excited about getting long, luscious curls in her hair.

"I'll be using this salon as much as I can afford to," she said. "Kylee is doing a good job. I can't wait for my boyfriend to see this."

Colclasure smiled at Tapio.

"I'm having a lot of fun, too. It's the perfect job for me. I don't like to color or cut hair, but I've always loved blow-drying and styling hair. I used to do it for my mom in her wedding planning business," said Colclasure.

All the stylists at Blo La Mesa must be licensed cosmetologists. In addition, Blo Blow Dry has its own training program that all of the stylists must complete. During the program, they learn and master the seven signature styles before they take clients. Some of those styles include: "Pillow Talk," which is the salon's concept of a beach waves look; "Holly Would" for big, bouncy curls; and "Executive Sweet" for sleek and straight looks.

"At this time we are definitely seeing our clients most attracted to a bit of a 'Pillow Talk' or 'Holly Would' with a braid added in. And if you are looking for a braided style, we are definitely the bar to come visit. We also offer updos for any event," Wilson said.

The youngest client at Blo La Mesa that day was a 4-year-old girl named Finley.

"She absolutely loved her Blo Girl Braid and twirled all around for everyone in the bar to see," Wilson said.

For more information, visit [blomedry.com/locations/blo-la-mesa](http://blomedry.com/locations/blo-la-mesa) or call 619-825-7980.

—Write to Cynthia Robertson at [clg2robertson@gmail.com](mailto:clg2robertson@gmail.com). ■

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# La Mesa celebrates streetscape’s ‘Shimmer’

The city of La Mesa celebrated the completion of a streetscape project along La Mesa Boulevard on Dec. 9 with a street-lighting ceremony.

Nearly 100 people were on hand to witness Mayor Mark Arapostathis and the City Council

flip the switch on the holiday lights strung around the Village for the event billed as “La Mesa Shimmer.”

In addition to the lighting ceremony, music and entertainment were performed by the Peter Pan Junior Theater, Sam Johnson Trio, and Fanny and the Atta Boys.

The La Mesa Shimmer event marked the end of construction for the streetscape project that began in July 2014. The \$5 million project updated the city’s downtown dining and shopping district with updated sidewalks, crosswalks, trees, street furniture and lighting. ■



(above) La Mesa Mayor Mark Arapostathis flips the switch to light up La Mesa Boulevard. (right) La Mesa Village decked-out for the holidays; (below) Carolers from the Peter Pan Junior Theater join the Sam Johnson Trio for a holiday song. (Photos by Jeff Clemetson)



## NEWS BRIEFS

### Ribbon-cutting event for reopening of art supply store

On Sunday, Jan. 17, 2016 the La Mesa Chamber of Commerce will host a ribbon cutting and open house to welcome its newest member, The Art Stash, to the La Mesa business community. The Art Stash is located at 7859 El Cajon Blvd. in La Mesa. The hours of operation are: Monday through Friday 10 a.m. to 7 p.m., Saturday and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. This shop offers supplies and a local art gallery for artists to hang their artwork. Owner Chelsea Merigan has a passion for creating this community-based art store and offers her loyal art patrons commission-free art sales. Merigan believes that offering the lowest prices possible, while striving to be a

part of the local community is extremely important. Guests at the ribbon cutting will enjoy light refreshments and a raffle for art supplies. With each purchase, customers will receive a goodie bag with free gifts, as well as a raffle ticket. During the open house, guests will be able to view firsthand the use of various products by observing product demonstrations in the classrooms, as well as the parking lot. This ribbon-cutting event begins at 11 a.m. with the official ribbon cutting held at noon on Jan. 17. The event runs until 4 p.m. and is free to the public. The Chamber encourages guests to RSVP to: [rsvp@lamesachamber.com](mailto:rsvp@lamesachamber.com) or call 619-465-7700.

### La Mesa educator receives grant

Ann Asaro, a Common Core

resource educator at La Mesa/Spring Valley School District in La Mesa, has received a \$2,000 Learning & Leadership Grant from the NEA Foundation to attend the Coaching Institute on Literacy Coaching and Whole School Reform through the Teachers College Reading and Writing Project. At the Institute, she will learn how to implement an effective writing program, and she will bring that knowledge back to her district to share with local educators.

Nationwide, the NEA Foundation announced that it is awarding grants to 39 educators across 22 states for a total of \$144,000. “With these grants, we are supporting educator-driven solutions that contribute to

See **BRIEFS** page 5 —————>

## 27 Quick and Easy Fix Ups to Sell Your Home Fast and for Top Dollar

La Mesa - Because your home may well be your largest asset, selling it is probably one of the most important decisions you will make in your life, and once you have made the decision, you’ll want to sell your home for the highest price in the shortest time possible without compromising your sanity. Before you place your home on the market, here’s a way to help you to be as prepared as possible. To assist homesellers, a new industry report has just been released called “27 Valuable Tips That You Should Know to Get Your Home Sold Fast and for Top Dollar.” It tackles the important issues you need to know to make your home competitive in today’s tough, aggressive marketplace. Through these 27 tips you will discover how to protect and capitalize on your most important investment, reduce stress, be in control of your situation, and make the best profit possible. In this report you’ll discover how to avoid financial disappointment or worse, a financial disaster when selling your home. Using a common-sense approach, you will get straight facts about what can make or break the sale of your home. You owe it to yourself to learn how these important tips will give you the competitive edge to get your home sold fast and for the most amount of money.

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► **Briefs**, from page 3

improved student performance in public schools,” Harriet Sanford, president and CEO of the NEA Foundation, said in a press release. “Our support enables educators to engage in a wide variety of innovative approaches to the benefit of students across the country.”

The NEA Foundation awards two levels of grant funding, \$2,000 or \$5,000, for two categories of grants to public education professionals: Student Achievement Grants for initiatives to improve academic achievement, and Learning and Leadership Grants for high-quality educational professional development activities.

A team of 20 educators, many former grantees, carefully reviewed all applications and evaluated each one against a set of criteria. Funded educator grants were selected for the quality of the grant proposal ideas and their potential for enhancing student achievement.

Over the past decade, the NEA Foundation has invested more than \$7.1 million in teaching grants to support the work of almost 4,500 educators from every state in the country to help students succeed. Each year, the Foundation awards approximately 150 Student Achievement and Learning and Leadership grants. To learn about these educators’ projects, visit the NEA Foundation’s Grantee Archive. Search for grantees and projects by most recent, grade level, subject, state, or keyword.

The NEA Foundation awards its grants to educators three times a year. The next education grant deadline is Feb. 1, 2016. Application forms and a video with step-by-step instructions on how to apply can be found in the Grants to Educators section of the NEA Foundation website.

**Helix Water recognized for transparency**

On Nov. 25, Helix Water District announced it had received the District Transparency Certificate of Excellence from the Special District Leadership Foundation (SDLF) in recognition of its outstanding efforts to promote transparency and good governance. “This award is a testament to Helix Water District’s commitment to open government,” Carlos Lugo, Helix Water general manager, said in a press statement issued by the district. “The entire district staff is to be commended for their contributions that empower the public with information and facilitate engagement and oversight.” In order to receive the award, a special district must demonstrate the completion of eight essential governance transpar-

ency requirements, including conducting ethics training for all board members, properly conducting open and public meetings, and filing financial transactions and compensation reports to the State Controller in a timely manner. Helix Water District also fulfilled 15 website requirements, including providing readily available information to the public, such as board agendas, past minutes, current district budget, and the most recent financial audit. Finally, the district must demonstrate outreach to its constituents that engages the public in its governance, through a regular district newsletter and completion of a salary comparison for district staff positions. Helix Water District is a special district, a not-for-profit, local government agency, formed to provide water for the cities of La Mesa, El Cajon and Lemon Grove, the community of Spring Valley and areas within the cities of Santee and Lakeside, and San Diego County. The district serves 270,375 people through over 56,000 metered accounts. Special districts are independent public agencies that deliver core local services to communities, such as water, fire protection, parks and recreation, health care, sanitation, mosquito abatement, ports, libraries, public cemeteries and more. Districts are established by voters and their funding is approved by voters in order to meet specific needs through focused service. They can be specially molded to serve large regions or small neighborhoods depending on the need.

SDLF is an independent, non-profit organization formed to promote good governance and best practices among California’s special districts through certification, accreditation and other recognition programs.

**Volunteer as an archeologist**

There’s no promise of an “Indiana Jones”-like adventure, but if you’ve ever wanted to experience what it is like to work on an archeological site, a new program offered by the Colorado Desert Archeology Society (CDAS) can give you just that. The CDAS needs volunteers to work in the Anza-Borrego Desert, Cuyamaca Rancho and Palomar Mountain state parks. Volunteers must take an introduction to archeology class, taught by Robin Conners, State Park Archeologist, in January and February in Borrego Springs. Upon completion, participants will be required to join CDAS and participate in archeological projects. There will be numerous opportunities to work in the field the Begole Archeological Research Center and the library. The courses are free, how-

ever, participants are asked to volunteer 40 hours a year in the Colorado Desert District Archeology Program to maintain active volunteer status. Classes will start Jan. 9 at 9 a.m. and will continue Friday evenings and all day Saturdays through Feb. 13. For more information, contact Susan Gilliland, SDAS Chair, at [shgilliland@mac.com](mailto:shgilliland@mac.com). To register, contact Conners at [robin.conners@parks.ca.gov](mailto:robin.conners@parks.ca.gov).

**Noah Homes receives generous donation**

San Diego philanthropist Colette Gerard is donating an estimated \$2.5 million to Noah Homes, a nonprofit in Spring Valley that provides care and advocacy for adults with developmental disabilities such as Down syndrome and autism.

The gift comes as Noah Homes is raising money towards staffing and construction of two of the first memory care homes in the nation specifically for people with developmental disabilities. The homes are currently under construction and scheduled to open in early 2017. Gerard’s son, Andre, has autism and is one of 70 residents that currently live in a home operated by Noah Homes.

I never thought I would be able to do something like this, but we have been working for so long and it’s so nice to be able to do this,” Gerard said in a press release. “Besides, I am getting older and Andre is in a very nice place, and I want him to be able to stay there.”

When Noah Homes opened Casa De Felicidad more than 30 years ago, the average age of a resident was 27. Today, the average age is 47 and climbing. As more people with developmental disabilities are living longer, there is an unprecedented need for memory care. Noah Homes is now working with national partners, including the National Task Group on Intellectual Disabilities and Dementia, UC San Diego Down Syndrome Center, Alzheimer’s San Diego, Brookfield Residential, HomeAid San Diego and others to create a best-practice model of care for people with developmental disabilities who show signs of Alzheimer’s and other forms of dementia.

“Colette has been a long-time member of the Noah Homes family and we are forever grateful for her support,” said Molly Nocon, CEO of Noah Homes. “Colette’s legacy makes a huge impact in our effort to ensure that no person with a developmental disability is left without a loving, lifelong home.”

For more information about Noah Homes, email Kaleigh Collins at [kcollins@noahhomes.org](mailto:kcollins@noahhomes.org), call 619-660-6200 or visit online at [noahhomes.org](http://noahhomes.org). ■

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**Sudoku & Crossword puzzle answers from page 15**

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E	N	I	A	O	L	V	E	N	O	E	E	N
N	I	K	H	S	N	O	C	B	E	S	I	I
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D	I	A	S	S	U				O	G	R	A
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D	O	I	R	E	A	T	I	O	N	O	T	S
S	M		H	O	N	I	C		S	M	A	V

5	9	1	8	2	7	3	6	4
3	7	6	1	5	4	8	2	9
4	8	2	6	3	9	5	1	7
1	5	7	4	9	8	2	3	6
9	3	8	2	6	5	4	7	1
2	6	4	3	7	1	9	5	8
7	2	5	9	8	6	1	4	3
8	4	3	7	1	2	6	9	5
6	1	9	5	4	3	7	8	2

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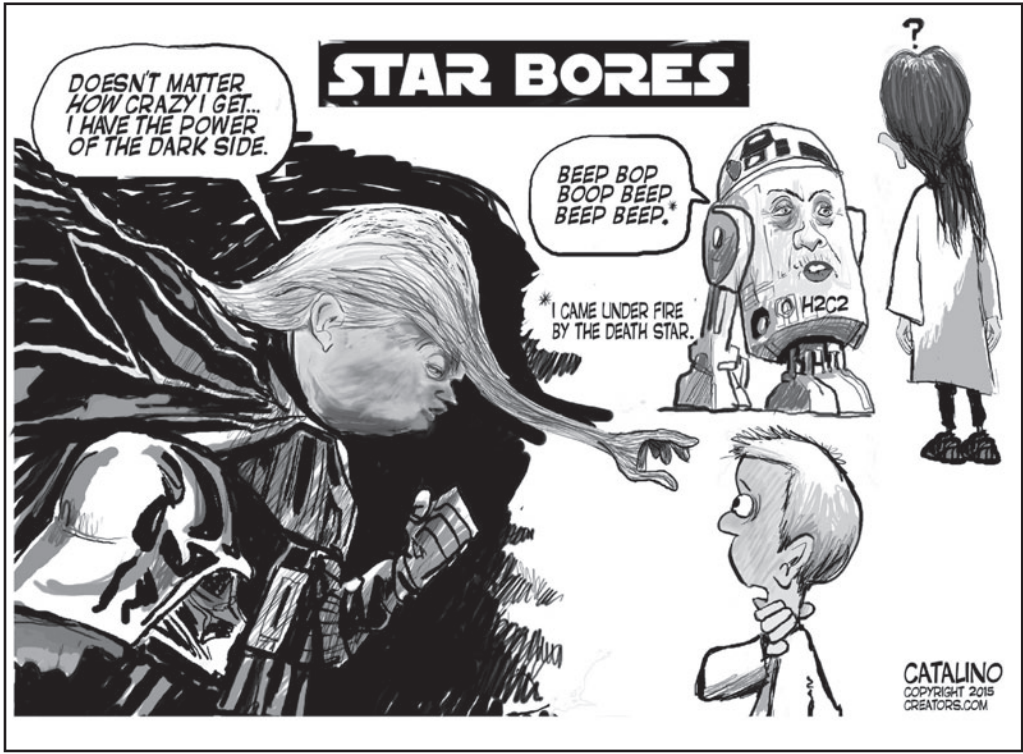


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GUEST EDITORIAL

La Mesa-Spring Valley students benefit from remake of public schools

Rick Winet

Ask anyone. The single greatest challenge in a child's development and education occurs during junior high school — grades 6 through 8. Quite simply, this is when you become who you are.

In the La Mesa-Spring Valley School District in San Diego County, we have embraced this challenge and are in process of remaking our school district. It started in the early 2000s when the La Mesa-Spring Valley School District board decided to dedicate additional funding and program support to La Presa Middle School in Spring Valley.

Under the leadership of Superintendent Brian Marshall and Principal Mike Allmann, La Presa Middle upgraded its curriculum and focus — and quickly advanced, becoming our top achieving middle school in math scores. In August of this year, La Presa Middle became the STEAM Academy @ La Presa, which focuses on science, technology, engineering, arts and math. This new academy, serving grades 4 through 8, is becoming a beacon of hope and achievement for the entire Spring Valley community.

The forerunner to the STEAM Academy @ La Presa is our own La Mesa Arts Academy, also serving grades 4 through 8, and now in its second year of operation and remarkable growth. Formerly La Mesa Middle School, the La Mesa Arts Academy was the brainchild of Dr. Mark Arapostathis (teacher and mayor of La

Mesa) and Jon Hayman (Dean of Students at LMAAC.) Along with the passionate support of Principal Beth Thomas, the La Mesa Arts Academy is now bursting with new enrollment from children who reside outside our district boundaries.

LMAAC offers opportunities in dance/choreography, theater arts, guitar, technology/media, orchestra, visual arts, band, vocal musical ensembles, keyboard, and more. And what is the most important result of all of these offerings? Our kids are fully engaged, energized, and they want to be there.

Coming next to the La Mesa-Spring Valley School District in August 2016 will be our International Baccalaureate Academy. Soon to be the former Spring Valley Middle School, this will be another program for grades 4 through 8. Once again, another remade middle school offering new learning opportunities for our children. Our International Baccalaureate Academy, championed by Principal Margaret Jacobsen, will be a program encouraging both personal and academic achievement, challenging students to excel in their studies and in their personal development.

Thanks in large part to the vision and leadership of Superintendent Brian Marshall, there is more to come. Look us up at the La Mesa-Spring Valley District, or just give Marshall a call. He will be happy to share with you how we are remaking K-8 public education.

—Rick Winet is President of the La Mesa-Spring Valley School District Governing Board. Write to him at Richard.winet@nbcuni.com. ■

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The library question

Muchisimas gracias for an excellent piece on the library question [Volume 5, Issue 11 or bit.ly/1Rhdt1]. Rigorously on point, but measured in tones and almost inarguable. A fine bit of work indeed. Bravo!

—Dr. Anthony McIvor, La Mesa

On behalf of the Friends of the La Mesa Library, I want to thank you for your editorial expressing support for a larger library here in La Mesa. It is a shame that a city of about 60,000 people has half the library space as some smaller communities in San Diego County.

It isn't as if we are asking for something that won't be used. The La Mesa Community Library is always busy with people looking for information and checking out materials. There is every reason to believe that with additional space our library would be utilized even more by La Mesa families.

For those readers of the Courier who agree with your editorial and would like to show their support for more space for the library, I have two suggestions. First, contact our City Council members and let them know your opinion. Second, consider becoming a member of the Friends.

The Friends of the La Mesa Library is a local non-profit organization whose goal is to promote the La Mesa Community Library and to raise money for extra materials and informational programming at our branch. We have been in existence since 1969. Membership annual dues are very reasonable, \$5 for individuals and \$10 for families. Membership forms are always available in the lobby of the library. Should anyone wish to contribute additional funds to future efforts to build and support a larger library, we have the means to earmark such funding for that cause.

—John Schmitz, Friends of the La Mesa Library President

I am very much in favor of a permanent library for La Mesa. I am against any money to go to build anything else until that is accomplished. I feel that the administration has handled this very poorly.

—Pat Keller, La Mesa

Response to Charger fan love

"My sweetheart has left me for another. Since the early '60s, she told me I was the only one. I can think of nothing else. Sigh. I have pampered her with all she has asked, even gone into asinine debt at her heartless demands. Alas, she will leave me if I don't buy her a new luxurious home, preferably with a waterfront view, totally at my expense without limitation.

My friends say I am a fool, but my heart tells me otherwise. My love knows no ends. Oh, what shall I do? Sigh."

Wake up you damn fool, she does not love you. Your dreams are not hers. Help her pack and get on (Charge-on) with your life.

—Carlos Miller, La Mesa ■

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123 Camino de la Reina, Suite 202 East  
San Diego, CA 92108  
(619) 519-7775  
lamesacourier.com  
Twitter: @LaMesaCourier

<b>EDITOR</b> Jeff Clemetson (619) 961-1969 Jeff@sd cnn.com	<b>SALES &amp; MARKETING DIRECTOR</b> Mike Rosensteel (619) 961-1958 mike@sd cnn.com
<b>CONTRIBUTING EDITORS</b> Morgan M. Hurley, x110 Ken Williams x102	<b>ADVERTISING CONSULTANTS</b> True Flores (619) 454-0115 true@sd cnn.com
<b>COPY EDITOR</b> Dustin Lothspeich	
<b>WEB &amp; SOCIAL MEDIA</b> Jen Van Tieghem, x118 jen@sd cnn.com	Lisa Hamel, x107 Andrew Bagley, x106 Sloan Gomez, x104
<b>CONTRIBUTORS</b> Linda Armacost Connie Baer Lynn Baer Jeff Benesch Dianne Jacob Judy McCarty Paloma Monesi Jennifer Osborn Heather Pisani-Kristl Cynthia Robertson Maya Srikrishnan Jim Stieringer Genevieve Suzuki Julie White Rick Winet	<b>CREATIVE DIRECTOR</b> Todd Kammer (619) 961-1965 graphics2@sd cnn.com
	<b>PRODUCTION ARTISTS</b> Suzanne Dzialo, x111 Vincent Meehan, x111
	<b>ACCOUNTING</b> Priscilla Umel-Martinez (619) 961-1962 accounting@sd cnn.com
	<b>WEB DESIGNER</b> Kim Espinoza kim@kespinoza.com
	<b>PUBLISHER EMERITUS</b> Jim Madaffer
	<b>PUBLISHER</b> David Mannis (619) 961-1951 david@sd cnn.com



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Poll of the Month

Last Month's Question:

Where do you do the bulk of your holiday shopping?

- 52% Local mom-and-pop shops
- 23% Box stores and shopping malls
- 25% Online retailers

This Month's Question:

How did you do with your 2015 new year resolutions?

- ☐ Never made one
- ☐ Still going strong
- ☐ It didn't go as planned

To cast your vote, visit lamesacourier.com.



GUEST EDITORIALS

Use bond money for Alpine school

Jim Stieringer

I'm pleased that the La Mesa Courier is covering the Alpine High School controversy [Volume 5, Issue 11 or lamesacourier.com/schoolyard-fight].

I was elected to the Grossmont Union High School District (GUHSD) Governing Board in 2012. I had earlier served 18 years as a member of the Grossmont Healthcare District Board from 1992 to 2010.

In 2008, prior to my election in 2012, the East County voters had passed, by the slimmest of margins, Proposition U, a \$417 general obligation bond issue that included many projects including the new high school in Alpine and Blossom Valley. Along with Trustee Priscilla Schreiber, I am part of a 3-to-2 minority that favors the immediate commencement of construction. The board majority (President Rob Shield, Jim Kelly and Gary Woods) argues that the current student population no longer supports the construction, although both Shield and Kelly are on record that they support the eventual construction of the school.

The proposition specified that the school could be built only after districtwide enrollment at the existing comprehensive high school sites "equals or exceeds 23,245 according to the California Basic Educational Data System (CBEDS) data."

In February 2011, the board directed that specific actions be taken for the construction of a 12th high school. Those actions included, but were not limited to:

- Continuing with property acquisition.
- Escrowing the necessary Prop U funds
- Authorizing the preparation of site and building packages for phase 1 building plans.

On July 14, 2011, the board adopted Resolution Number 2012-05 that specifically acknowledged that the enrollment threshold set forth in Prop U was met in 2010-11. The district's enrollment has since declined below that threshold.

A proposed building site at 3148 Alpine Boulevard was purchased at a cost of \$15,574,956, and has been subsequently approved and permitted by applicable local, state and federal regulatory bodies.

Sufficient Prop U funds remain available, thanks in part to a ruling by Superior Court Judge Joel Pressman that the district set aside an additional \$42 million for construction costs for the project in case the courts later rule that the school must be built.

A group called Alpine Union School District and Alpine Taxpayers for Bond Accountability is waging a two-pronged attack against the GUHSD. They have petitioned to declare the Alpine District a unified district that will include a high school. Their request has been approved by the San Diego County Board of Education and forwarded to the State Board of Education where it awaits a decision. Supervisor Dianne Jacob has enthusiastically supported Alpine's unification and spoke publicly at one of the three public hearings. And they have filed a lawsuit in Superior Court asking the court to forbid GUHSD from spending additional bond money until the high school is built.

Ironically, the board majority has criticized Schreiber and myself for wasting taxpayer money for supporting a "frivolous lawsuit." I would argue that the real waste is the expenditure of nearly \$2 million fighting a lawsuit to build a school that the board majority has indicated that it will eventually support. For the record, both Schreiber and I have voted against spending additional money on the lawsuit.

—Jim Stieringer is a member of the governing board of the Grossmont Union High School District. Write to him at stieringer@cox.net. ■

New events center planned for Grossmont is needed

Marta Jiacoletti

As one of the oldest high schools in San Diego County, founded 95 years ago, Grossmont High School has always offered San Diego's East County students the opportunity to experience the richness of the performing arts through music, drama and dance.

The performing arts program at Grossmont has had a significant impact on school culture and academic success. It also is recognized for its outstanding programs, so it's no surprise that it is very popular among students. More than 800 of our 2,254 students are enrolled in one of our performing arts classes.

The Jimmie Johnson Foundation in 2009 awarded a \$70,000 grant to purchase sound and lighting equipment to enhance student learning. In 2013, Grossmont received the award for Exemplary Arts Program in Visual and Performing Arts. This award recognizes schools that, in addition to high academic achievement indicated by their distinguished school qualifications, have committed time and resources to standards-based arts education programs that strengthen students' creativity and encourage their personal interests. This award is directly related to the California Department of Education's involvement in CREATE CA, a statewide coalition of organizations working to further arts education in California.

The Grossmont High School performing arts classes continue to attract intense student interest because the programs are meaningful and offer students great learning experiences.

Unfortunately, the quality of the learning is constrained by the current performing space, a 70-year-old building called the Old Gym, that does not support the needs of a contemporary performing arts program. The current performing space, the Old Gym, has an extremely old and outdated lighting system and very poor seating for audiences.

Further, the conditions of existing classrooms are deteriorating due to age and use. The dance room has no air conditioning, and the floor is cement, which is not an appropriate dancing surface. The drama room has poor ventilation and is too small for adequate seating during performances for a program of this size. The choir room does not have adequate electrical outlets to power musical instruments and not enough room to store risers and other equipment for performances.

Happily, there is a plan to construct a new Events Center on the Grossmont campus. Funded by the voter-approved Proposition U, the new complex will ensure our students learn in modernized classrooms that meet the standards for today's top-notch programs.

A lawsuit filed by a small group of residents in Alpine has blocked this project from breaking ground and many others throughout the district, so it is my hope that the school district prevails in its defense of our students and schools.

The planned Events Center at Grossmont is to include a 300-seat theater for all performing arts shows, a black box classroom for drama, an area to build sets and store equipment, new classrooms for dance, choir and piano, and dressing rooms.

Educators will tell you high school departments should be housed in the same buildings. It increases collaboration between teachers and student achievement. But the performing arts classrooms are spread out across the school, and our facilities will be the last to be upgraded.

Performing arts — theater, dance and music — provides extraordinary enrichment to the high school experience. But a proper education experience requires a setting that is appropriate, and suited to the robust curriculum that modern performing arts programs demand.

At Grossmont, our performing arts students deserve to be taught in modernized classrooms that offer state-of-the-art performance experiences to increase the level of academic engagement and achievement.

—Marta Jiacoletti has been a dance teacher for 16 years at Grossmont High School and was chair of the school's performing arts department for 12 years. ■



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## Helix Highlights

### Interested in attending Helix? Here's how to apply

Jennifer Osborn

As the new year approaches, families are considering the 2016-2017 school year and enrollment at Helix Charter High School. Helix enrollment is open to any student in grades nine through 12. The boundaries set by the Grossmont Union High School District do not apply to Helix, as we have our own attendance area, which may overlap some GUHSD schools' attendance areas. Regardless of what school is your "neighborhood school" as determined by the local school districts, families can choose to attend Helix. The following is a brief overview of the enrollment process. Please access the school website at [helixcharter.net](http://helixcharter.net) for important details.

Students living within Helix's traditional attendance area, or students with siblings currently attending Helix in ninth, 10th, or

11th grade, are eligible for priority enrollment.

The incoming ninth grade student and at least one parent/guardian must attend one Information Night Meeting at their current school. Students that live in the Helix attendance boundary, but do not attend one of the major feeder schools, must still attend an information night. Information meetings are currently scheduled for the following schools:

- Lemon Grove Academy-Thursday Jan. 14 at 5:30 p.m.
- La Mesa Arts Academy-Tuesday, Jan. 19 at 6:20 p.m.
- Mt. Vernon-Thursday, Jan. 21 at 6 p.m.
- Vista La Mesa Academy-Wednesday, Jan. 27 at 6 p.m.
- Parkway Middle School-Thursday, Feb. 4 at 6 p.m.

Next, the incoming ninth grade student and at least one parent/guardian must attend one of four Family Orientation Nights in April, for which an appointment is required. Dates and times, and information regarding appointments can be found on the school website.

At the orientation meeting, if you decide Helix is the school for your student(s), then you will fill out an Intent to Enroll Form and you will be allowed to make a summer registration appointment.

For students who do not legally live within Helix's boundaries, Helix's lottery system is the only method for entrance to Helix.

Students interested in entering Helix through the lottery

must attend one of the Lottery Information Nights. Lottery Information Night meetings will all be held in the Helix Performing Arts on Tuesday, March 8 at 6:20 p.m. and Wednesday, March 9 at 6:20 p.m.

At the meeting, interested families will submit a Lottery Card. After both lottery meetings, the lottery cards from all of the meetings will be separated by grade level. If there are enough open seats for prospective students at a given grade level, all students at that grade level will be granted enrollment. If there are more prospective students than openings at a given grade level, the cards will be entered in to a random lottery drawing. We will randomly select cards and assign them a number of one through however many cards we have at each grade level. Lottery wait lists will be created for each grade level that has more prospective students requesting enrollment than we have openings. Lottery wait lists for each grade level will be posted on our website on March 11.

Excellence in Education Tours are one-hour programs and tours designed for anyone interested in finding out more about Helix. Tours in January will be held on Friday, Jan. 8, from 9:30 – 10:30 a.m., and on Thursday, Jan. 21, from 5:30 – 6:30 p.m. Reservations for each tour can be made via [helixcharter.net](http://helixcharter.net).

—Jennifer Osborn writes on behalf of Helix Charter High School. Reach her at [josborn@helixcharter.net](mailto:josborn@helixcharter.net).



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# Foothiller Footsteps

## Tradition of excellence of Grossmont HS band

Connie and Lynn Baer

**G**rossmont High School (GHS) band students have a history of accomplishments, both past and present.

The school band has appeared three times in the Tournament of Roses Parade as representatives of San Diego County: in 1953 and 1954 under the direction of Harold Lutz, and in 1961 under the direction of Jim Nichols. Both of these legendary band directors challenged their students to achieve perfection in their performances.

Grossmont's first Rose Parade appearance in 1953 is documented in the school newspaper, The Foothill Echoes, in an article which reveals that "they have been invited several times before, but this is the first time they've accepted."

The band played, "The Thunder," "V Is for Victory," and "King Cotton," during the five and half mile parade. The band departed Grossmont at 1 a.m. to be ready to march in Pasadena at 8 a.m.

Former band member Joe Framme recalls that he was left guide, front row, and said he believes that director Harold Lutz "defined the standards for high school marching bands for all time. ... It was a life defining experience."

In 1961, according to a local newspaper article, there were "84 GHS band members and drum major Joe Fannin, who were preceded by 9 girls carrying banners which spelled out 'Grossmont,' marching to 'Men of

Music' by Karl King. During the pre-parade judging, three GHS band members fainted and were replaced from the pool of 19 alternates. The GHS Blue and Gold Specialty Corps, directed by Miss Rosemary Redditt, followed the band" and had 53 members of the Pom Pom Corps and 22 members of the Flag Corps.

In the Museum collection, thanks to Class of 1964 alumnus Bill Hoffman, we have one of the medals given to each 1961 Rose Parade participant that year as well as the 72nd Annual Tournament of Roses Parade complimentary program; a third of the way through the program is listed "Grossmont High School Band (San Diego)."

"It was a honor to represent our school and the city in 1961," recalls Ken Carson, Class of 1963. "We each received a commemorative medal for marching in the parade, and it's a memory I talk about periodically, especially on New Year's Day."

This year, Grossmont's Royal Blue Regiment Band has completed a successful fall competition season. Crowning their season was a first-place win at the Chula Vista Field Tournament with the Color Guard winning second place.

"The future is bright for the Royal Blue Regiment and we can't wait to see how the band does in the future," said James Llamas, who is now in his fourth



The 2015-2016 Grossmont High School band (Courtesy of the GHS Museum)

year as GHS band director.

The band welcomes your financial support as they fundraise for the band and color guard to perform in the spring at Disneyland.

"The band has made huge strides in the last four years, and these kids have not had a trip to Disneyland yet," Llamas said. "We have arranged a trip to Disneyland this March, but it's looking like we may not be able to afford it. We want to take all 95 members in the band, orchestra,

and color guard on this trip."

To make this trip a reality, please visit their website at [bit.ly/10kvxCN](http://bit.ly/10kvxCN) to donate via Pay Pal. You may also write a check payable to Grossmont Instrumental Music Association and mail to GHS Band, Attn: James Llamas, 1100 Murray Drive, El Cajon, CA 92020. For more information, please contact [jlamas@guhsd.net](mailto:jlamas@guhsd.net).

To hear the band in person, join them for their Winter Concert,

Jan. 12, 2016, at 7 p.m. in the GHS Old Gym. The concert will feature both the band and the orchestra.

GHS Museum hours: Noon - 4 p.m. Jan. 6, or by appointment. Contact the museum by phone at 619-668-6140, email [ghsmuseum@guhsd.net](mailto:ghsmuseum@guhsd.net), or visit the website at [foothillermuseum.com](http://foothillermuseum.com).

—Connie and Lynn Baer write on behalf of the GHS Museum. ■

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## Presentation of Action Track Chair, officer elections close year

New year starts with look at voting security

Judy  
McCarty



NCRWF took center stage for a time at the San Diego County Republican Women Federated Biennial Convention as member Kat Culin joined Congressman Darryl Issa (R-49) in presenting an Action Track Chair to the Independence Fund, which works to heal severely wounded veterans. NCRWF is proud of their effort under Kat's leadership to have raised the majority of the \$20,000 needed. Several Navajo Canyon women have served on the county board for the past two years. Most notably Waskah Whelan, whose energy and enthusiasm led the group to achieve high goals.

Judge Robert Amador installed the newly-elected 2016 officers for NCRWF. Installed were: Sally Steele as president; Cathie Johns as first vice president for pro-

grams; Kathie Riesgo and Mary Lewis as second vice presidents for membership; Glenda Boerner as third vice president for ways and means; Gloria Harpenau as treasurer; Marjie Siekerka as recording secretary; Pat Boerner as corresponding secretary; Nancy Amador as parliamentarian; and Waskah Whelan as campaign and precinct coordinator. This past year has been very full of fun and frolic, but the new board has some great ideas. We wish them well.

A new year begins with our Jan. 13 luncheon meeting at The Brigantine. Election expert Lori Steele-Contorer, founder and CEO of Everyone Counts, will speak about security and auditability in elections. Steele-Contorer is the world's top expert in election modernization, having led successful election administration in countries throughout the world and, closer to home, led the transition from mail voting to secure online voting for the



Judge Robert Amador installs the 2016 NCRWF officers (above, l to r): Kathy Riesgo, Mary Lewis, Cathie Johns, Sally Steele, Marjie Siekerka, Glenda Boerner, Nancy Amador and Pat Boerner. (Courtesy of Judy McCarty); (right) Everyone Counts CEO Lori Steele-Contorer (Courtesy of everyonecounts.com)



Oscar and Emmy awards. She will explain the reality vs. myth of secure and auditable elections, touching on issues from the past and the imminent crisis in voting technology. Will 2016 be 2000 all over again, dividing the country over hanging chads? It doesn't have to be. Steele-Contorer will discuss the advantages of using

technology to ensure accurate, auditable elections for all eligible voters. Check-in time for the 11 a.m. meeting is 10:30 a.m. A full-course lunch will be served at noon with the speaker following at 12:45. To join us, RSVP to NCRWF99@gmail.com or call Marjie at 619-990-2791. Cost is \$20 and reservations are

required. Please join us!

For more information on all our activities, visit us at [navajo-canyonrnf.org](http://navajo-canyonrnf.org) and also like us on Facebook.

—Judy McCarty is publicity chairman for Navajo Canyon Republican Women Federated. Write to her at [jhmccarty@cox.net](mailto:jhmccarty@cox.net). ■

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# Atkins-Block debate, Cory Briggs to highlight January meeting

Linda **Armacost** and  
Jeff **Benesch**

In what is sure to draw region-wide interest and many spectators, the Jan. 6 meeting of the La Mesa Foothills Democratic Club should be full of fireworks and surprises. The contentious 39th Senatorial District race between incumbent Marty Block, and current Assembly Speaker Toni Atkins should make club history as the 2016 Election Cycle will be kicked off in grand style with an issues-filled debate between these two progressive heroes.

And to top off the evening, we'll have controversial attorney Cory Briggs present his Citizens' Plan for San Diego to the gathering. Co-written by Donna Frye, this initiative will conjoin the San Diego River Park concept for the Mission Valley stadium area with plans for both a potential Chargers stadium Downtown and a convention center expansion, both without traditional taxpayer subsidies.

## Marty Block

Block was elected in November of 2012 to represent California's 39th Senate District, including the cities of San Diego, Coronado, Del Mar, and Solana Beach. He chairs the Senate Education Budget Subcommittee, the Senate Committee on Banking and Financial Institutions, the Capitol Knesset, and the Legislative Jewish Caucus.

Block was elected to the California State Assembly in 2008 where he represented the 78th Assembly District until his election to the Senate. He served as chair of the Assembly Higher Education Committee for three years.

Senator Block previously served for eight years as a member of the San Diego County Board of Education and then served eight years as President of the San Diego Community College District Board of Trustees. During that period, he also served as a San Diego Superior Court Judge pro Tem, Statewide President of the California County Boards of Education, President of

the San Diego Chapter of the American Jewish Committee, and Founding Chair of the San Diego Latino/Jewish Coalition.

Block's most recent notable legislative success would be SB 850: Community College Baccalaureate Degrees. This game-changing legislation for higher education will allow a number of community college districts across the state to develop four-year degree programs, increasing access for quality higher education in areas that have a demonstrated workforce need.

## Toni Atkins

Atkins has served in the California State Assembly since 2010 when she succeeded Marty Block in the 78th AD. She was elevated to the top leadership post in 2014, when her colleagues unanimously elected her 69th Speaker of the California Assembly. She previously served eight years on the San Diego City Council, and became a stabilizing force during a tumultuous period in 2005, stepping in as acting mayor after the resignation of Mayor Dick Murphy.

Prior to her election as Speaker, she held the position of Majority Leader. She chaired the Assembly Select Committee on Homelessness, and served on committees on Agriculture, Housing and Community Development, Health, Judiciary, Veterans Affairs, Select Committee on Ports, Select Committee on Biotechnology as well as the Joint Legislative Audit Committee. Atkins believes government policies can improve people's lives. She is a leading voice for affordable housing, an advocate for womens issues, and a champion for veterans and homeless people.

## Cory Briggs

Briggs will present the Citizens' Plan for San Diego, an initiative that would authorize the city to use the Mission Valley Qualcomm site for river-park, university-related, and tourism uses should the Chargers decide to leave or go



Marty Block



Toni Atkins



Cory Briggs

Downtown.

These options would have a lower impact on the environment than high-density commercial projects: research facilities instead of office space; student housing instead of high-rises; an educational hub connecting SDSU to UCSD.

The Citizens' Plan is presented to the voters with an unprecedented commitment to full disclosure — no tricks, no hidden references. It sets the Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT) at 15.5 percent for the city's larger hotels, the low end of the average range of TOT rates in major competing cities. The TOT would be 14 percent for lodging businesses with less than 30 rooms.

The plan eliminates a current 4 percent "earmark" of TOT revenues for promoting the city and eliminates the Tourism Marketing District (TMD) now under legal challenge, and replaces both with a more legally supportable, and voluntary, self-

assessment program.

Eliminating the earmark will lawfully free up approximately \$72 million per year that could then be used to fix streets and sidewalks, build and maintain parks, libraries, and fire stations, and pay for other general governmental services.

The La Mesa Foothills Democratic Club, serves the communities of San Carlos, Allied Gardens, Del Cerro, College Area, La Mesa, Santee, Mt. Helix and other East of Interstate 15 neighborhoods and meets the first Wednesday of each month at the La Mesa Community Center, 4975 Memorial Drive, just North of University Avenue in La Mesa.

Our meetings begin at 6:30 p.m. with a social half hour with snacks, sweets and beverages, and then down to business at 7 p.m. Seating will be on a first-come, first-served basis for this extravaganza.

The January meeting will

be the second in our series of endorsement votes, with the active membership choosing their preference for whom to support in the 39th San Diego race between Block and Atkins. February will feature debates and endorsements in both the San Diego City Attorney race, and the very local San Diego 7th District election. In March, we'll hear candidates for the key District 1 election, and also the presidential contest with representatives for Martin O'Malley, Bernie Sanders and Hillary Clinton all battling for our endorsement.

New members must join the club 30 days prior to each debate to vote on endorsements. Existing dues-paying members must be current in order to vote. See our website or Facebook page for additional details.

—Linda Armacost is president and Jeff Benesch is vice president of programming for the La Mesa Foothills Democratic Club. ■

## EXPERT ADVICE

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What steps can you take to find someone who know how to fix it, How much money can you expect to pay for the color correction? And should you dare try and fix it at home? To read more about what to do next, please visit <http://lamesacourier.com/expert-advice>



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Jeanette Ham of SanDiego350 holds a sign demanding a strong climate action plan for La Mesa at the city's planning commission meeting on June 3. (Courtesy of SanDiego350)

#### ► Climate, from page 1

"They did draft a climate plan, but they wanted to make it aspirational and it's very clear that climate plans for mitigations have to be legally binding," said Nicole Capretz, who helped usher San Diego's plan through city hall when she was a staffer there. She is now executive director of Climate Action Campaign, which advocates for cities to pass similarly stringent plans around the county.

Jacobs acknowledged that the plan doesn't bind the city to its reduction targets. But he said the measures should still be enough to meet those targets.

But Capretz points to the Fourth District Court of Appeal ruling that shot down the county's plan because it did "not fulfill the County's commitment ... to provide detailed deadlines and enforceable measures to ensure GHGF emissions will be reduced." If challenged in court, La Mesa's plan may face the same issues.

Plus, La Mesa's long-range plan for future development, passed in 2012, gives the city a blueprint for 20 years. Capretz argues its climate plan should therefore set reduction targets through 2030, not just 2020, a mere five years away.

That would be consistent with state goals, which reach out to 2035.

"The CAP focuses on the near-term 2020," said Jacobs. "The state has established a longer-term reduction goal and to that end other jurisdictions have taken a longer-term view. We'll see what happens."

Santee is still in the preliminary stages of preparing its climate plan. The city set a goal of using the plan to give developers certainty on future projects while meeting the state's required climate goals.

"This is our first attempt to bring Santee on board with greenhouse gas reduction measures," said John O'Donnell, Santee's climate action plan project manager. "If cities are going to do a climate action plan, you

need something that is measurable and gets us to where the state wants us to be."

"I think we're way behind the curve in getting things done," said Van Collinsworth, of local nonprofit Preserve Wild Santee. "They can't just keep doing business as usual. I think they realized that at some point they were going to be called to task to do their part."

Santee wants to give developers a menu of options to reduce greenhouse gas emissions when they build new projects. Each option will give them a certain number of points and after achieving a certain threshold, they'd be able to bypass certain parts of the environmental review process. In October, Santee's planning department gave the City Council a list of options to include in a climate plan, like putting solar panels on all new residences, expanding bike routes and encouraging new commercial developments to have electric vehicle chargers.

Once the City Council decides which items it wants to include, the planning department will run the numbers to see how much reduction in greenhouse gases those measures would produce, and how they relate to the state's 2020 and 2035 reduction goals.

Capretz said she is "cautiously optimistic," about Santee's efforts. They're not out of compliance with anything yet, but so far their process has been vague.

For example, she asked, how could the City Council members make good decisions about which greenhouse gas-reducing measures would be best for this streamlining process without first knowing how much reduction each measure would actually create?

Collinsworth said Santee doesn't have the best record with environmental priorities. "I just hope this is a serious climate action plan," he said.

—Maya Srikrishnan is a reporter for the Voice of San Diego. She can be reached at [maya.srikrishnan@voiceofsandiego.org](mailto:maya.srikrishnan@voiceofsandiego.org). ■





Guests gather at Senator Joel Anderson's Holiday Open House on Dec. 10. (Courtesy of Toyota of El Cajon)

## Legislative open house a huge success

Paloma Monesi

California State Senator Joel Anderson's 2015 Holiday Open House was held on Dec. 10, and thousands came from all across the county and beyond to Toyota of El Cajon to meet and share their thoughts on state government with Anderson. The open house was an opportunity for constituents to exchange ideas, celebrate the holiday spirit and receive a legislative update from the past year. Booths and tables were scattered throughout the showroom for constituents to submit ideas, legislative proposals, and problems they feel that need to be addressed.

"I'm grateful to the over 4,000 attendees who came to share their ideas to improve our government," said Anderson after the event. "Forty to 60 percent of

the bills I introduce come from my constituents, and I look forward to bringing many of their great ideas to the Senate floor next year."

An essential part to any holiday celebration is food. Local businesses and organizations donated their time and services to provide delicious food and joyful entertainment for the guests as they mingled with other community members. One of these generous businesses was La Mesa's Dream Dinners, who was named the fourth fastest growing store in the national chain earlier this year. Dream Dinners is a one of a kind, one-stop shop that eliminates the hassle of prep work and cleaning at the home to provide nutritious home-cooked meals. Dream Dinners allows the cook to spend time with their loved ones as opposed to slaving over the stove. Anderson had the privilege of having the innovative Dream Dinners attend last year's Open

House as well.

"We were invited to attend last year and were very pleased with the turn out. Senator Anderson was so kind to come over and talk to us. He made us feel very special," said Franchise Partner and General Manager Marsi Haney. "This event is also a great place to make connections in the community."

This year was the eighth annual Holiday Legislative Open House hosted by Anderson. This unique opportunity allows for constituents to get involved in their state government and have their voices heard. Any La Mesans who missed the event can still share their legislative ideas with Anderson by calling 619-596-3136 or emailing Senator. Anderson@senate.ca.gov.

—Paloma Monesi is a legislative intern for Senator Anderson and sophomore studying political science at SDSU. ■

## Dianne's Corner

### News and notes from County Supervisor Dianne Jacob

Dianne Jacob



**Ratepayer relief:** I've said it for years — consumers deserve more energy options. We need to end SDG&E's stranglehold on the energy market and offer ratepayers the freedom of choice.

That's why I think our region should take a serious look at what is called "community choice aggregation," which would allow communities to band together to provide ratepayers with alternatives to SDG&E.

It's being done right now in other counties and many ratepayers appear to be benefitting.

I know SDG&E and Sempra executives are hell-bent on protecting their monopoly, but providing real competition is great for ratepayers and our local economy.

**Meth means death:** Nearly a decade ago, I led efforts to create the region's Meth Strike Force. We've made huge progress rooting out local meth manufacturers, thanks to law enforcement, but we must keep up the fight as Mexican drug cartels work to smuggle the substance into San Diego.

We will continue to do all we can to stem the tide of this

terrible drug into our communities. Community treasures: I recently teamed up with Supervisor Ron Roberts to plant the seed of an idea — and we're hoping it takes root.

Thanks to a proposal we brought to the Board of Supervisors, the county is looking at creating incentives to encourage community gardens and city farming. County staff was asked to return with a detailed plan in a few months.

Community gardens are good for our health and good for our neighborhoods!

For more District 2 news, go to [diannejacob.com](http://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](mailto: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](mailto:Dianne.jacob@sdcounty.gov). ■



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## New Year's Resolution Starts Here! — Jan. 26

Join us on Tuesday, Jan. 26 as we discuss what research shows is the most effective method of weight loss and the diabetes connection. The doctors will discuss gastric bypass, sleeve and Lap-Band options and which procedure may be right for you! Financing and insurance options will be discussed along with a Q&A. Make Jan. 26 a life-changing day in 2016.

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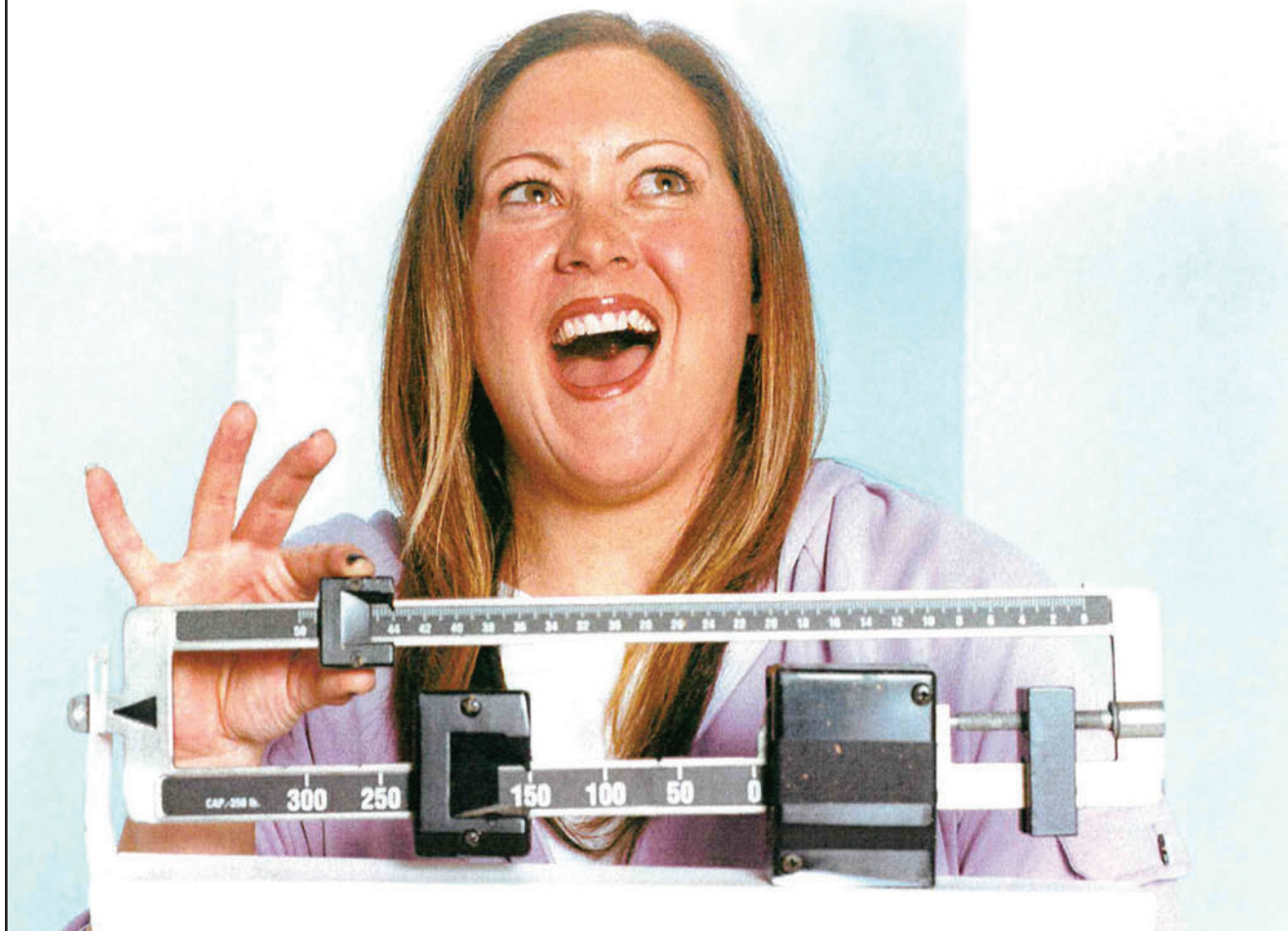
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**La Mesa Courier**  
INSIDE THIS ISSUE  
Walking Wednesdays  
Improving economy boosts city budget

► **Marijuana**, from page 1

new state law, however, says that cities must make guidelines for cultivating marijuana, "expressly clear," Sabine said. The new state law also says that "cities cannot rely on their permissive zoning code, but must actively and expressly prohibit" mobile deliveries of medical marijuana.

The council then heard public comments.

"I hope that the city of La Mesa would continue to uphold prohibiting medical marijuana dispensaries," said Lisa Bridges. She also expressed concern that the ordinances may need to contain language that covers other marijuana products such as "edibles and liquids."

Lorenzo Higley of CASA for Safe and Healthy Neighborhoods told the council that his group helped "decisively" defeat Measure J that would have allowed legal dispensaries in the city. "Your draft ordinance supports retaining control, reducing availability of a substance for which there is no known medical use and will protect public health in the city of La Mesa," he said, adding that even when jurisdictions allow legal dispensaries, they are still "afflicted by the illegal dispensaries that open up, the delivery

services that open up."

Vey Linville of Americans For Safe Access spoke next. Linville, who suffers from emphysema and carried an oxygen tank with him, urged the council to support a "suggested ordinance" that will be presented from his organization that will "hold up in court and preserve [the council's] ability to govern what goes on in La Mesa in a very positive way."

Linville also said that despite Measure J not passing, there are now "many more" dispensaries that operate in La Mesa and that it is not "ideal at all because they exist in an environment that is essentially unregulated."

The council then voted unanimously to pass both ordinances. Before casting his vote, Vice Mayor Bill Baber said he was supporting the ordinances in order to retain city control over marijuana dispensaries but that in the future the council may have to revisit the issue because he sees "this area evolving" and that "anecdotally" the status quo "doesn't appear to be working."

After the meeting, Linville said that because of ordinances like the ones passed by the council, the city "will end up with further legal challenges."

"Just so everybody's clear, and I don't think the council understands this at all, their regulation

will not make it illegal to grow marijuana in La Mesa," he said. "Patients in La Mesa who have a doctor's recommendation have a state right to cultivate marijuana that they may not interfere with."

Linville said that the council's vote banning cultivation only applies to commercial growers and not individual patients who were granted the right to grow for personal use under Proposition 215. He also said that the ordinance banning mobile dispensaries would only apply to operations based in La Mesa and not deliveries made to or through the city, although that would likely be tested in court if and when the La Mesa police charge a delivery driver with a crime.

Even in cities like San Diego that don't have an outright ban on dispensaries, Linville said zoning ordinances restrict access to patients, like himself.

"It's unfortunate that the licensing process is so onerous, so expensive, so long and that there are so few spots available," he said "There really isn't anywhere near enough to service the patients in the city and they are not where they need to be. There needs to be a lot more."

—Write to Jeff Clemetson at [jeff@sdcmn.com](mailto:jeff@sdcmn.com). ■

► **Whale**, from page 1

prepped when they come as well as activities when they return to the classroom, Ursitti said.

Each boat has naturalists on board to talk about the natural history, population decline and over-harvesting of whales. Boats also include a library, models of whales (Ursitti calls them "action figures"); and will soon have samples of baleen and krill for students to learn about how whales feed.

Whale conservation is one of the biggest lessons for students who learn about how the grey whale was hunted to the brink extinction twice and how protecting whale species is positive for both environmental and economic reasons.

"If you really look at it on a global scale, whales are worth far more today in terms of ecotourism dollars than they ever were as a product for oil, food, etc. So we talk about the importance of that conservation."

Ursitti said conservation is the main reason for the rise of at-sea ecotourism in San Diego.

"Growing up in this industry, we never would see [whale migrations] occurring on a consistent basis, but we have in recent decades," he said. "Whaling, globally, is at an all-time low and that certainly sets the stage for species recovery."

Modern production of products is also a reason for whale populations returning. "We produce so many things synthetically that we don't need to go after whales for oil or for meat."

And with more whales there are more tourists wanting to experience them in the ocean.

"Ecotourism is booming here in Southern California. Everyone wants to go out and see nature in the wild — not



Humpback whales are seen in San Diego in spring and early summer. (Courtesy of H&M Landing)

sounding to check depth; and an anemometer for wind speed.

Students learn about ocean biology by dredging for organisms; using a touch tank to handle animals collected with an otter trawl; and viewing plankton under a microscope in a lab. "Students will break down a sample of water and they can see exactly what's in there as far as phyto or zooplankton so they can get a really good idea of the food chain."

The Floating Lab is a popular field trip that around 10,000 students experience annually, Ursitti said. "We have students that come from the desert, Arizona, north of Orange County, San Diego County, of course. We have a group of 300 students [from Oceanside] coming in two weeks and we'll use multiple boats."

The success of the Floating Lab gives Ursitti confidence that the whale-watching program will also be a big hit with schools and teachers wanting to give students something memorable and educational in a field trip experience. Most of all, though, it is the now-predictable whale migrations that make it possible to offer students and tourists a first-class whale-watching experience.

"January into April, it would be very rare not to see a grey whale," he said. "As we get into the summertime, we have fin and blue whales. We see southbound pods on their way to Baja Mexico calving lagoons. March and April will see northbound grey whales with mothers and calf pairs and spring to early summer we see humpback whales in our region."

For more information on H&M Landing's school programs, whale-watching tours or sport-fishing trips, visit [hmlanding.com](http://hmlanding.com) or call 619-222-1144.

—Write to Jeff Clemetson at [jeff@sdcmn.com](mailto:jeff@sdcmn.com). ■





# What's Cooking

with *Julie*

## Potato and parsnip pancakes

Julie White

You will love the crispy crunch when you bite into these potato pancakes. The parsnip is a sweet vegetable that looks like a white carrot. These actually could be a Hanukkah side dish. Not low-calorie, but delicious. Happy New Year!

### Ingredients:

1 pound of russet potatoes, grated and water drained or squeezed out

1 pound peeled and grated Parsnips

4 tablespoons of flour

2 eggs, beaten

1/2 of an onion, grated

salt and pepper to taste

Vegetable oil for cooking, about

1/4 cup or less

### Directions:

Place all of the ingredients except the oil in a bowl and mix well. Heat



oil in a skillet and make little flat patties of your mixture and place in heated pan. Cook until crisp. Drain on paper towels. May be served with applesauce or sour cream. ■

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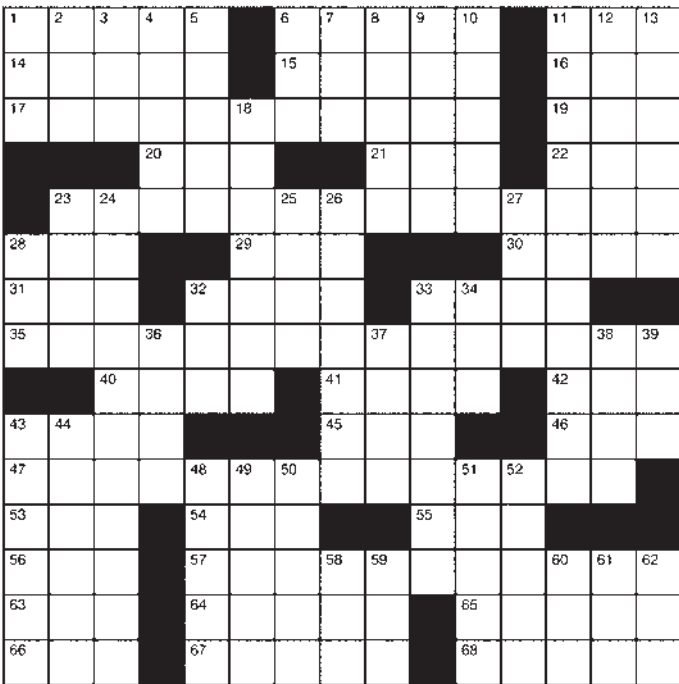
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## PUZZLES | ANSWERS ON PAGE 5

### CROSSWORD



CREATORS NEWS SERVICE

By Charles Preston

### ACROSS

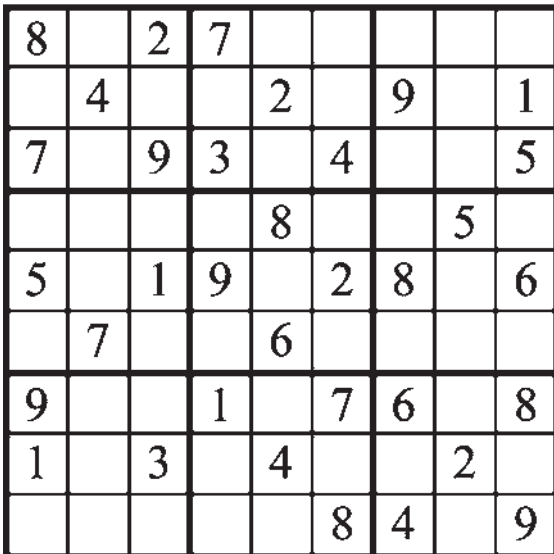
- 1 Washington's follower  
6 Piece of cake  
11 *Robinson*  
14 Wise lawgiver  
15 Gestation stations  
16 Alley  
17 Silent diner  
19 Spanish one  
20 Middle of a famed  
palindrome  
21 Tie the knot  
22 Phoenix-to-Seattle dir.  
23 Socialite being  
pompous?  
28 Stop start  
29 Queue before Q  
30 Maui melody makers  
31 Lou's sidekick  
32 One of the Lesser  
Sundas  
33 Tortilla flour  
35 Director in a brawl?  
40 Johnson, of *Love at*  
*First Bite*  
41 Seine tributary  
42 Mulhouse Mrs.  
43 Golden Fleece carrier  
45 Letters on some hulls  
46 Assist  
47 President in delibera-

### DOWN

- tion?  
53 Sound of disapproval  
54 Last year of  
Caligula's reign  
55 Geological span  
56 *now or never!*  
57 Essayist chilled to the  
bone?  
63 Formerly named  
64 *a time*  
65 Ramlike  
66 Unconventional  
67 Usefulness  
68 Actress Hiller  
13 Gives birth to  
18 Infant  
23 College-credit unit  
24 Not identified, med-  
ically  
25 Defendant's plea  
26 Motorist's mishap  
27 Exclamation of  
reproof  
28 TV network  
32 Food preservative,  
familiarily  
33 Lassies  
34 Have a birthday  
36 Short reptile?  
37 Blenny or bluehead  
38 Participant's comment  
39 Author Buntline  
43 Pink-eyed rat  
44 Raised Cain  
48 U-shaped river bend  
49 Treeless plain  
50 More congenial  
51 Not at all, vernacular-  
ly  
52 Jack  
58 Meal starter  
59 Utmost  
60 Relatives  
61 Not Rep. or Democrat  
62 French marshal  
Michel

### 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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- Bakery
- Barbecue
- Beer
- Billiards
- Breakfast
- Brunch
- Burger
- 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
- Pet Friendly Dining
- Pizza
- Romantic Dining
- Rooftop Lounge
- Salad
- Sandwich
- SD County Winery
- Seafood
- Sports Bar
- Steakhouse
- Sushi
- Thai Cuisine

- Vegetarian/Vegan
- Wine Bar

Business & Retail

- Accountant
- Acupuncture
- Antiques
- Art Gallery
- Attorney
- Auto Dealer
- Auto Repair Shop
- Bank
- Barber
- Bicycle Shop
- Bookstore
- Boutique
- Bridal Shop
- Car Wash
- Chiropractor
- College/University
- Consignment/Resale
- Cosmetic Surgeon
- Credit Union
- Day Spa
- Dentist
- Discount Store
- Doctor
- Dry Cleaners
- Financial Planner
- Florist

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



# La Mesa Reads: Find resources to prep for El Niño at library

Heather **Pisani-Kristl**

Many Americans resolve to lose weight, become more physically fit, or learn a skill at the start of the New Year. Have you considered family disaster planning for your new year's resolution? As I write this, meteorologists and public safety agencies have been warning for several months about a significant El Niño effect in Southern California, characterized by unusually warm Pacific Ocean temperatures and higher-than-average precipitation. It's dry right now, but residents are being told to prepare themselves for flooding, coastal storm erosion and possible landslides. As your community information center, the La Mesa Library offers these links and titles for your preparedness:

**Find one-stop disaster preparedness at ReadySanDiego:** [readysandiego.org/el-nino](http://readysandiego.org/el-nino).

The County of San Diego and local cities offer sandbags, checklists, flood control maps and webcams, and other important components in safety planning. For many reasons besides flooding, consider enrolling your cell or home phone number in AlertSanDiego, the County's regional emergency notification system. All of these links are available on the ReadySanDiego site. The City of La Mesa also offers emergency preparedness links on its website at [cityoflamesa.com](http://cityoflamesa.com) (look under Residents Emergency Preparedness).

**Read some magazine articles at home:** [sdcl.org/refdb2.html](http://sdcl.org/refdb2.html).

How is El Niño expected to affect California? Find out by doing a magazine search on the County Library's website. Searching the General OneFile database with the words "El Niño California" brings up a list of full-length articles from magazines as diverse as The Economist and Ski. Your county library card and PIN (typically the last four digits of your phone number) are required if you're searching from home or on a mobile device.

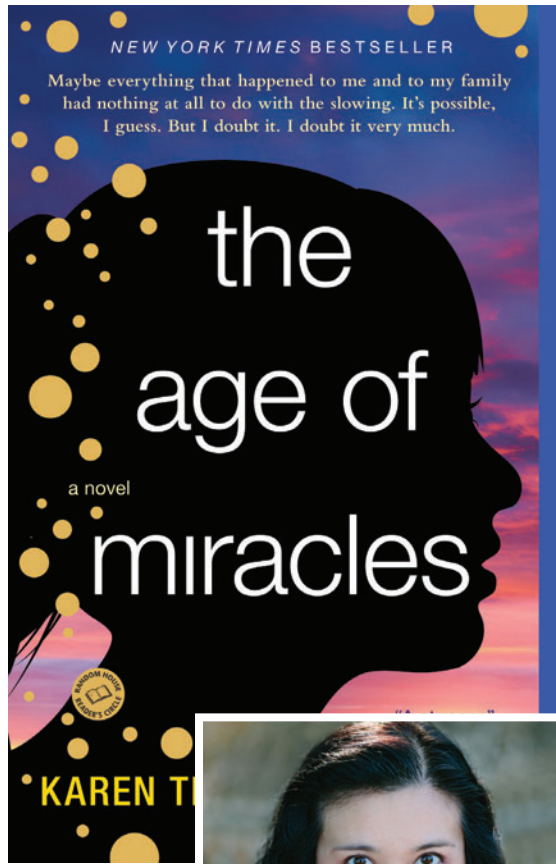
Enjoy a fictional version of climate disaster:

Sometimes known as "Cli-Fi," climate change in speculative fiction has been growing in popularity. Novelist Kim Stanley Robinson has been writing about the changing earth for years. His last fictional disaster scenario, "Sixty Days and Counting," outlines the political repercussions of global warming and environmental instability. "The Water Knife" by Paolo Bacigalupi casts California as the evil empire against Arizona, whose citizens lost the war for water rights and are paying Chinese corporations for access to aquifers that lie beneath their feet. Other authors writing for the disaster genre include Michael Crichton ("State of Fear") and Margaret Atwood ("Oryx and Crake," "The Year of the Flood" and "MaddAddam"). Don't forget "The Age of Miracles" by Karen Walker, which takes place in San Diego County as the earth's rotation slows and high tides swallow Del Mar. Even if El Niño turns out to be more like a passing rain shower, you can still get your adrenaline pumping with any one of these titles.

**Upcoming at the Library:**

Tell the teens in your life about a special author visit happening at La Mesa Library this month. On Tuesday, Jan. 19 at 4:30 p.m., the Teen Book Club is discussing "Serpentine" by Cindy Pon, and the author will be present for questions.

This local author's latest story takes readers on a fantastical journey through friendship and Chinese mythology in the mythical Kingdom of Xia. In Pon's words, "Skybright has been a handmaid



(above) "The Age of Miracles" is a 'Cli-Fi' novel that takes place in San Diego. (below) Author Cindy Pon will speak to the Teen Book Club at the La Mesa Library on Jan. 19. (Courtesy of the La Mesa Library)

and companion to her mistress her entire life. She is pragmatic and hardworking, until one night she wakes to find the lower half of her body has morphed into a long serpentine coil. This changes what she thought she knew about herself and her life forever."

"Serpentine" received a starred review from School Library Journal, which indicates a book of merit for young readers. This special event is for teens only. Please contact the library at 619-469-2151 to let us know if your teen will be attending.

—Heather Pisani-Kristl is branch manager of the La Mesa Library. Write to her at [heather.pisani-kristl@sdcounty.ca.gov](mailto:heather.pisani-kristl@sdcounty.ca.gov). ■

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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.

**Jan. 3:** Danny Green Trio at Mission Trails Regional Park Visitor Center Auditorium. Free. 3 – 4 p.m. 1 Father Junipero Serra Trail, San Carlos. MTRP.org.

## Pop

**Jan. 2:** Sock Monkeys at Bolt Brewery. Free. 6:30 p.m. 8179 Center St., La Mesa. BoltBrewery.com.

**Jan. 2:** Baja Bugs at Riviera Supper Club. Free. 9 p.m. 7777 University Ave., La Mesa. RivieraSupperClub.com.

## Classical

**Jan. 1:** “Salute to Vienna New Year’s Concert” at Copley Symphony Hall. \$25+. 2:30 p.m. 750 B St., Downtown. Visit SanDiegoSymphony.org.

**Jan. 8 & 10:** “All About the Piano: Rhapsody in Blue” at Copley Symphony Hall. \$20+. 8 p.m. Friday; 2 p.m. Sunday. 750 B St., Downtown. Visit SanDiegoSymphony.org.

**Jan. 16 & 17:** Beethoven’s “Emperor Concerto” at Copley Symphony Hall. \$20+. 8 p.m. Saturday; 2 p.m. Sunday. 750 B St., Downtown. Visit SanDiegoSymphony.org.

## Alternative / Rock

**Dec. 31:** New Year’s Eve with Clapton Hook (tribute band) at Chico Club. Free. 8:30 p.m. 7366 El Cajon Blvd., La Mesa. ChicoClub1940.com.

**Jan. 8:** Hills Like Elephants and John Meeks at Bar Pink. Free. 9 p.m. 3829 30th St., North Park. Visit BarPink.com

**Jan. 9:** 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.

**Jan. 15:** Podunk Nowhere at Riviera Supper Club. Free. 9 p.m. 7777 University Ave., La Mesa. RivieraSupperClub.com.

## Other

**Jan. 1:** FX5 at Navajo Live Bar. Free. 9 p.m. 8515 Navajo Road, San Carlos. NavajoLive.com.

**Jan. 16:** The Waits (acoustic duo) at San Pasqual Winery Tasting Room. Free. 7 – 10 p.m. 8364 La Mesa Blvd., La Mesa. SanPasqualWinery.com.

**Jan. 17:** Yale Strom (Klezmer music) at Mission Trails Regional Park Visitor Center Auditorium. Free. 3 – 4 p.m. 1 Father Junipero Serra Trail, San Carlos. MTRP.org.

Compiled by Jen Van Tieghem. Bands, venues and music lovers: please send music calendar listings to [jen@sdcn.com](mailto:jen@sdcn.com). ■

DEC  
28DEC  
30

## Winter camps

**Monday, Dec. 28 – Wednesday, Dec. 30**

La Mesa Recreation Center (4975 Memorial Drive) will host several three-day winter camps including the following:

**Robotics using LEGO:** Kids will build and program robots using the WeDo and EV3 systems. This camp teaches programming skills, engineering concepts and the names of robot components. Kids will work together in small groups. Ages 7 – 9 will meet from 9 a.m. – noon and a group for ages 9 – 14 will meet from 1 – 4 p.m.

**Superhero Camp:** This camp for ages 5 – 12 will meet from 8:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m. This camp ensures a fun and inspiring time with lessons including martial arts, parkour (urban exercise), creative soccer training and more.

**Fun Foods and Silly Snacks:** This hands-on camp for ages 7 – 12 will meet from 9 a.m. – noon. The lessons will focus on nutrition and making food fun. Children will learn to correctly measure, read product labels, and each student will take home a copy of the recipes and the cookbook “Chop, Cook and Munch!” Recipes include: cheddar “nibble sticks,” tuna salad pita pockets and chocolate nachos.

Classes range from \$90 – \$130 for La Mesa residents and \$100 – \$140 for non-residents. Visit [CityOfLaMesa.com/classes](http://CityOfLaMesa.com/classes) or call 619-667-1300 for more information or to register.

DEC  
31

## New Year’s Eve party

**Thursday, Dec. 31**

The La Mesa Adult Enrichment Center (8450 La Mesa Blvd., La Mesa) will host this year-end event from 8 p.m. – midnight. There will be live entertainment by The Blue Zone, refreshments, party favors and noisemakers. Tickets are \$25 each. Call 619-667-1322 for more information and tickets.

JAN  
5JAN  
15JAN  
19

## Free blood pressure screenings

**Tuesday, Jan. 5, Friday, Jan. 15 and Tuesday, Jan. 19**

No appointment necessary for these free screenings on Jan. 5 from 9:30 – 11 a.m. at the Sharp Grossmont Senior Resource Center (9000 Wakarusa St., La Mesa); on Jan. 15 from 9:30 – 11 a.m. at the La Mesa Adult Enrichment Center (8450 La Mesa Blvd.); and on Jan. 19 from 11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. at College Avenue Senior Center (6299 Capri Drive, College Area). Call 619-740-4214 for more information. Open to the public.



(Courtesy of La Mesa National Little League)

JAN  
6JAN  
9JAN  
16JAN  
17

## La Mesa National Little League (LMNLL)

## registration and tryouts

**Walk-up registration: Wednesday, Jan. 6; Tryouts: Saturday, Jan. 9, Saturday, Jan. 16 and Sunday, Jan. 17**

The walkup registration for the 2016 LMNLL season will be Jan. 6 from 5–7 p.m. at Lemon Avenue Elementary School (8787 Lemon Ave., La Mesa). The league serves boys and girls ages 4 – 12 from the La Mesa area. Fees are \$95 for t-ball and \$180 for all other divisions. Tryouts will be held Jan. 9, 16 and 17 at Kuhlken Field (9410 Memorial Drive, La Mesa). LMNLL games are played at Kuhlken Field and Lemon Avenue Elementary. Visit [LMNLL.com](http://LMNLL.com) for more information.

JAN  
7

## ‘Planning Senior Care on Your Terms’ discussion

**Thursday, Jan. 7**

The Soroptimist International of La Mesa group presents his community event at Hillside Park Center (840 Buena Terrace, El Cajon) at 7 p.m. A panel of experts will discuss skilled nursing and assisted living care; how to pay for long-term care;

the definitions of DNR and DPOA; and more. They will also be taking questions from attendees. Space is limited. RSVP to [programs@silamesa.org](mailto:programs@silamesa.org) or 619-795-2165 or visit [bit.ly/CARRJan7](http://bit.ly/CARRJan7).

JAN  
12JAN  
20JAN  
23

## CASA volunteer information sessions

**Tuesday, Jan. 12,**

**Wednesday, Jan. 20 and Saturday, Jan. 23, 2016:**

These sessions provide information on becoming a volunteer Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) for Voices for Children. CASAs advocate for a child’s best interests in court and in other aspects of their lives, such as education, health, and living arrangements. CASAs gather information from files and reports and communicate with social workers, family members, school officials, and other professionals to identify and address a child’s needs. They also visit the child (or a set of siblings) at least once a month to provide a reliable adult presence that is both supportive and consistent. Must be 21+. No experience is necessary. Training and support provided. To learn more or RSVP to an information session, call 858-598-2230, email [volunteer@speakupnow.org](mailto:volunteer@speakupnow.org) or visit [speakupnow.org](http://speakupnow.org). The location of the sessions will be given upon registration. Volunteer opportunities are available throughout the county.

JAN  
14

## ‘Healthy eating in the New Year’ seminar

**Thursday, Jan. 14**

A session covering nutrition strategies and how to eat right and manage weight will be held at the Grossmont HealthCare District Conference Center (9001 Wakarusa St., La Mesa) from 12:30 – 1:30 p.m. As the New Year brings fad diets and quick fixes, this nutrition seminar goes beyond temporary changes and helps make adjustments to your eating style. Registered dietician Ursula Ridens of Sharp Grossmont’s Outpatient Nutrition Counseling Program will lead this seminar. Registration required. Call 1-800-827-4277 or register online at [sharp.com](http://sharp.com).

JAN  
16JAN  
17JAN  
18

## Martin Luther King Jr. Weekend of Commemoration

**Saturday, Jan. 16, Sunday, Jan. 17 and Monday, Jan. 18**

The opening program of this weekend will be a free screening of the film “12 Years a Slave” on Jan. 16 in the Friendship Hall at United Church of Christ of La Mesa (5940 Kelton Ave.) from 1:30 – 4 p.m. Discussion of the film’s message will follow. For more information visit [TableUCC.com](http://TableUCC.com) or call 619-464-1519.

On Jan. 17 a free fellowship gathering with “small plate supper” will be held at the Christian Fellowship UCC (1601 Kelton Road, Emerald Hills) at 4 p.m. with entertainment by the Gospel Jazz Vespers at 5 p.m. For more information call 619-262-8095 or email [info@ChristianFellowshipUCC.org](mailto:info@ChristianFellowshipUCC.org).

A breakfast on Jan. 18 with featured speaker Reverend Richard Lawrence, a Selma walk participant, will be held at 7 a.m. at Jacobs Center (404 Euclid Ave., Lincoln Park). There is a \$50 fee for this event. Visit [JacobsCenter.org](http://JacobsCenter.org) for more information.

The final event of the weekend on Jan. 18 will be the MLK Jr. Day of Interfaith Community Service from 9 a.m. – noon in Balboa Park. The opening interfaith ceremony will be at 9:15 a.m. at Marston House (3525 Seventh Ave.), followed by a cleanup and beautification of the Marston House grounds at 9:30 a.m. and musical entertainment and picnic lunch at 11:30 a.m. Visit [CBISD.org/event/mlk](http://CBISD.org/event/mlk) for more information.

JAN  
17

## Spring recreation class early registration

**Sunday, Jan. 17**

Registration is now open for spring recreation classes at La Mesa Community Center (4975 Memorial Drive). If you sign up by Jan. 17 you’ll receive \$10 off each class. Classes include: Pilates, dance, tennis, tumbling, yoga and much more.

JAN  
20

## Seniors on the Go trip to Golden Acorn Casino

**Wednesday, Jan. 20**

A group trip to Golden Acorn Casino in Campo will depart from La Mesa Adult 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. Visit [CityOfLaMesa.com/classes](http://CityOfLaMesa.com/classes) or call 619-667-1300 for more information or to register. ■



# La Mesa fire captain bids adieu

Jeff Clemetson  
Editor

For Eric Danell, there is no other job he would have enjoyed better than the one he has had at Heartland Fire and Rescue. Well, almost no other.

"Besides flying a fighter jet, I can't think of anything else I wish I had done," he said. Piloting loud, powerful machines seems to be Danell's forte. Before being promoted to captain 10 years ago, he was an engineer for Heartland Fire & Rescue and drove fire engines. "It's the best job in the department to have," he said.

This month, Danell will retire after 31 years with Heartland Fire. "I figure it's time to move on to the next phase," he said. That phase will involve fishing and supporting his wife's horse training business.

Some aspects of firefighting have changed and others have stayed the same since Danell first visited a firehouse with his brother years ago and decided to leave San Diego State University and pursue fire science at Grossmont College.

"The care for people on medical incidents has improved quite a bit," he said. "We deliver advanced care much faster than we used to and almost all fire departments now have paramedics on their fire trucks."

Also, the equipment for firefighting has improved, he said. Fire trucks today are stronger, faster and can pump better, but the biggest advance is the addition of computers.

"We are able to access information that we never could have in the past," he said. Knowing the layout of a building and, more importantly, what kinds of possibly hazardous materials are on a fire site gives today's firefighters an advantage they didn't have when he first started, Danell said.

But, he said, firefighting's core is still the same.

"What's interesting that hasn't changed with all those improvements in equipment and technology is that it still takes the same men and women to be brave enough to go into a very hazardous environment and put water on the fire," he said. "We still have firefighters killed every day. That part hasn't changed."

Although Danell has fought



Heartland Fire & Rescue Capt. Eric Danell is retiring after 31 years of serving La Mesa. (Photo by Jeff Clemetson)

many fires on the job, it was during a wildfire while he was off duty when he came closest to dying.

During the Cedar Fire in October 2003, Danell was off duty and traveling throughout the county to help where he could. He and another firefighter who was also off duty went to Julian to check on a retired fire chief who lived there. The wildfire headed that way and eventually reached them at 11 p.m., he said.

"[The wildfire] came in and split and came around the house so we couldn't get out if we wanted to. We spent the whole night protecting his house."

All they had was a small pump with two hoses connected to a water tank, but only one hose could run at a time.

"We spent all night holding it back and the one firefighter I was with actually passed out because there was so much smoke and heat," he said. "There was one point where I had my face down in the dirt, trying to breathe and thinking to myself, 'This was a bad choice to stay here.'"

Although the pump ran out of gas and Danell had to refill it while lit embers rained down around him, the three made it through the night and the retired fire chief's house was the only one that survived in the area.

In a small city like La Mesa, not every call to the station is going to be as dramatic as the Cedar Fire. However, even calls that seem mundane — like tending to elderly

residents who may not have family nearby or know their neighbors well enough to ask for help — are "the times you realize you can make a difference and it doesn't take long to spend a little extra time," Danell said. "You can't do this job if you don't want to help people."

Danell was born in New York and has cousins and uncles who work as firefighters there. After the 9/11 attack on the World Trade Center, his department raised \$20,000 for a widow of a firefighter from his uncles' department by holding fundraising drives like selling T-shirts at Oktoberfest. He went back to New York to deliver the money and attend funerals of fellow firefighters, thanks to the La Mesa community pulling together to show their support.

It is that generous spirit he will miss most from the community he served for 31 years. "La Mesa has been a great city to work for," he said. "The people here truly like and support their police and fire. I do truly believe they appreciate what we do."

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

## Gen-X in a millennial world Shop local for your New Year's resolution

Genevieve  
Suzuki



I enthused to store owner Carol. "I'm glad you're here!"

Recently, I've heard rumors that Grossmont Center is going to undergo an overhaul to include residences. This rumor worries me greatly — I don't know how it will affect the shops. Selfishly, I don't want the mall to go anywhere. Grossmont Center, like Vons on Lake Murray before it and Coco's before that, is among my go-to places. As you can see, my track record sucks.

We see most of our movies at the Grossmont theaters and always buy our snacks at Candy Paradise, owned by the always-friendly Khuu family. Also, if it weren't for Candy Paradise, we couldn't properly bribe Quinn to allow us to eat our pho in peace.

The reality is La Mesa is changing. We're getting younger as new families come in and plant roots around town. And even though the community is flipping, we still need a local mall. We need Candy Paradise, Engraving Pros and comic book shops just as much as we need Target, Wal-Mart and Macy's.

Don't get me wrong, I enjoy a good jaunt to Fashion Valley just as much as the next gal. But when it comes to taking my family on a spontaneous mall visit, I'd rather avoid having to get on the Interstate 8.

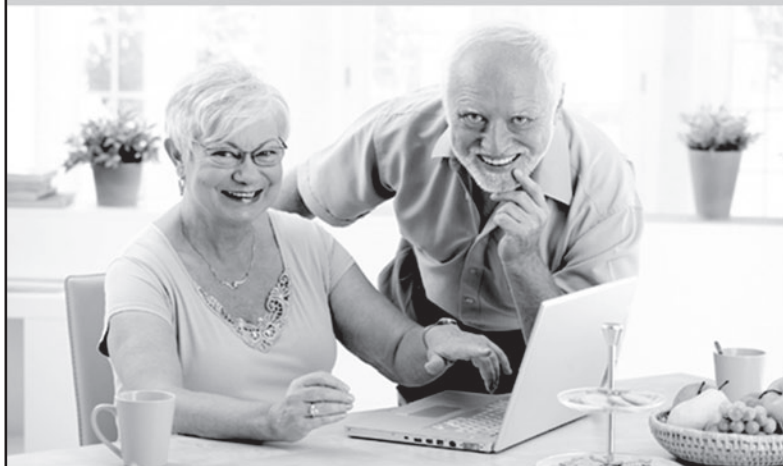
If you live in La Mesa, if you work in La Mesa, make it a point to patronize the restaurant down the street — the warm familiarity you'll enjoy within a couple of visits is well worth any effort.

—Genevieve A. Suzuki is a La Mesa resident who practices family law. Find out more on her website, [sdlawyersuzuki.com](http://sdlawyersuzuki.com). ■

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