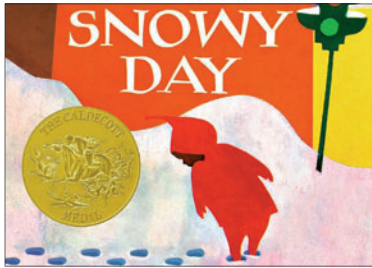


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Winter is coming



Live cold winters vicariously through reading these selections. **Page 12**

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Mediterranean bargain



Mystic Grill & Bakery offers big eats and reasonable bills. **Page 17**

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'And The There Were None'



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PLAYTIME

LA MESITA PARK  
GETS AN UPGRADE

Jeff Clemetson  
Editor

La Mesita Park has a new playground — as new a playground as it gets.

"This is the first Modern City to be installed in the world," said Tom Norquist, senior vice president of PlayCore, the designers of the new Modern City playground product line.

Norquist along with city officials and representatives of La Mesa Park and Recreation Foundation officially cut the ribbon on the new playground equipment at La Mesita Park on Jan. 15.

During the ribbon-cutting ceremony, Mayor Mark Arapostathis thanked the private-public partnership that made the new equipment possible and also pointed out why playgrounds are important.

"There is an important reason we are upgrading this playground, mainly because of children's health," he said and cited statistics from Centers for Disease Control that show that 20 percent of U.S. children and adolescents are overweight or obese. "And while the fix for this problem is multi-pronged and complicated, there is no question that having [...] parks is the first step in encouraging weight-losing physical activity."

See **PLAYGROUND** page 4



Shellece Gunnell and her son Jason enjoy a slide on the new Modern City playground in La Mesita Park. (Photo by Jeff Clemetson)

Report on police incident at Helix draws ire

Jeff Clemetson  
Editor

A long-awaited report on an incident at Helix Charter High School where a police officer was filmed slamming a student to the ground was met with frustration by community members and councilmembers at the Jan. 8 La Mesa City Council meeting.

Following outcry from the community after the Jan. 19,

See **HELIX REPORT** page 5



(l to r) Councilmembers Bill Baber, Kristine Alessio and Dr. Akilah Weber discuss a police use of force incident at Helix High School. (Photo by Jeff Clemetson)

NEWS BRIEFS



(Courtesy SDCNN)

La Mesa Courier  
launches new website

Online readers of La Mesa Courier may have noticed a few changes to the design of the paper's website over the last few months. In an effort to update its online presence, La Mesa Courier parent company SDCNN set out at the end of 2018 to revamp all six of the community newspaper group's websites.

In addition to cleaning up outdated categories and a layout that wouldn't load correctly to smartphones and tablets, the update gave each paper an opportunity to offer more content for readers. For example, in the online News section under Politics, readers can find articles from city, county and state representatives that do not always make it into the print editions of the paper. A new Business section will have real estate and finance articles as well as house our "Expert Advice" articles, sponsored links and Best of La Mesa Courier winners. The Arts & Entertainment section of the website includes arts, theater, film and books articles from around the region. Under the Lifestyle section, travel, fashion, pets and fitness articles that appear in other SDCNN papers are now shared with La Mesa Courier readers.

The new site also provides the editorial staff at La Mesa Courier to add additional online content such as videos, podcasts and

See **NEWS BRIEFS** page 2



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► News Briefs, from page 1

photo galleries. Look in the print edition for prompts about any additional online-only content. Visit [lamesacourier.com](http://lamesacourier.com) to poke around and get familiar with the new website.

**La Mesa town hall meetings**

In an ongoing commitment to communicate with residents, the La Mesa City Council will host two town hall meetings. These open-forum sessions provide an opportunity for citizens to share concerns, ideas, and opinions on issues in their neighborhood and throughout the city.

The first meeting will be held on Tuesday, Jan. 29, at La Mesa Dale Elementary, 4370

Parks Ave. The second meeting will be held on Thursday, Jan. 31, at Murray Manor Elementary, 8305 El Paso St. Both meetings will be held from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

The town hall meetings are intended as a means for citizens to learn about city services, state what they like about La Mesa, how they envision the future of their city, and to express concerns. Members of the City Council and city staff will be present. Additionally, information will be available about crime prevention, emergency preparedness, and recreation classes.

Further information about these meetings is available by calling the City Manager's office at 619-667-1105 or emailing [cmoff@ci.la-mesa.ca.us](mailto:cmoff@ci.la-mesa.ca.us).



Thousands of items were collected for holiday baskets delivered to seniors. (Photo by Sandra Small)

**Chamber Homebound Project a huge success**

La Mesa Chamber of Commerce's Homebound Senior Project — a holiday drive to bring essentials to 24 homebound seniors — brought in a total of 3,804 items that were either donated or purchased.

In addition to La Mesans' generosity in supporting the

project, the chamber received donations of food, toiletries, and other items to us from people in San Diego, Santee, El Cajon, Little Italy and Spring Valley. Besides the food and toiletries, a group of women participated by crocheting or quilting handmade blankets for the homebound seniors.

"The commitment of these ladies is a true testament to the power of community," stated La Mesa Chamber of Commerce President Mary England in a press release. "It took weeks/months for these three ladies to hand make these blankets, truly a gift of love. I would like to add that these three charming ladies are seniors themselves, seniors helping seniors!"

The donated items included 1,750 non-perishable food items such as vegetables, pasta, cereals, soups, sauces, beans; 905 stationery items such as writing tablets, paper supplies and calendars; 711 toiletry items such as soaps, shampoo, toothpaste, toothbrushes, lotions, etc.; 254 clothing and home items; 120 miscellaneous items; and 74 gift cards. In addition to these items, cash and gift cards were also donated by local businesses and community members.

The chamber assembled all of these donations into a total of 96 bags and baskets decorated with holiday flair.

On the delivery date, the seniors received a hot turkey meal, with all the trimmings and pumpkin pie, three big cloth bags filled with items and a holiday basket that held toiletries and the cash and gift cards. These items were transported to

the La Mesa Police Department parking lot by Carl Burger Dodge Chrysler Jeep RAM World and their staff members, Pablo Tapia and David Benavidez. Once in the lot, the items were distributed to the La Mesa Police Department RSVP officers to make the deliveries.

Other sponsors of the project included Barona Resort & Casino, EDCO, Marie Callender's, Pete's Place, Silvermine Band, and Sycuan Casino.

**Jacob named board chair**

On Jan. 8, the San Diego County Board of Supervisors named longtime District 2 representative Dianne Jacob to serve as the board's 2019 chair.

Jacob will deliver this year's State of the County address at 10 a.m., Feb. 6, at the County Administration Center Downtown.

In the speech, she plans to outline proposals on a wide range of regional issues.

"With two new members now on the board, Jim Desmond and Nathan Fletcher, we have a great opportunity to take a fresh look at many of the county's biggest challenges," Jacob said in a press release.

The new supervisors were sworn in on Monday. They join Jacob, District 1 Supervisor Greg Cox and District 3 Supervisor Kristin Gaspar.

Jacob was first elected to the board in 1992 and will complete her seventh and final term in two years, when she

See NEWS BRIEFS page 3 —————>

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► News Briefs, from page 2

will be termed out. This is also the seventh time she has served as chair.

District 2 spans 2,000 square miles and includes El Cajon, La Mesa, Santee and Lemon Grove, along with the communities of Campo, Lakeside, Alpine, Jamul and many others.



A sample of new food offerings at Sycuan Casino (Courtesy Sycuan)

Sycuan unveils The UnCommons

On Jan. 17, Sycuan unveiled The UnCommons, a San Diego fast-casual dining experience in its new hotel casino tower. The UnCommons market will feature five restaurants and a variety of cuisines.

Sycuan partnered with several new restaurants to bring The UnCommons to life. The new restaurants that will be featured in the fast-casual market are Phil's BBQ, Hodad's, The Hangry Slice, Lucha Libre Gourmet Taco Shop and Luna Grill.

"Sycuan chose top-tier, fast-casual brands that have original roots in San Diego; each offering their unique and iconic dishes that will appeal to a wide range of guests," said John Dinius, general manager at Sycuan Casino. "These brands are well-known for consistent quality and a passion for giving back to the local community, and each seemed like a natural fit for The UnCommons. This collection of San Diego's best will surely solidify Sycuan Casino as a place where guests can visit and enjoy a multitude of dining, gaming and entertainment options."

Phil's BBQ opened its doors in San Diego in 1998 with a menu that features barbecue classics ranging from baby back ribs to pulled pork sandwiches. Phil's BBQ has received several awards including Best Restaurant, Best BBQ, Top 10 Restaurants in the Nation, #1 Restaurants in San Diego and more.

Since opening their doors in 1969, Hodad's has become an

icon in the San Diego community. Hodad's was featured on an episode of "Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives" that garnered national attention and has been named one of the best burger joints in the nation. Though originally an Ocean Beach staple, Hodad's has expanded over the years to include locations in Downtown San Diego, Petco Park and now, at Sycuan.

The Hangry Slice will offer pizzas, calzones and sandwiches with a theme of curing the emotion of anger and hungry called "hangry."

"Our guests will quickly see that The Hangry Slice is not your average pizza place," said Paul Schwab, executive chef at Sycuan Casino. "We are working hard to create unparalleled dining experiences at Sycuan by taking classic pizzas and adding our own twist."

Lucha Libre Gourmet Taco Shop was opened as a fast-casual Mexican restaurant in the Mission Hills neighborhood of San Diego 2008 by the Rojano brothers and offers good quality Mexican food with never-before-seen menu items, incorporating quality ingredients from family recipes, as well as improving classic taco shop staples. Lucha Libre has been featured in several national TV networks including the Travel Channel, Food Network, Cooking Channel and more.

Luna Grill offers fresh Mediterranean cuisine such as signature kabob plates, gourmet salads, appetizers including hummus and falafel, wraps, desserts, craft beer and wine in a contemporary setting. The concept has now grown to 48 locations in Southern California, Inland Empire and the Dallas Fort Worth Area.

**New county initiative encourages 'granny flats'**

Homeowners in the unincorporated areas of La Mesa will have a new option for expanding their properties. On Jan. 9, the San Diego County Board of Supervisors launched a program to encourage the development of granny flats and other small dwellings as part of a broader county effort to address the region's housing shortage.

The board voted to waive county permit and development impact fees over the next five years for property owners wishing to build granny flats on lots with existing homes. The units

can be used for family members or rented out as a source of income for the homeowner.

The program could result in thousands of additional homes within the county's unincorporated areas, a region largely represented by District 2 Supervisor Dianne Jacob and District 5 Supervisor Jim Desmond.

"This is a critical step in our ongoing efforts to address the region's housing crisis, especially the serious need for affordable housing," said board chair Jacob in a press release. "This new program is the quickest and easiest way for us to expedite the development of housing."

To cover the loss of fees, the county will subsidize the program to the tune of \$11 million over the five-year period.

"There is no single solution to the regional housing shortage, but an average savings of \$14,000 for an accessory home will raise property values and offer more affordable places to live," said Desmond. "We will continue to be creative and challenge the status quo to solve the region's housing crisis."

The additional homes are allowed under the county's General Plan, which guides development in Alpine, Julian, Fallbrook, Lakeside, Valley Center and all other unincorporated communities.



(l to r) Superintendent David Feliciano and Dr. Emma Turner (Courtesy La Mesa Spring Valley School District)

**Turner tapped for California School Boards Association**

La Mesa Spring Valley School District (LMSVSD) board member Dr. Emma Turner is now also the president of the California School Boards Association (CSBA) following a vote by its members. CSBA represents more than 1,000 educational agencies across the state.

Turner has served on the LMSVSD board for over 12 years and was appointed CSBA

How to Sell Your La Mesa Home Without an Agent

La Mesa - If you've tried to sell your home yourself, you know that the minute you put the "For Sale by Owner" sign up, the phone will start to ring off the hook. Unfortunately, most calls aren't from prospective buyers, but rather from every real estate agent in town who will start to hound you for your listing.

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

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► **Playground,** from page 1

The mayor, who has also been a teacher for many years, also praised the striking design of the new playground.

“I’ve been around lots of playground equipment and nothing looks like this,” he said. “It’s unusual looking. It’s inviting. It’s structurally unique to the playground experience. It’s made for children to explore. It challenges their minds and challenges them physically. It works for all levels, for children as young as 5 all the way up to 15, there is something for them to interact with on this.”

Norquist further explained the design elements of the new equipment as well as some of

the thought process that went into making the Modern City product line.

“We wanted to have something where form is primary. We wanted to have a striking look to it,” he said. “It’s tall, it’s got these beautiful castings that your eyes go to. You see these X shapes in the design so it’s very attractive. And then we loaded it with play value. Every single upright support has multiple opportunities for play.”

The Modern City playground has three different areas. One is for preschool-aged children; a larger playground is for bigger kids; and there is also a separate swing set area.

“We moved [the swings] over to the side so nobody runs into the people while they are swinging. So from a safety

standpoint, it’s a really great design,” Norquist said.

The swing set also includes some new designs such as special swings for children with disabilities; a special “bird’s nest” swing that can hold multiple children at the same time; and “expression swings” that allow parents to be face to face with their child.

Bringing adults into the playground was a priority in the design of the playground, Norquist said.

“It might be one of the most inviting playgrounds in the world in terms of intergenerational play. The parents are actively in the play area with their children rather than sitting on the benches looking at their phones,” he said, later adding that the open-air architecture is what allows for the high visibility and easy interaction between parents and children.

“The one thing that is so fantastic about this is the way the parent can actually get in and coach and work with their children as they go through the actual playground and reach in and touch them, guide them and help them.”

Funding for the new playground came from what Norquist described as a “generous partnership” between PlayCore and the La Mesa Park and Recreation Foundation. PlayCore worked



The new playground features equipment designed for preschool-aged children. (Photos by Jeff Clemetson)

Park and Recreation Foundation President John Fonseca. La Mesita was the fourth and Collier Park will be the final park to be upgraded.

Fonseca said La Mesita Park took a precedence in getting its upgrade because it “lent itself to being ADA compatible and it was the easiest to get done in a timely manner.”

“This got done in six months, which is kind of unheard of in terms of the city,” he added.

In addition to improving playgrounds, the foundation also helps fund general maintenance of parks like installing sidewalks and improving signage as well as putting on events at parks like science fairs and free outdoor movies. The foundation is funded through private donations as well as an annual fundraising event, La Mesa Rocks, which has raised over \$100,000 in the last three years, Fonseca said.

After the It’s Child’s Play initiative is complete, the foundation will be focusing its attention on helping build and shape MacArthur Park.

“I would love to see a new community center there in the next 10 years,” Fonseca said. “I don’t know if that’s going to happen, but our goal is to make that the central park of La Mesa.”




(l to r) City Councilmember Bill Baber, La Mesa Park and Recreation Foundation president John Fonseca, Mayor Mark Arapostathis, Councilmember Kristine Alession and PlayCore senior vice president Tom Norquist cut the ribbon on new playground equipment at La Mesita Park.

with the foundation to help fund the equipment and also help with the installation, at a total cost of around \$250,000.

The La Mesita Park renovation is the latest achievement of La Mesa Park and Recreation Foundation’s It’s Child’s Play initiative, which has already helped improve playgrounds at three other city parks — Jackson, Northmont and Vista La Mesa. The initiative was started with a goal to raise \$1 million in order to improve five local parks, said La Mesa

—Reach Jeff Clemetson at [jeff@sdccn.com](mailto:jeff@sdccn.com). ■

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### Sudoku & Crossword puzzle answers from page 19

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► **Helix report**, from page 1

2018 incident, the City Council voted to hire an independent investigator to look into whether the officer acted outside of department policies regarding use of force. At the Jan. 8 meeting, attorney Scott Tiedemann delivered the report compiled by investigator Barry Aninag.

The release of the report was limited because investigations of a police officer's personnel record must be kept confidential by law, Tiedemann said. The only exception to the law is for incidents that result in death or severe injury.

"Thankfully, in this case, we do not have a death nor great bodily injury," he added.

"In this case, Mr. Aninag interviewed 20-plus witnesses. However, the student involved in the subject incident was not interviewed," he said. "Her mother and attorney had not responded to requests by Mr. Aninag to interview her. Therefore, the student did not provide her first-hand account of the incident."

Even without the student's comments, the investigation was deemed finished.

The investigation looked into four separate allegations:

- Was the initial use of force — the first body slam — a violation of La Mesa Police Department (LMPD)'s use of force policy?

- Was the subsequent use of force — a second body slam — a violation of department policy?

- Was the conduct racially motivated?

- Did the officer lose his temper during the incident?

For the first two allegations of whether the officer's action violated LMPD policy, the findings were "not sustained," reported Tiedemann. The report also said that LMPD policies were "consistent" with other use of force policies throughout the state.

The third and fourth allegations of racial motivation or a loss of temper by the officer were deemed "unfounded."

In council discussion and in comments from the community, the report raised more questions than offer answers about the Helix incident. Mayor Mark Arapostathis questioned why a report would be released without the student involved being interviewed and wanted to know how thorough the

investigator was in trying to interview her. Tiedeman said that letters and phone calls to the student's parents and attorney went unanswered.

Arapostathis asked if the investigator inquired about why the school called the police in the first place and also wanted to know whether Helix High School administrators were interviewed for the report. Tiedemann said that he was "not in a position to" answer why the school called the police and did not know whether the school was conducting its own investigation. He added that any interviews with the school involving the incident were confidential because the report is part of the officer's personnel file.

"Confidential to who? To whom will this be released?" asked Arapostathis.

Tiedemann said the report was released to Police Chief Walt Vasquez, who has accepted the findings.

Councilmember Dr. Akilah Weber asked what was in the department's use of force policy.

"Is there a stepwise approach that is recommended when you have a situation that needs to be deescalated, or is it just at the discretion of the officer at the time?"

Tiedemann said he did not know what the policy is, but that, in general, policies are that force should be limited to "a reasonable response that a reasonable officer would use."

"So it is subjective, what an officer thinks is reasonable at the time in that situation?" asked Weber.

"It's exactly the opposite," replied Tiedemann. "It is measured by an objectively reasonable standard."

Weber then asked Tiedemann what led to the officer thinking the body slam was reasonable. Tiedemann said he couldn't disclose those findings.

Public comments on the report echoed the frustrations of the council.

Yusef Miller, a member of the East County Justice Coalition, expressed his disappointment in a "weak report on a sensitive subject" of police violence in schools.

"We wait all this time to hear nothing in this report. No questions can be answered," he said. "This is not justice for the community."

La Mesa resident Jack Shu called the report "a failure of process" and said the incident



Yusef Miller vents frustration at the Jan. 8 City Council meeting. (Photo by Jeff Clemetson)

should be investigated further. He suggested the city form a citizen oversight or advisory committee to deal with complaints against police officers.

"That's how we mend things in cities. That's how we become transparent and helpful," he said.

Aeiramique Blake said that she and other community activists who organized in the wake of the Helix incident developed a good working relationship with Chief Vasquez, but was disappointed in report, which she said was shielded by the "Police Bill of Rights."

"When a young lady is slammed to the ground twice while she is in handcuffs or any type of restraint ... there is never an excuse for that. Obviously, we need to do something different," she said.

Tasha Williamson called on public officials to change policies and criticized the report as waste of time and money.

"Today what I heard is it was acceptable to brutalize a black girl. That's all I heard," she said.

Janet Costanos also voiced support for a citizens advisory council or oversight committee, citing benefits to the city like saving money, reducing litigation, exonerating innocent cops in the court of public opinion and building bridge with community.

"All of these potential benefits support the goals of community policing, which seeks to utilize problem solving techniques ... to proactively address concerns so we don't go through something like this again," she said.

See **HELIX REPORT** page 8 —>

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Guest Editorial

Step by step: Walk toward a healthier year

Paul Downey

There are countless benefits to exercise, no matter what age. For older adults, many studies point to how exercise is important for the mind and the body. Exercise has been proven to help prevent dementia and keep the mind sharp. Being active is a mood-lifter for people of all ages, but specific studies on elderly patients show that consistent exercise can reduce depression.

For those with arthritis, it may be hard to get up and start moving, but regular activity can help alleviate stiffness and keep your joints lubricated. About 12 million seniors – 1 in 4 – live with diabetes, and exercise has been proven helpful in maintaining a healthy body weight and regulating blood glucose levels. Lifelong exercise contributes to cardiovascular and muscle health, too. A recent study from Ball State University shows that seniors who participated in regular exercise for the past five decades have the cardiovascular health of somebody 30 years younger.

It's clear exercise is important, but unfortunately, in populations age 75 and older, 1 in 3 men and 1 in 2 women engage in no physical activity. Federal guidelines recommend two hours and 30 minutes of moderate exercise a week, and that may seem like a lot, but as the saying goes: slow and steady wins the race.

The beginning of a new year is the perfect time to set new goals for yourself,

such as improving your health with daily walks. Walking is a low-impact, safe method to get your heart pumping daily. It can be hard to start a new routine, especially if you feel achy or tired, but a little exercise every day is better than none at all. Plus, our temperate San Diego winters are the perfect season for daytime walks, providing you with a healthy dose of vitamin D while remaining cool enough to keep you from overheating or getting too much sun.

It can be daunting to start a new exercise routine, but here are some suggestions of how to put one foot in front of the other – and have fun doing it:

- **Find a friend:** Walking is easier, and safer, with a friend. Setting a walking date can keep you accountable and socially engaged.
- **Visit the mall:** Many shopping centers open early to allow walkers to take advantage of the indoor square footage. Or, visit during shopping hours to leisurely browse and people watch as you get some steps in. Most malls have plenty of public seating, providing a respite when you need a break.
- **Join a local health club:** If you are unsure of how to start, a local health club is a wonderful option. Professionals can help keep you safe by creating a walking or exercise program to suit your needs. And, most treadmills have handrails to help stabilize yourself while you walk.
- **Go grocery shopping:** You may not even realize it but running

errands can really rack up the steps! From the car to the store, and from aisle to aisle, running an errand daily is a simple way to get exercise as well as get out and about. Use a shopping cart to help stabilize yourself as you walk – and remember to wear good walking shoes.

- **Volunteer:** Finding a volunteer activity can keep you social and physically active. The humane society may need help walking dogs. Volunteering as a local museum docent can give you a chance to help visitors. Here at Serving Seniors, we have volunteer opportunities help serve seniors meals, assist in the computer lab or fitness room, and of course leadership positions on our board.
- **Take some laps in the house:** If you are housebound, there are ways to still get some daily walking in. Set a timer to remind yourself to get up every 30 minutes and take a lap from room to room. Or, every time you use the restroom, touch each of the four walls of your house before returning to your seat. Small activities can make a big difference in your cardiovascular health, and before long you'll have more stamina to walk further.

—For more than two decades, Paul Downey has been a national advocate for low-income seniors, as well as the president and CEO of Serving Seniors, a nonprofit agency dedicated for nearly 50 years to increasing the quality of life for San Diego seniors living in poverty. Learn more at [serving seniors.org](http://serving seniors.org). ■

Guest Editorial

Nine things to know before you donate blood in 2019

American Red Cross

January is National Blood Donor Month. It's also a difficult time of year to collect blood donations due to snowstorms and flu season. Last January, the American Red Cross had to cancel hundreds of blood drives due to winter weather, causing thousands of blood and platelet donations to go uncollected. We don't know how severe it will be this year, but we do know from past experience that snow, ice and seasonal illnesses affect a blood donor's ability to give.

To help prepare for your blood donation, the Red Cross has nine tips to know before donating blood in 2019.

- 1. Your whole blood donation appointment will take approximately one hour.** In the time it takes to complete one whole blood donation appointment, 1,800 patients in the U.S. will have needed lifesaving blood products. To make your donation more comfortable, come prepared. Be sure to wear a T-shirt or a top with sleeves that can be rolled up easily and bring your favorite book, movie or music to relax with.
- 2. You don't need to know your blood type.** According to a national survey conducted in April 2018, on behalf of the Red Cross, more than 53 percent of people believe they need to know their blood type to donate blood — this is simply not true. We need donors of all blood types to ensure a sufficient supply for patients. Donors may be notified of their blood type following their donation when they receive their blood donor card or by creating a profile through the **Red Cross Blood Donor App**.
- 3. You must be in good health.** Seasonal illnesses like the flu can affect a blood donor's ability to give. Most medication will not disqualify you from being able to donate, but if you have questions please visit [RedCrossBlood.org](http://RedCrossBlood.org).
- 4. Rest and relax.** Get a good night's sleep before your donation and avoid any heavy lifting or strenuous activity afterwards. If you experience dizziness or lightheadedness, stop what you're doing and sit or lie down until you feel better.
- 5. Hydrate and eat a healthy meal before your donation.** It is important that before giving, blood donors drink plenty of fluids (an extra four 8-ounce glasses of fluids) and eat nutritious foods — rich in iron and vitamin C — such as red meat, fish, poultry, beans, spinach, iron-fortified cereals or raisins.
- 6. You're never too old to donate blood.** While in most states, you must be at least 17 years old to donate blood,



(Photo courtesy of American Red Cross)



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► **Helix report**, from page 5

After the public hearing, the council discussed possible actions that the city could take. Mayor Arapostathis said classrooms need to have de-escalation policies and again voiced frustration with not being informed about the school's part in deciding to involve the police.

Vice Mayor Colin Parent echoed the frustration about the "sparseness of information" in the report and suggested using the Public Records Act to get information about the incident from Helix High School.

Parent and Councilmember Kristine Alessio both suggested looking at the police department's use of force policy, but City Attorney Glenn Sabine reminded them that a city council can review and comment on police policy, but by law cannot direct police chiefs on how to operate their department.

"But an educational process as to what's out there ... may be good," Sabine said. "I think it could open the eyes of the police department, if that's warranted, by looking at what some other jurisdictions are doing. But if nothing else, it's an awareness kind of approach and it may be justified."

Weber suggested to specifically look at La Mesa's use of force policy and see how it differs for how officers deal with adolescents, the elderly and mental health patients and said that the council should "strongly consider" a citizen advisory or oversight. She acknowledged that La Mesa has a low amount of complaints against police officers, but said a citizen group would add transparency, involvement, engagement and improve community relations.

Parent suggested looking at other smaller cities that have citizen advisory councils to see how they operate "so it's not a group that meets every four years and doesn't have established practices." He also suggested folding the police oversight into another committee if possible.

Mayor Arapostathis directed city staff to start looking into citizen advisory groups and report back.

Councilmember Bill Baber reminded the council that an oversight committee still cannot force a police chief to change policy.

"I don't want to artificially raise expectations," he said. "But is it good for the citizens to be involved in a working relationship with the police chief and have a discussion of policies — what they mean, how they can be handled better — certainly."

Councilmember Bill Baber also added that frustration with the report was in part to "unreasonable expectations" of its scope. The report, he said, was to determine if the officer as a city employee did or did not follow the standards of his job description.

"It was never intended to be an investigation of the whole thing," Baber said, adding that a separate lawsuit will likely bring more information to light about the Helix incident.

"We're one branch of the government, and in this function we're functioning as the executive branch," he said. "But the judicial branch is working, too. There's a court case. Some of the things that couldn't be brought out here can be brought out in court."

—Reach Jeff Clemetson at [jeff@sdenn.com](mailto:jeff@sdenn.com).■

# Ted talks: Leitner to headline Dems meeting



La Mesa - Foothills  
Democratic Club

Tina Rynberg and  
Jeff Benesch

La Mesa Foothills Democratic Club will have the pleasure of hosting the inestimable Ted Leitner to speak truth to power at its Wednesday night, Feb. 6, meeting at the nearby La Mesa Community Center.

Leitner, San Diego's best known sports broadcaster, is most familiar to San Diegans as the long time voice (39 years) of the San Diego Padres, and also the voice of San Diego State University Aztec football and basketball. He's also called games for the San Diego Chargers, Philadelphia Eagles, San Diego Clippers, and numerous other college and pro teams on both radio and television.

Leitner had a nearly 25-year relationship with KFMB-TV as the nightly sports anchor, doing the sports segment on the 5 p.m. and 11 p.m. news, and for a brief time hosted a daily non-sports talk show on the radio side of the same station. He opined freely on a variety of topics, including the Bush administration's 2003 illegal and immoral foray into Iraq in which thousands of Americans died and millions of Iraqi civilians were killed, injured or displaced. His run-ins with conservative program director and fellow talk show host Mark Larson are legendary.

In an excellent column in the Union Tribune from 2017, Kevin Acee wrote of Leitner:

*"Perhaps more astonishing than the fact he has worked with no fewer than 10 radio partners is that Leitner has worked for so many bosses. The Padres' current home on 94.9 FM is their fourth. The current owners are the team's fifth since Leitner began calling games in 1980. It's not that none of those owners — or the five team presidents or too many listeners to count — haven't quibbled with Leitner's stream of consciousness manner or his endless supply of anecdotes about Ray Charles and Mickey Mantle and Jerry Lewis. It's not that no one has ever wondered if the game is getting in the way of Leitner's stories."*

*As Leitner says: "If you don't have the steak, sell the sizzle. Try to make it entertaining radio and maybe they'll listen. If I were doing the Red Sox through all their winning years and other juggernauts, I wouldn't do what I do."*

*He is who he is, has been since he showed up here and his nightly sportscast — no notes, no teleprompter, just a guy looking in the camera giving you sports and opinions as if he were your slightly angry uncle from New York. He could have left. He didn't. He's as addicted to San Diego as the rest of us."*

Leitner studied TV and radio broadcasting at Oklahoma State University and earned



Ted Leitner (Courtesy La Mesa Foothills Democratic Club)

his master's degree in radio/television/film from the University of Oklahoma in Norman. In addition to broadcasting and hosting multiple sports community events, Leitner has lent his talents to many charitable and nonprofit fundraising events over the years.

La Mesa Foothills Democratic Club will meet Feb. 6 at La Mesa Community Center, 4975 Memorial Drive starting at 6:30 p.m.

The club, which represents the communities of San Carlos, Allied Gardens, Del Cerro, La Mesa, College Area, Santee, Mt. Helix, Casa de Oro and Spring Valley and other close-by areas, is starting its 2019 membership drive with annual dues starting at \$30. For more information, visit [lamesafoothillsdemocraticclub.com](http://lamesafoothillsdemocraticclub.com).

—Tina Rynberg is president and Jeff Benesch is vice president of programming for La Mesa Foothills Democratic Club.■




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# Phone scams: Don't always believe caller ID

**District Attorney News**  
Summer Stephan



As your District Attorney, I'm committed to increasing communication and accessibility between the DA's Office and you, the community. One way I have been doing that is through this monthly column, where I provide consumer tips on public safety matters.

One of the most important things you can do to prevent yourself or a loved one from becoming a victim of a financial scam is to never provide your personal or financial information to anyone you don't know or trust. This is especially true when it comes to getting cold calls on your phone. There are so many fraudsters who make a living off of scamming people, so the best offense is to prevent the crime by not falling for their tricks in the first place.

Be aware that newer technology is now allowing scammers to make their call number or email appear like an official government agency such as the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) or the Social Security Administration in order to gain your trust. The latest scam we've been warning people about is phony calls from the Social Security Administration. In fact, you could substitute the Social

Security Administration for any other organization such as the IRS, your bank, even someone claiming to be your relative or calling on behalf of your loved one.

In the Social Security scam, callers are pretending to be from the agency in an attempt to obtain Social Security numbers for financial crimes. Senior citizens are particularly vulnerable to this scam and have been a main target.

There are multiple versions of the rip-off. For example, in some cases the caller may say your Social Security number has been linked to a crime and has been blocked, but that for a fee it could be reinstated. The caller will then ask you to verify your Social Security number. Another variation involves the caller saying that your Social Security number has been used to apply for multiple credit cards, which could cause you to lose your Social Security benefits. Or the caller may say that your bank account is on the verge of being seized and that you must withdraw all of your cash, which the caller will conveniently tell you he or she can keep safe.

When answering calls from unknown callers, keep in mind:

Do not provide your Social Security number or banking information to any caller, even if the caller ID shows the Social Security

Administration's 1-800 number.

If you get one of these calls, hang up and call Social Security to verify: 1-800-772-1213.

Scammers use technology to make any number they want appear on a caller ID.

Many calls cannot be traced because they originate overseas.

If you get a call saying someone you know is in jail and needs bail money, verify this is actually the case.

If the caller tells you not to tell anyone about your conversation, hang up. It is a scam.

The DA's Consumer Protection Unit is composed of deputy district attorneys, investigators and paralegals dedicated to protecting consumers and law-abiding businesses from fraudulent or unfair business practices. To report a consumer complaint, you can call 619-531-3507 or email [consumer@sdcdca.org](mailto:consumer@sdcdca.org).

—District Attorney Summer Stephan has dedicated nearly 30 years to serving justice and victims of crime as prosecutor. She is a national leader in fighting sex crimes and human trafficking and in creating smart and fair criminal justice solutions and restorative justice practices that treat the underlying causes of addiction and mental illness and that keep young people from being incarcerated.■

# News from your County Supervisor

## DIANNE'S CORNER

Dianne Jacob



**Big step regarding the housing shortage:** The Board of Supervisors recently voted to waive county permit and development impact fees over the next five years for property owners wishing to build granny flats on lots with existing homes.

The units can be used for family members or rented out as a source of income for the homeowner. The program could result in thousands of additional homes within the county's unincorporated areas, on land already zoned for housing.

This is a big step forward for folks in need of affordable options in our region.

**Gearing up for another year as chair:** The board was pleased to recently welcome two new supervisors at the

beginning of January: Nathan Fletcher, representing District 4, and Jim Desmond, District 5.

I was honored to be appointed the 2019 chair of the board. There is a lot of work to be done and we will most certainly be diving head first into the most pressing issues.

**Backcountry biz:** I was happy to attend the grand opening of the new Pine Valley Fire Station last month.

This beautiful \$8.2 million project has created a large sum of jobs and beefed up fire protection in the backcountry.

I am so thankful for everything that our first responders do for us every day.

—Dianne Jacob is San Diego County Supervisor for District 2. For more District 2 news, visit [diannejacob.com](http://diannejacob.com) or follow her on Facebook and Twitter. For assistance with a county issue, call 619-531-5522 or email [dianne.jacob@sdcounty.ca.gov](mailto:dianne.jacob@sdcounty.ca.gov).■

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# Measure U rollout smoothing after bumpy start

Jeff Clemetson  
Editor

This month marks the one-year anniversary of the implementation of Measure U — the legislation passed by voters in 2017 to allow for medical marijuana businesses in La Mesa.

As previously reported in La Mesa Courier, the initial rollout of the measure was somewhat chaotic, with business applicants competing for limited spaces and a numbered first-to-next-in-line system that some applicants decried as unfair.

“Early on, the process was a bumpy road, but diligent efforts by parties on all sides of the process has smoothed the path ahead,” said La Mesa Director

of Community Development Kerry Kusiak. “We’re making good progress toward completing the review process.”

That progress has so far approved eight medical marijuana dispensaries between March 2018 and January 2019. One dispensary, The Grove located at 8155 Center St., opened in October 2018 and another dispensary, Fresh Selection located at 8744 La Mesa Blvd., is slated to open in March.

The most recent dispensary, to be located at 8160 Parkway Drive, was approved by City Council at its Jan. 8 meeting.

Because of rules in Measure U that prohibit dispensaries to operate within 1,000 feet of each other, some applicants found themselves fighting

appeals after being approved by the city because a competing dispensary was hoping to open shop within the 1,000-foot radius.

“Not all locations have a competing location,” Kusiak said. “Most do not.”

And even if some do, there are signs that the appeals may be slowing down. At the Jan. 8 meeting, the Parkway Drive dispensary was facing an appeal, but when the hearing was called the appellant was a no-show so the dispensary was approved.

## Solution for The Center

Although most appeals have been from competing cannabis businesses, one came from a neighboring nonprofit, prompting the City Council to deny the dispensary’s permit which triggered threats of lawsuits. An application for a dispensary at 7339 El Cajon Blvd., Suite C was denied by City Council because it was located in the same medical plaza that houses The Family Wellness Center, a part of the San Diego Center for Children. The Center argued that La Mesa Planning Commission should have denied the applicant because Measure U prohibits dispensaries from opening within 1,000 feet of “minor-oriented” facilities. The

Center testified that it serves minors and has contracts with local school districts.

New Origins Management, Inc., the dispensary operators, initially filed a lawsuit against the city, but began negotiating with The Center to find an agreeable solution. At the Jan. 22 La Mesa City Council meeting it was announced that an agreement had been met and that The Center withdrew its appeal, allowing the dispensary to open. Although

details of the agreement have not been shared with the public, it appears that New Origins is going to help The Center relocate to a new location.

In a statement to La Mesa Courier, San Diego Center for Children president and CEO Dr. Moisés Barón said, “The Center is currently in the process of relocating its La Mesa facility. We will share information about the new site in the East County once the move is completed.”

## What’s next

With the most controversial dispensary application resolved, and eight total shops approved, the city now has only



A dispensary at 8160 Parkway Drive was approved by City Council on Jan. 8.

12 dispensary applications to finish processing. However, in addition to dispensary businesses, La Mesa has seven applications for cultivation and eight applications for manufacturing businesses to work through.

Of all the applications for cannabis businesses the city received, only two have withdrawn their applications — one dispensary and one manufacturing business.

For a complete list of all applications including location and status, visit [bit.ly/2Tegm8v](http://bit.ly/2Tegm8v).

—Reach Jeff Clemetson at [jeff@sdccn.com](mailto:jeff@sdccn.com). ■



The Family Wellness Center will relocate from 7339 El Cajon Blvd. to allow a medical marijuana dispensary to open next door. (Photos by Jeff Clemetson)

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► News Briefs, from page 3

president at the association's annual education conference held in San Francisco. Turner attended the 5,000-plus-person event with LMSVSD Superintendent David Feliciano.

Turner is known as a passionate and vocal advocate for children in the district and throughout the state, with a focus on the values of equity and educational access for all children, including access to early childhood education.

For more information about Dr. Turner and CSBA, visit [bit.ly/2DhccY2](http://bit.ly/2DhccY2).



The Hills Local Pub staff and Sen. Brian Jones (Photo by Joel Ortiz)

Sen. Jones holds grand opening of district office

Newly elected District 38 California state Senator Brian Jones organized a district office grand opening after being sworn in on Dec. 3 and invited all of his constituents to visit his East County office in El Cajon on Dec. 18. Jones shared that he wanted to host this event early in his term so that his constituents could “propose their ideas on how to make our state a better place and celebrate the holiday season with community leaders, friends, and neighbors.”

The grand opening was catered with sliders from The Hills Local Pub and popcorn was made by clients of Partnerships With Industry, a nonprofit organization that provides supported employment opportunities to adults with developmental disabilities. In Jones' new office, each room was filled with more food donated by local businesses including Denny's, Fifty-Two East Neighborhood Eatery, On the Border, The Coffee Corner, Cooking 4 Life, and Eccentric International Chefs & Bakery.

Jones greeted visitors at a designated area for those that wanted to meet him in person and take a photo with him. Some people caught up with their neighbors around a Christmas tree, and others met with the Senator and his staff to voice their opinions about a variety of issues.

One of the constituents in attendance was Mark Bruno of Poway. When asked why he came to the event, Bruno stated, “I came to wish Senator Jones good luck and congratulate him on his new position in the Senate.” He also shared with Jones that, “Reaching across the aisle is important where you can, but I think you have to hold firm on a lot of issues like spending. We don't want the state to go back into a deficit.”

Jones encourages anyone that was not able to attend the event to still contact him with any questions or issues by emailing [senator.jones@sen.ca.gov](mailto:senator.jones@sen.ca.gov) or calling his El Cajon district office at 619-596-3136.

Grossmont Healthcare District board elects officers

The Grossmont Healthcare District (GHD) board of directors has elected its 2019 board officers.

Randy Lenac, who recently won re-election to his second four-year term, was elected as 2019 board president. Virginia Hall was elected as vice president and Robert “Bob” Ayres was elected as secretary. Lenac selected Gloria Chadwick to serve as treasurer. Also serving on the five-member board is Michael Emerson, who served as board president in 2017 and 2018.

“I've served on this board since 2014 and I'm continually impressed with the collective wisdom and selfless dedication of my board colleagues to serve the taxpayers in our district,” Lenac said. “Every constituent can feel confident that this board is committed to our role of addressing unmet health care needs and supporting the community to the greatest extent possible.”

Lenac, a resident of Campo, was appointed to the GHD board in July 2014 and elected to a four-year term in November of the same year. In November 2018, he was re-elected. Since 2011, Lenac has served on the board of the Grossmont Hospital

Corporation (GHC), the operator of Sharp Grossmont Hospital. He also represents GHD on the Association of California Healthcare Districts board, a statewide organization representing health care districts.

Hall, a retired registered nurse, was elected to the GHD board in November 2016. She worked in health care from 1973 to 2004, including at several hospital emergency rooms, clinics and research facilities.

Ayres, a retired banking executive with more than 50 years of experience in both public and private-sector banking and construction financing and management, joined the GHD board in 2010. The El Cajon resident has been twice elected to four-year terms, in 2012 and 2016.

Chadwick, a retired psychiatric nurse, has served on the GHD board since 1998, when she became the first woman elected to the board in 22 years. In 2000, she became the first woman in GHD history to serve as board president. The Dehesa Valley resident has been re-elected to the GHD board five times, including most recently in November 2018.

Emerson, a registered dispensing optician (RDO) who joined the GHD board in 2008, also serves on the Grossmont Hospital Corporation. The La

Mesa resident was re-elected to four-year terms on the GHD board in 2012 and 2016. Prior to joining the GHD board, he served on the Grossmont Hospital Corporate Board beginning in March 2007.

The Grossmont Healthcare District is a public agency that supports various health-related community programs and services in the East County region. For more information about GHD, visit [grossmonthealthcare.org](http://grossmonthealthcare.org).

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**East County Chamber of Commerce announces interim CEO**

On Jan. 22, the San Diego East County Chamber of Commerce announced the appointment of former board chairman Joe Mackey as interim CEO, while the organization continues its search for a permanent CEO following the departure of Eric J. Lund.

Mackey, a longtime community leader and owner of XL Staffing Services, will lead the Chamber on an interim basis during the transition period. Mackey also was recently announced as the El Cajon Citizen of the Year.

“We are delighted to have the leadership and talent of Joe Mackey at such an important

time,” said board chairman Cameron Stewart in a press release. “His abilities provide us great confidence we have an effective process in place to continue a smooth transition as he ensures the Chamber's programs and projects continue successfully in support of the business community.”

“The East County Chamber of Commerce is a vital piece in the business puzzle that makes up the East County way of life,” said Mackey. “It has always been a feeling of deep responsibility for me, that the business community thrives for all businesses. Owning a temporary staffing agency, it is only natural that I accept this temporary assignment. The Chamber is strong financially and the staff is the best in the chamber business.”

The Chamber board previously established a Search Committee to identify the next CEO, following the Jan. 11, 2019, resignation of Lund, who accepted an opportunity with another organization. The Search Committee is in the process of reviewing the several applications received thus far, while encouraging interested individuals to continue to submit their resumes.

For more information about the job, visit [bit.ly/2Rbrx03](http://bit.ly/2Rbrx03).■

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### City of La Mesa, Rides4Neighbors Seeks Drivers

What are you doing to positively impact your community? The City of La Mesa offers a great opportunity to do just that by volunteering for the Rides4Neighbors program. The program is funded by grants awarded by San Diego Association of Governments and fueled by volunteer drivers. Rides4Neighbors provides transportation services for East County seniors and/or people living with a disability that inhibits their mobility. Drivers use their personal vehicles to assist enrolled riders in performing duties essential to their lives, such as, doctor appointments and grocery shopping. Monthly mileage reimbursement is offered, in addition to the opportunity to explore the beautiful county of San Diego. For non-ambulatory riders, the City contracts with a transportation company for wheelchair van services.

The Rides4Neighbors program has operated for over ten years. Mike Higdon, a volunteer since 2010 when the program began explains "I enjoy paying it forward. I also feel the need to do something productive. I may need this service in the future and I would hope that there would be somebody to help me."

The riders are not the only people who benefit from Rides4Neighbors, volunteers are able to meet new people, feel a sense of purpose by contributing their time to the community, and earn extra cash.

While the median age of the population grows upward, the demand for transportation increases. As can be imagined, there is a disproportionate amount of those in need in comparison to those who provide help for those needs. Volunteers are the driving force behind the program, but currently there are approximately 650 enrolled consumers and only 30 drivers. If you or anyone you know would be interested in participating as a volunteer with the program call **619.667.1321** for more information. Volunteers are required to go through a DMV screening and fingerprinting for a background check at no cost.

## Wintery tales for sunny San Diego



Jake **Sexton**

Winter in San Diego is different from other places. Rather than having to adjust our lives to deal with freezing temperatures and shoveling snow, at worst, we might have to switch to long sleeves, or maybe have our latte hot instead of iced. To sympathize better with our brothers and sisters who live in more traditional climates, here are some books that deal with real, actual, winter cold.

It would be hard to have a list like this without mentioning George R.R. Martin's "A Song of Ice and Fire" series, the basis for the popular "Game of Thrones" HBO TV series. Some of the main characters in this fantasy epic come from the realm of Winterfell, cold and mountainous year-round and where heavy, fur-lined cloaks are normal fashion. North of Winterfell is a gargantuan wall of ice intended to keep out a race of frosty zombie creatures known as "The Others" (or "White Walkers" on the TV show). But even more striking is that in this fantasy land, the length of seasons vary, meaning that winter can last a year, 10 years, or in one legendary case, for an entire generation. This harrowing fact gave birth to the show's prophetic slogan, "Winter is coming."

One of the most memorable tales I know about the cold is Jack London's "To Build a

Fire." It's a short story, but very intense. A man travels through the Yukon wilderness during temperatures lower than -50 degrees, trying to survive as things go from bad to worse. Decades after I read this story in school, I still remember the visceral descriptions of cracking ice, the physical pain of extreme cold, and fear of not being able to find warmth ever again. As I understand it, there are two versions of this tale, one that ends well, and one that ... doesn't.

expedition in the 1840s. While searching for the Northeast Passage, the poor crew instead finds frostbite, starvation, mutiny, and in this author's version, a murderous supernatural creature. You may have heard of this title recently, as it became an acclaimed TV horror series.

But winter isn't always grim. Ezra Jack Keats' classic children's book "The Snowy Day" is a joyful look at the season. With minimal text and fabulous, stylish art, we see young Peter's first experience with snow. Keats does an amazing job showing the boy's wonder, playfulness and zeal as he discovers his own footprints, makes snow angels, and uses his imagination in this new and unexpected environment. It is an award-winning book, and well-loved over the generations for good reason.

If you like learning about books from these columns, you might also enjoy the library's Coffee + Books program. On Wednesday, Feb. 13 at 10 a.m., library staff will recommend a variety of new book titles and hidden gems that you might enjoy, while you can snack on some light breakfast and coffee. And speaking of learning, San Diego Oasis will be teaching several free classes at the library, starting with Medicinal Cannabis 101 on Feb. 21 at 6 p.m.

—Jake Sexton is librarian at the La Mesa branch of the San Diego County Library. Call the library at 619-469-2151, visit in person at 8074 Allison Ave., or visit online at [sdcl.org](http://sdcl.org).■



Another wintry survival take is Dan Simmons' "The Terror." Set in another frozen clime, two British ships become trapped in sea ice above the Arctic Circle, and the crew must struggle with the elements. The book is historical fiction, based upon Sir John Franklin's doomed British

## A return to the canvas



Linda **Michael**

Glenn Osga is a self-taught artist — starting with thousands of dinosaurs drawn as a child, a few weekend art classes, and a few college art courses as an undergrad at the University of Vermont. Between undergrad and grad school in the 1970s, he was producing drawings and paintings of landscapes that sold in northern Vermont galleries.

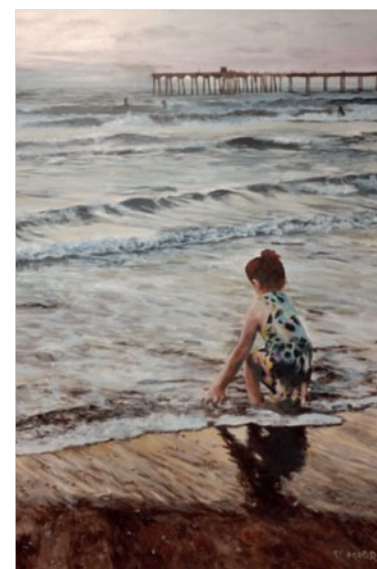
After obtaining a doctorate in human factors psychology at the University of South Dakota, Osga began a 30-plus-year Navy-civilian, scientist career. He dabbled in art until 1983, but abandoned visual art to focus on musical art. He played keyboards and sang with his band on the San Diego hotel circuit and at weddings and parties with many late-night music gigs.

Fast forward to August 2015 when, on a visit to the Laguna Annual Pageant of the Masters, Osga was inspired by the art shown and decided, "I can do this!" He started painting again. He finished a painting in 2016 that he had barely started in 1983, trying to imagine what he intended 33 years earlier.

Today, more than 125 paintings after he resumed painting, he continues to learn and grow artistically, working primarily with acrylics.

"I enjoy the challenge of turning the visual image in my head into reality," Osga said. "It is a total escape from the world around me, similar to when I am composing music. Sometimes I use reference photos, other times I just paint from my imagination. I find landscapes, nature and animals 'relaxing' while portraits or figures are challenging. I am also inspired by creative talents shown in the art and demonstrations at the Foothills Gallery."

Osga is a member of the Borrego Art Institute, South



(Courtesy Foothills Art Association)

Bayfront Artists Association, and Foothills Art Association.

Glenn Osga will host an Artist's Reception on Saturday, Feb. 23, 2-4 p.m. at the Foothills Gallery, 4910 Memorial Drive in La Mesa. For more information, call 619-464-7167.

—Linda Michael is editor of Footnotes, the newsletter of the Foothills Art Association.■



# PRIDE program teaches emotional intelligence



## Foothiller Footsteps

Connie and Lynn Baer

In the 2015-2016 school year, Grossmont High School began its PRIDE program, which is designed to teach students school-wide behavioral expectations through a reward program that reinforces positive behaviors. GHS PRIDE encourages students to be prepared, respectful, involved, disciplined, and empathetic (PRIDE). For the past four years, the program has positively impacted the culture of the school. Since its inception, Foothiller staff and students have been searching for ways to complement and improve PRIDE.

"We have been on a social emotional learning journey on our campus," said ASB advisor Jeremy Hersch. "This led us to a relationship with Yale University, and in particular, the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence."

Searching for more information, Sept. 28-29, 2017, Hersch and fellow GHS teacher Megan Long, and students Kamryn Correll and Autumn Maas attended a Youth Empowerment Leadership Lab (YELL) at Facebook headquarters in Menlo Park, California.

"I learned a lot about how to make a plan and achieve the goals I want for our school to progress," Mass said. "Kamryn Correll and I were able to share our PRIDE program with other schools, as well as with Facebook employees. That Grossmont has been able to attract the attention of a multibillion-dollar company is astonishing, to say the least. I know that it would not have happened if it were not for our amazing and efficient adviser Jeremy Hersch."

The Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence (YCEI), in collaboration with Facebook for Education, created InspiRED, a set of free resources to support teams of high schoolers in creating

positive changes in their schools and communities.

According to Marc Brackett, director of the YCEI, the program uses "the power of emotions to create a healthier, more equitable and compassionate society."

On Jan. 18, the school-wide weekly Friday PRIDE lesson was "Music and Emotions." According to Assistant Principal Denise Bates in her weekly PRIDE email to the staff, "We are continuing our journey through the Yale lessons to understand emotions. This lesson looks at the influence of music. It can be used as a tool to shift emotional states."

On Nov. 2, 2018, Grossmont High hosted a free workshop with people from Facebook and the YCEI in the school library. One hundred student leaders from most of the Grossmont Union High School District schools attended, along with leaders from Cathedral, Patrick Henry, and Mission Bay High Schools. At the event, students were trained to implement the model of InspiRED in their schools through projects on their individual campuses.

About the workshop, GHS PRIDE class member Olivia Wrangler recalls, "I was surrounded by people who wanted to help our school as much as I do. We were able to come up with some great ideas about how to improve our campus's cleanliness by trying to reduce the amount of trash on campus. When we presented this idea, students from other schools gave us feedback on our ideas, which gave us more to think about. The YELL program is a great way to come up with ideas to improve schools by discussing problems and sharing ideas of ways to improve. The InspiRED program has improved the PRIDE program by giving us a list of things that we can implement at Grossmont."

GHS PRIDE coordinator, teacher Megan Long, reflects, "The fact Yale and Facebook take the time and provide the



(l to r) Autumn Maas and Kamryn Correll at Facebook headquarters

resources to value student voice only enhances the students' passion for positive change. Yale and Facebook have created a structure for students to thrive in their pursuits on campus. We value the relationships Grossmont has built with Yale's Center for Emotional Intelligence and with Facebook. They have supported our journey with social emotional learning; we would not have been able to make the progress we have made without them."

For 98 years, Foothillers have been nurtured by caring and supportive teachers and staff who are concerned not just about the academic learning of their students, but also with their emotional and physical well-being. The YELL program continues this decades-long tradition of caring.

For more information about the wonderful things happening at Grossmont, please visit the museum from noon-3:30 p.m. on Feb. 6 or by appointment on other Wednesdays. To explore our 98 years of Foothiller history, visit our website at foothillermuseum.com. Contact: ghsmuseum@guhsd.net or 619-668-6140.

—Connie and Lynn Baer write on behalf of the Grossmont High School Museum. ■



ASB President Kennedy Dirkes presenting at YELL at Grossmont High School (Photos courtesy GHS Museum)



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# College district picks trio for employee excellence award

Della Elliott

Cohesion and excellence are concepts often expressed in threes: The three musketeers. The Three Tenors. The three wise men. The Triple Crown. The three Olympic medals.

The Grossmont-Cuyamaca Community College District has a winning trio of its own — the winners of the 2018 Chancellor/Classified Senate Award — who were lauded Tuesday night by the governing board in recognition of their exemplary work. The jobs of the winners — Rochelle Weiser from Grossmont College; Gwen Nix from Cuyamaca College; and Gabriella Avila-Garcia from district services — are varied, representing the broad expanse of tasks performed by non-instructional staff.

In recognition of classifieds' critical role, one member of each college and district services is chosen each year for the honor and presented with a trophy, \$250 gift certificate, recognition at the state-wide Classified Leadership Conference and lunch with Chancellor Cindy L. Miles and the governing board president.

"These three award winners reflect a true commitment to excellence in their service to students and campus communities," Miles said. "Our classified professionals are truly the backbone of the district — they keep our operation running smoothly and their contributions are appreciated beyond measure."

Ariane Ahmadian, Cuyamaca College Classified Senate president, said the yearly award honors classified



Grossmont College professional development training assistant Rochelle Weiser



Campus and Parking Services Operations assistant Gabriella Avila-Garcia

employees whose job excellence and work ethic inspire others.

"Among our many dedicated classified professionals are people like this year's winners, who go well beyond the scope of their duties and are consummate and respected members of our district," she said.

## Gwen Nix

After 12 years at Cuyamaca College, with the last eight as administrative assistant to the vice president of student services, Gwen Nix is known for her institutional knowledge and problem-solving skills. The current vice president, Jessica Robinson, said she came to rely on Nix's knowledge and sage advice when she began at Cuyamaca College in January.

"The professional demeanor, coupled with her enthusiastic and welcoming personality make her a perfect fit as the welcoming face of the vice president of student services office,"

said Robinson, who nominated Nix for the award.

Robinson also noted Nix's involvement in many college committees and events, including the annual Spring Garden and Butterfly Festival, the twice-year convocations and Cuyamaca's recent 40th anniversary celebration. Her humor and warmth, as well as her professionalism, will be missed by all when she retires next year, Robinson said.

Nix worked for 20 years as an administrative assistant at San Diego State University, where she earned her bachelor's degree in social sciences. After getting her master of arts degree in theological studies from Bethel Seminary in San Diego, Nix served a three-year stint as an adjunct instructor for a freshman first-year program at SDSU. When the program ended, Nix decided to leave academia and worked for 1 1/2 years as a resort manager.

"But I missed the college environment and was very happy to begin working at Cuyamaca College," said the San Joaquin Valley native.

While looking forward to retirement and leisurely touring the country in her travel trailer, she said she will miss her co-workers and the college that has been a second home over the years.

"I fell in love with Cuyamaca College from the first day I was here and I love the people I work with," she said. "The administration is so committed to improving students' lives."

## Rochelle Weiser

As the training assistant in Grossmont College's professional development office, Weiser helps colleagues — faculty, staff and administrators — improve themselves through workshops and trainings. Weiser's days are a mind-boggling jumble of handling phone calls, scheduling trainings and determining what professional learning opportunities should be offered.

It's a job Weiser has held since 2012, and she is so valued a worker that three administrators — her supervisor and the current and past professional development coordinators — nominated her for the award recognizing classified professionals.

"The office of professional development has developed considerably since its inception and Rochelle has been a vital part of every step," her nomination reads. "Rochelle is constantly engaged in problem-solving — discerning what professional

learning opportunities should be offered, how they can be facilitated in a meaningful and impactful way, and how can we ensure that we garner participation."

Weiser, who first started working at Grossmont College in 2009, takes pride in expanding professional development opportunities, especially for classified staff who are relatively new to the professional development picture.

"It's ongoing work, but we're beginning to get to a place where more and more classified staff see themselves as participating as professionals — it's been a culture shift and a journey for us," Weiser said.

Before Weiser arrived at Grossmont College, she worked for eight years for a family-operated pool service business. Prior to that, she worked for more than 20 years as a horse trainer, traveling the country coaching riders to local, state and national championships. The highlight of that career was seeing one of her riders win the American Paint Horse Association World Championship Show.

Asked what she likes best about her current job, Weiser said she enjoys the people she works with and the creative prospects she is afforded.

"My position gives me the opportunity to think outside the box, to collaborate and to create engaging opportunities for the campus community," she said. "I am beyond honored to be nominated and to receive this recognition is an amazing feeling."

A new venture Weiser has undertaken is pursuing a child development degree at Grossmont College. On target to graduate in fall 2020, she is looking at the bachelor's degree completion program offered through Point Loma Nazarene University and hopes one day to work in the child development field.

## Gabriella Avila-Garcia

Rarely a day passes that Campus and Parking Services (CAPS) Operations Assistant Gabriella "Gaby" Avila-Garcia doesn't think of the phone call she received at her Chicago home in 2017 from CAPS Director Nicole Conklin telling her she had a job waiting for her.

"I wanted to jump up and down with excitement because the dream I shared with my wife of moving to California was about to become a reality,"



(left) Cuyamaca College administrative assistant to the vice president of student services Gwen Nix (Photos courtesy Grossmont Cuyamaca Community College District)



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See GCCCD AWARD page 19 →



# Helping bring down the cost of college



## Helix Highlights

Jennifer Osborn

Helix’s mission is to provide a comprehensive education that prepares all students to graduate college-ready and equipped to reach their personal and academic potential. It is of vital importance that students are prepared for the next level, whether that be college, the military, or a career. It is our belief that a solid high school education that prepares students for college also gives students a solid foundation to become part of the work force or our armed forces.

At this time of year, it is exciting to see our seniors begin to make decisions about their futures. College applications have been submitted, and students are receiving acceptance notices and deciding where they might go. A large part of this decision is based on finances. As we often hear, the cost of a college education can be prohibitive. Some students who would choose to attend a college or university are unable to do so because of simple economics.

In an effort to combat the high cost of higher education, Helix implemented a few programs to help students achieve their goal of attending college, should that be their choice for their future. First, Helix has on staff a full-time College Access Counselor. Besides helping students decide where to apply and supporting them through the application process, the College Access Counselor assists students in completing the Free Application for Financial Aid (FAFSA) forms. The majority of students across the country

qualify for some kind of financial aid, so completing the FAFSA is an important part of defraying the cost of college. The College Access Counselor is also a great resource for students searching for opportunities to apply for scholarships.

Another program in place at Helix is the Dual Enrollment program. At Helix, students can enroll in college courses taken on the Helix campus as part of the students’ regular school day. The courses are taught by Helix teachers who are qualified to teach community college courses, or by college professors from Grossmont College. These courses count both as high school graduation requirements and actual college credit. This program helps to offset the cost of college because first, there is no cost to the student to take these courses, and second, students can complete part of their college education early, cutting down on the number of semesters students must pay for before getting a college degree.

Helix is also fortunate to be supported by the Helix High School Foundation, which facilitates fundraising that promotes the growth and improvement of the programs, facilities, and activities at Helix. Every year, the Foundation raises funds to provide thousands of dollars in scholarships for graduating Helix seniors. Funding and the participation of community members are always required to reach the goals the Foundation has set. The Foundation also holds various social events such as a wine tasting event and the annual Highlander Open Golf Tournament. To become a member of the Foundation and help provide college scholarships, visit their website at [helixhigh-schoolfoundation.com](http://helixhigh-schoolfoundation.com).

We are looking forward to hearing about all of our students’ plans for the future as the class of 2019 gets closer and closer to graduation!

### 2019-20 enrollment for new students

Enrollment for the 2019-20 school year is in full swing. Any student interested in new enrollment for next school year must attend and informational meeting to obtain an access code for our online enrollment system. Meeting dates and times, and detailed enrollment information are available by visiting [helixcharter.net](http://helixcharter.net), then access the Entrance Boundary/Lottery Information link.

### Performing arts calendar

The Highland Players present “Urinetown, The Musical.” In a Gotham-like city, a terrible water shortage, caused by a

20-year drought, has led to a government-enforced ban on private toilets. The citizens must use public amenities, regulated by a single malevolent company that profits by charging admission for one of humanity’s most basic needs. Amid the people, a hero decides that he’s had enough and plans a revolution to lead them all to freedom!

Show dates are Jan. 31, Feb 1, 6, 7, 8, 9. All performances are at 7 p.m. in the Helix Performing Arts Center Mainstage Theater. Tickets are \$10 and are available at [highlandplayers.ticketleap.com](http://highlandplayers.ticketleap.com).

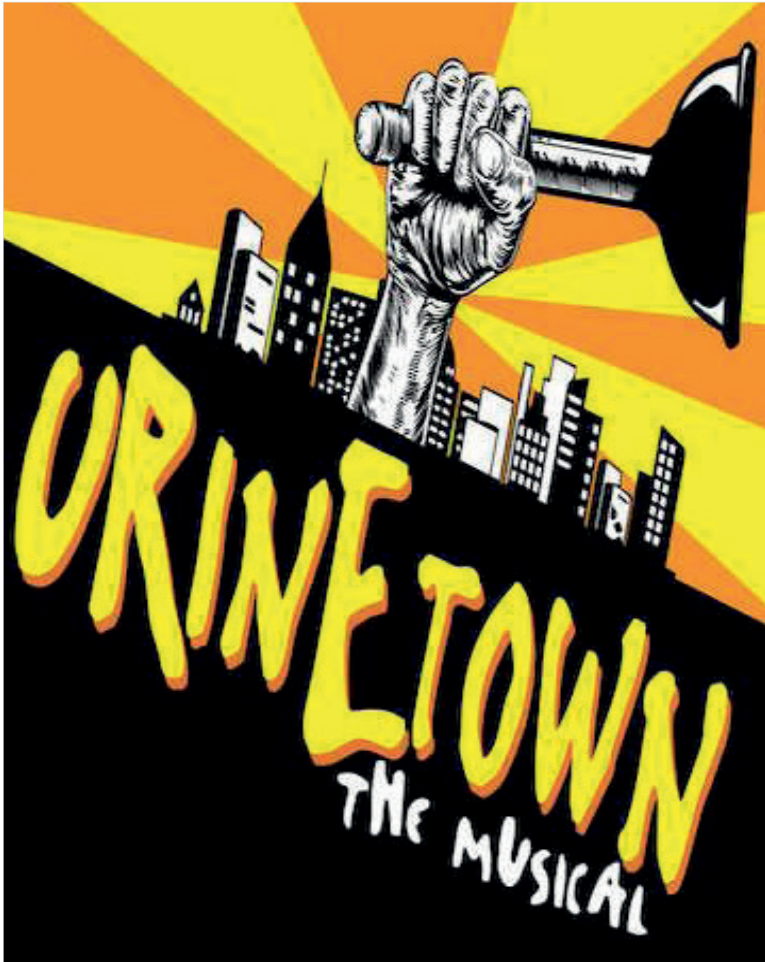
The Helix Instrumental Music Department’s Annual

Giving Gala is coming up on Feb. 23 at 6:30 p.m. Enjoy delicious food, drink, live entertainment and bid on awesome items in live and silent auctions. For tickets and more information, visit [helixinstrumental.ticketleap.com](http://helixinstrumental.ticketleap.com).

### Helix Tours

If you are interested in finding out more about Helix Charter High School, please attend one of our Excellence in Education Tours, held monthly. Upcoming tours will take place on Feb. 1 at 8:10 a.m., Feb. 13 at 9:10 a.m., and Feb. 28 at 5:30 p.m. Reserve your spot using our website, [helixcharter.net](http://helixcharter.net).

—Jennifer Osborn writes on behalf of Helix Charter High School. ■



The Highland Players’ production of “Urinetown, The Musical” begins Jan. 31. (Courtesy Highland Players)

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# Mediterranean Melange

## Restaurant Review

Frank Sabatini Jr.



With some of the cheapest meal prices in town coupled with big, bold signage that stands out from blocks away, Mystic Grill & Bakery is difficult to ignore.

Located advantageously on the corner of University Avenue and 70th Street, the fast-casual restaurant has been serving up Mediterranean-inspired food for 11 years. Yes, there are the obvious choices such as Greek-style salads, hummus, gyros and kabobs. But you'll also find things like kibbeh, which are crunchy Arabic croquettes encasing ground beef and onions, plus assorted meat pies of Levantine origin filled with spinach, beef or chicken shawarma. The kibbeh and meat pies are only \$1.99 each.

There's also pizza using house-made dough. Remarkably a 14-incher with two toppings sells for \$5.95 — less than what many frozen, commercial brands cost. Their aromas initially hit

your nose upon entering the place, just as your eyes lock onto those gorgeous cones of gyros and shawarma sitting on spits behind the order counter.

Mystic Grill & Bakery's Syrian co-owner, Kamal Laila, oversees the kitchen. He's been in the food industry for 30 years, having cooked in eateries while growing up in his homeland, and then owning and operating restaurants in Baton Rouge when coming to the U.S.

He ran a second location of Mystic Grill on Fletcher Parkway in La Mesa but recently closed it for an upcoming offshoot he'll open on Balboa Avenue in Kearny Mesa in about two months.

I kicked off a midday lunch with two kibbeh constructed traditionally with sturdy bulgur wheat casings. With kibbeh I've encountered elsewhere, the ground beef inside is

usually lightly seasoned. Yet in this case, the meat was so under-spiced that the earthiness of the wheat shells took center stage and even dominated the accom-

panying yogurt sauce, which seemingly contained mint and cucumber.

A meat pie filled modestly with chicken shawarma was my first introduction to the

house-seasoned poultry that is sliced directly from a sumptuous cone of all-white meat. It prompted me to order a plate of the shawarma by itself. The robust flavors of fennel, smoky paprika, cinnamon, salt and cayenne pepper duly compensated for the dryness of the chicken, which sported crispy edges reminiscent of those tasty end pieces you find on roast beef.

A falafel wrap with the addition of feta cheese inside needed a boost from garlic sauce since the fried chickpea balls tasted

cumin-deprived. But the sauce lacked flavor too, as I

could barely detect any garlic in it.

So I resorted instead to a little cup of

hot sauce with some mysterious

seasoning in it (maybe tahini), which gave the wrap a decent zip. On the plus side, it's a weighty item with plentiful fillings for only \$4.99.

When I asked Laila how he's able to keep prices so low, he didn't offer an explanation, but said with a chuckle, "We're going to change them soon."

I concluded my visit with a small plate of finger-sized desserts: two types of baklava, one made with pistachios and the other with almonds; and a miniature square of harisa.

The latter is an Arabic cake combining cream of wheat, yogurt, fresh coconut and honey. The merged ingredients create a distinct flavor that sort of resembles a juicy sugar cookie, if one ever existed. As for the baklava, both pieces were flaky on the outside and moist and nutty inside.

Mystic Grill's large, pictorial menu hangs over the order counter and visually entices you with substantial entrees and combination plates as well. Those offerings average around \$11 each and include beef or veggie moussaka; salmon or jumbo shrimp over rice; pasta with a choice of seafood and sauces; and kabobs of beef, lamb or chicken served with rice and salad.

The triple-storefront space offers ample seating at



Co-owner Kamal Laila at the cone of chicken shawarma (Photos by Frank Sabatini Jr.)



Kibbeh with yogurt sauce



(l to r) Pistachio baklava, almond baklava, and harisa; Falafel wrap



Julie White

## GINGER BEEF STIR-FRY

This is a very savory dish with tender meat and crunchy veggies. It is easy to make and fit for a special meal.

**Ingredients:**

- 1 1/2 pounds boneless beef sirloin steak, sliced thinly in 3-inch pieces
- 3 tablespoons cornstarch
- 2 tablespoons water
- Pinch of salt
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 cup thinly sliced carrots
- 1 cup sugar snap peas (strings removed)
- 3/4 cup beef broth
- 2 tablespoons soy sauce



(Courtesy pinterest.com)

- 2 tablespoons grated orange rind or peel
- 2 tablespoons grated fresh ginger (1 tablespoon ground ginger may be used, but fresh ginger is tastier)
- 2 cups fresh cooked white or brown rice
- Chopped green onions for garnish

**Directions:**

Cut up beef, add 2 tablespoons cornstarch water and salt. Toss well. In a large skillet, add 1 to 2 tablespoons oil and stir the beef until done. Remove to a plate and keep warm. Stir-fry the vegetables in additional oil.

Place remaining cornstarch and broth in bowl. Add soy sauce, orange peel and ginger. Return beef, veggies and broth mixture to skillet. Bring to a boil and stir until thickened.

Serve over steaming hot rice, sprinkle with sliced green onions. Serves about 4.

"Love is the greatest refreshment in life!" —Pablo Picasso.■

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Gen-X in a millennial world

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Marriage is not for the weakhearted.

I know the last thing you think you'd hear from your local divorce attorney is how to stay married, but I think many of my colleagues and I have seen enough to be able to tell you what can help keep a marriage intact.

And although you'd think it's counterintuitive to be selfish in a union of two people, one of the most important things you can do to enjoy your marriage is to advocate for your own needs.

I'm not talking about selfish desires like telling your partner, "Hey, I'd really like to sow my wild oats while being married to you" or "I would love for you to completely financially support me while I watch the latest season of whatever housewives is on TV" or even "You raise the kids while I hang out with my friends as though we're in college."

When I tell you to be your own advocate, I mean you need to tell your partner what you need to feel satisfied in your marriage.

The other day I was talking to a friend whose marriage was on shaky ground. He and his spouse had grown apart and he was starting to think about calling it quits. "We just like different things," he said, talking about how he liked to

focus on his career while his wife enjoyed going to movies. In the very next breath, however, he talked about how beautiful she was and showed me the latest photo.

I stared at him for a beat before chastising him. They had been married for 12 years and he was going to toss it to the side because they were doing different things? Was she disloyal to the marriage when she was going to movies? Was she dating someone else?

No, he admitted. "Neither of us has betrayed the other."

Unacceptable, I told him. "You are clearly still in love with her. Make it work. Go to counseling."

He worried his wife would wonder why he was willing to try now, after a year of squabbling.

I advised him to look into her eyes and tell her the truth: He had been talking to a divorce attorney when he realized he wasn't going to give up. "Tell her that even the divorce attorney could see the truth; tell her, 'I'm still in love with you.'"

He was struck by that; so simple to say, but still so hard to manage. It's funny how, when we are first wooing each other in the beginning of a relationship, we are willing to take risks, but during a relationship we become too prideful to admit our vulnerabilities.

But that one simple admission may go a long way toward healing a rift caused by the refusal to engage in meaningful communication.

"While you're at it," I said, "plan to go to a movie with her next month. And then ask her to hang out with you on the Sunday you're not working."

My husband, Derek, and I have been married for 18 years. We both acknowledge marriage is work. Yes, you need to compromise with your spouse, but you also need to ask for things you want, otherwise you can easily get lost along the way.

It's easy to accuse a person with "You never did this..." — it's harder to answer the question, "But did you ask?"

For example, I have sat through, and will continue to sit through, LeBron James' games, whether James is with the Cleveland Cavaliers, the Miami Heat or the Los Angeles Lakers. Derek in turn has endured my obsession with soap and lotion, sometimes taking us throughout the city on the hunt for a special brand.

There are times where we each groan through the various games and excursions, but for the most part it's good for us. Among many things, I love my husband for knowing I'd like to visit the Fresh store while we are in Los Angeles and I'm sure he appreciates the tickets I bought him to see James play his first game as a Laker. It's almost like Stockholm syndrome, except it comes with health benefits and being jointly tortured by our minor children.

This Valentine's Day, take a few minutes to sit down with your loved one, spouse or significant other, and agree to devote time to each other's needs. That fine balance between being selfish and selfless will prove worth it as your relationship grows and matures.

—Genevieve A. Suzuki is a local attorney who lives and works in La Mesa.■

► **GCCCD award**, from page 14

said Avila-Garcia, who grew up in Chicago.

Before the college district, she last worked for 10 years as an office manager for a realty company in Naperville, a Chicago suburb, but never far from her mind was the thought of trading Chicago's bitter cold winters for life in sunny California. When Avila-Garcia learned of the job opening at CAPS, she quickly assembled her resume and applied for the position.

Avila-Garcia said the move was the best decision she ever made.

"I am truly blessed to be surrounded by amazing people who have made a huge impact in my life and who I admire and look up to," she said.

Conklin said Avila-Garcia's work ethic and willingness to perform well beyond her assigned duties make her an invaluable member of the CAPS team. Her cheery nature helps when the occasional irate person comes into the office challenging a parking ticket.

Avila-Garcia is also credited for taking it upon herself to audit several invoices to CAPS and finding more than \$30,000 of incorrect charges.

"Gabby is a prime example of someone who started at the bottom and will continually rise to the top," Conklin said. "I am lucky to have found her and am proud to call her a member of our team."

—Della Elliott is public information specialist for the Grossmont-Cuyamaca Community College District.■

WORSHIP DIRECTORY

**Calvary Chapel**  
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**619-697-7221 Pastor Chris Pawlowski and Pastor Dave Riley**  
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PUZZLES ANSWERS ON PAGE 4

**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.

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

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**CROSSWORD Musical Musings**

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CREATORS NEWS SERVICE By Charles Preston

<b>ACROSS</b> 1 Reared 5 Foundations 10 Betsy's Wedding actor 14 Rickey ingredient 15 Focal part of a church 16 City of northern France 17 Donald Trump 20 Favorite 21 Leavings 22 Zodiacal sign 23 Compete 24 Large cask 25 Fay Vincent 34 Selected 35 Baseball great 36 Unit of vol. 37 Mystery-writer Gardner 38 Cracow natives 39 Spanish-born lyric soprano 40 Snare 41 Mrs. Meir 42 Marine mollusk 43 Tammy Fay Bakker 46 Vegas preceder 47 Exist 48 Lance 51 Houston team player 54 Greek letter 57 Ronald Reagan 60 Gauch's rope 61 Scottish island 62 Spoken 63 Backtalk 64 Khadafy's turf 65 Latest developments	<b>DOWN</b> 1 Radar signal 2 Widespread 3 Send out 4 Night condensation 5 Hogshead 6 Nautical position 7 Kind of party or line 8 Corn spikes 9 Hindu title 10 Sore 11 Baa baby 12 Cherished 13 Freud's daughter 18 Ancient Roman official 19 Crime leads 23 Urn 24 Not that 25 Early British settlers 26 Hurdled 27 Symphony conductor Sir Georg 28 Italian city 29 Nita, of the Silents 30 Pick up the tab 31 Extreme pain 32 Polo 33 Root or Yale 38 Internees 39 Party pauper 41 Harsh light 42 French painter 44 South American ruminants 45 Fine-grain meal 48 Kinfolk 49 Malay canoe 50 Lampreys 51 Dugout 52 Croatian 53 Salver 54 French dad 55 Cabbage salad 56 Misfortunes 58 de mer 59 Placed first
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# Countdown to ... murder!

Jeff Clemetson  
Editor

Murder mysteries are enjoying somewhat of a comeback in recent years. In addition to books, television shows and feature films, the genre is also enjoyed by revelers at special dinner parties with murder mystery themes. The continuing popularity of the murder mystery in no small part is owed to one of the original masters of the genre, Agatha Christie.

Lamplighters Community Theatre's current production of Christie's classic whodunnit "And Then There Were None" is an enjoyable step back in time to the roots of murder mystery storytelling.

The play is set in 1939 in the living room of a house on Soldier Island. Ten guests — revealed to have shady pasts — gather on the same weekend, invited by a mysterious host, and one by one are murdered in

accordance to a nursery rhyme. As the guests are picked off by the murderer, one of the 10 toy soldiers on the mantle of the fireplace also disappears. The slow unveiling of the details of the guests' past misdeeds throughout the play, as well as the stage prop of toy soldiers, makes for a fun way to keep the audience guessing what character will be the next to be victim and when.

Directed by Keith Anderson, the Lamplighters ensemble maintains a good pacing of the dialogue throughout the performance, which allows for some of more subtle British humor in Christie's writing to come through and also gives the audience enough clues to play detective and guess who the murderer might be.

Is it the prudish Miss Brent (Kira Blaskovich)? Or perhaps it is the adventurer Phillip Lombard (Nathan Boyer) who partakes in morning whiskeys and flirts with Vera (Alycia



Miss Brent (Kira Blaskovich)

McDonald), another suspect? Could it be the stoic and gruff Judge Wargrave (Bud Emerson), or the old General Mackenzie (O.P. Hadlock) who delivers the play's most dramatic scene as he confesses a past crime of passion? Did the butler Rogers (James Flaherty) or his wife Mrs. Rogers (Jennifer Cramer) do it? Perhaps the culprit is the police officer Blore (Lee Price) who delivers many of the play's comedic moments?



(l to r) Vera (Alycia McDonald) and Mackenzie (O.P. Hadlock) (Photos courtesy Lamplighters Community Theatre)

Or is it the Dr. Armstrong (Eva Kvass) who has knowledge of poisons? Or the playboy lush Martson (Gabriel Huerta)?

The excellent character acting by the cast is even more highlighted by the set — one living room, although set designer Mary Anderson and sound designer Steve Murdock do wonders with well-timed lightning flashes, sudden blackouts and other noises that add action to the story. As a small community theater, the Lamplighters' stage is perfect for this type of show — small set production with a focus on dialogue and story and in "And Then There Were None," the acting keeps the audience enraptured up until the very end when the murderer is revealed. But don't ask anyone who has seen the play or read the book who that is — as a matter of tradition, it is a secret to be revealed by attending a performance.

## 'And Then There Were None'

Lamplighters Community Theatre  
5915 Severin Drive,  
La Mesa

Through Feb. 10 on Fridays  
and Saturdays at 8 p.m.,  
Sundays at 2 p.m.

Tickets: adults \$22;  
seniors, students military  
\$19; special rate of \$20 for  
group of 10 or more

lamplighterslamesa.com  
619-303-5092

"And Then There Were None" is playing at Lamplighters Community Theatre through Feb. 10. For tickets and information, visit lamplighterslamesa.com.

—Reach Jeff Clemetson at  
jeff@sdenn.com.■



(l to r) The butler Rogers (James Flaherty) and Blore (Lee Price)



Phillip Lombard (Nathan Boyer) and Vera



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# Best of Boise

**Travel Tales**  
Nancy Stern



Nestled near the foothills in the High Desert, the city of Boise, Idaho has a lively culture of arts, outdoors activities and family-friendly festivals — plenty to keep tourists happy and busy. From as stroll down Freak Alley to a step back in time at the Basque Block, here is a glimpse at some of the best Boise has to offer.

**Freak Alley**

Walking down one well-known block, Freak Alley, will inspire you to take out the camera for what is recognized as the largest mural gallery in the Northwest. This alley is located between business buildings and is popular in the artist community. They can pay a fee to create their brightly painted murals on the back walls; over time, some illustrations are painted out and new ones are applied by other artists. The alley was established in 2002; an annual mural event is held every August to view the recently added artworks.

**Boise River Greenbelt**

The Boise River Greenbelt is consistently rated as the top attraction on TripAdvisor. Paved pathways meander along the Boise River, traversing 25 miles of lushly landscaped park foliage, that are best experienced by bike.

Tourists of all ages can rent bikes from McU Sports, located at 820 W. Jefferson. Helmets, locks and repairs are included in the rental fee, which is \$15 for a half day or \$25 for eight hours. Boise Green Bike is another mobility option. Download the app ahead of time to find the nearest bike kiosk located throughout the downtown corridor.

Along the route, you will pass through the “Ribbon of Jewels Parks,” which includes Esther Simplot Park and Julia Davis Park. The latter is where visitors can spend some time exploring the Boise Art Museum or Zoo Boise.

**Idaho Anne Frank Human Rights Memorial**

Located at an entrance to the Boise River Greenbelt, this is the only memorial dedicated to Anne Frank in the U.S. The

visual display began as a traveling exhibit honoring Frank, but the community and state worked together to permanently keep it in Boise.

The memorial honors the courage and strength of the human spirit, traits Anne embodied during her short life. The 180-foot quote wall is engraved with heartfelt sentiments, accompanied by a life-size bronze sculpture of the brave girl and nearby reflecting ponds.

**State Capitol building**

The beautiful Idaho State Capitol building is visible from many points in town. Constructed from sandstone, the building has the distinction of being the only state Capitol building heated by geothermal water, which is pumped from a source 3,000 feet under street level. Additionally, the public has free access to attend session proceedings.

**Hyde Park Historic District**

For a fun afternoon, head to the neighborhood in Boise’s North End, known as the Hyde Park. This historic district was a 1982 addition to the National Register of Historic Places. It is popular for its boutiques, restaurants, and eateries; an old-fashioned soda fountain and candy store are among the locally owned specialty shops.

September visitors can attend the Hyde Park Street Fair, an annual event that includes live music, food and craft vendors, as well as a children’s play area.

**JUMP**

JUMP — an acronym for Jack’s Urban Meeting Place — is a place where everyone can discover their personal creativity and potential. It was inspired by Jack Simplot, a fearless entrepreneur.

Events are offered in the Share Studio, a kitchen area to experiment with culinary skills, and the Move Studio, which features yoga, dance, and fitness classes. Additionally, Inspire and Play Studios both encourage artistic expression; the latter invites musicians, designers, and filmmakers to hone their talents.

**The Basque Block**

Boise is home to the most concentrated Basque population anywhere outside of Basque Country in Spain. In the heart



Anne Frank Memorial



Alive After Five (Photos by Ron Stern)

of downtown is an area known to locals as the Basque Block. The block features a Basque museum, The Basque Boarding House, Basque restaurants, and The Basque Market.

The Basque Museum and Cultural Center provides visitors with an interactive learning experience introducing them to Basque culture and history, both nationally and in Europe.

Next door to the museum is the Cyrus Jacobs House. Built in 1864 — and restored in 2005 — it is the oldest brick house in Boise and features historical artifacts. From 1910 to 1969, it served as a boarding house, where immigrants from the old country could feel at home with Basque food and fellowship while speaking in their native Basque language of Euskara.

**Alive After 5**

Summer in Boise is the best time to experience the local music scene. Local and visiting bands perform a variety of music to entertain everyone at a popular outdoor concert,

Alive After 5. In its 32nd year, the music and food event is held every Wednesday evening at Grove Plaza in the summer months. In addition to the tunes, a water fountain keeps the kids cool and entertained while the adults contemplate the delicious fare.

**Idaho Botanical Gardens**

Visitors will gain a renewed love of nature from a trip to the Idaho Botanical Gardens. Fifteen acres of flora and fauna with themed gardens — such as the English Garden, a Winter Garden of Glow (on display from Thanksgiving to New Year’s Day), and a meditation garden with native and exotic plants — will inspire green thumbs to grow their own gardens. To further one’s botanical knowledge, educational programs are also available.

On Thursday evenings, music is performed on the grounds, which once belonged to the now defunct Idaho Penitentiary, where the inmates previously tended a dairy farm, crops, and fruit trees.



Idaho State Capitol Building


Nothing is more exciting than when one comes across a new adventure, food, or people, and all of these can be found in the hidden gem that is Boise.

—Nancy Stern is a travel writer with her husband Ron Stern. This was a sponsored trip; however, all opinions herein are the author’s.■



Freak Alley is the largest mural gallery in the Northwest.

# 11TH ANNUAL SALUTE TO LOCAL HEROES



## Honoring 8 Local Heroes from La Mesa’s Public Safety Organizations

Thursday, March 14 - 5:00 pm - 8:30 pm  
The Golden West / California Ballrooms at the  
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One ballot per person. Ballots must be postmarked, submitted  
online or hand-delivered by 11:59 pm on Sunday, March 3rd 11:59 pm

Dining & Entertainment

- American Cuisine
- Bakery
- Barbeque
- Beer
- Billiards
- Breakfast
- Brunch
- Buffet
- Burger
- Burrito
- Casino
- Casino Buffet
- Casual Dining
- Catering
- Chinese Cuisine
- Cocktail
- Coffee Shop
- Comfort Food
- Dance School
- Deli

- Dessert
- Dinner
- Donut Shop
- Family Restaurant
- Fine Dining
- Greek Cuisine
- Golf Course
- Happy Hour
- Health Food Store
- Hot Wings
- Indian Cuisine
- Irish Pub
- Italian Cuisine
- Japanese Cuisine
- Jazz Bar
- Juice/Smoothies
- Live Music Venue
- Lunch
- Margarita
- Martini

- Mexican Cuisine
- Micro Brewery
- New Restaurant
- Nightclub
- Outdoor Dining
- Performing Arts Theatre
- Pet Friendly Dining
- Pho/Noodle House Restaurant
- Pizza
- Romantic Dining
- Salad
- Sandwich
- Seafood
- Spanish Cuisine
- Sports Bar
- Steakhouse
- Sushi
- Thai Cuisine
- Vegetarian/Vegan
- Wine Bar

BUSINESS & RETAIL

- Accountant
- Acupuncture
- Antiques
- Appliances Store
- Art Gallery
- Attorney
- Auto Dealership
- Auto (Used) Dealership
- Auto Repair Shop
- Bank
- Barber
- Bike Shop
- Boutique
- Car Wash
- Child Care
- Chiropractor
- Computer Repair
- Consignment/Resale
- Cosmetic Services
- Credit Union
- Day Spa
- Dentist
- Dermatologist
- DJ (Event)
- Doctor

- Dispensary
- Dry Cleaner
- Electrician
- Electrician (Company)
- Event Organizer
- Financial Planner
- Fighting Gym
- Florist
- Furniture Store
- Garden Supply
- General Contractor
- Gym/Workout Studio
- Handyman
- Hair Salon
- Home or Residential Cleaning
- Home Care / Caregiver
- Hardware Store
- Hospital
- Hotel
- Insurance Broker
- Jewelry
- Locksmith
- Manicure/Pedicure
- Massage
- New Business

- Optometrist
- Personal Trainer
- Pet Boarding/Dog Care
- Pet Groomer
- Pet Groomer (Mobile)
- Pet Sitter
- Pharmacy
- Photographer
- Physical Therapist
- Plumber
- Pool Services
- Real Estate Agent
- Real Estate Office
- Retirement Living
- Solar Company
- Supplement Store
- Tailor
- Tanning Salon
- Tattoo/Piercing Studio
- Veterinarian
- Veterinarian Hospital
- Waxing or Threading Salon
- Wedding Planner
- Windshield Repair
- Yoga Studio



# LA MESA COURIER

## COMMUNITY AND ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT CALENDAR

### ONGOING EVENTS

#### 'And Then There Were None'

**Through Feb. 10**  
Lamplighters Community Theatre presents this classic Agatha Christie whodunit. Ten strangers are lured to a deserted island. A mysterious voice accuses each of having gotten away with murder – before one of them drops dead. Can the others discover the identity of the murderer before they all fall prey to the trap? Tickets \$22. 5915 Severin Drive. Ticket purchases online at [bit.ly/2DtTb1c](http://bit.ly/2DtTb1c).

### FEATURED EVENTS

#### FRIDAY

Jan. 25

#### La Mesa blood drive

About one in seven people entering a hospital need blood. One pint of blood, which is the amount volunteers give when they donate blood, can save up to three lives. Since blood is always needed, volunteers are asked to give blood for patients, such as those going through cancer or trauma. To support the cause, a mobile blood drive will be in the Sharp Grossmont hospital auditorium from 11 a.m.–4 p.m. It is recommended that donors consume an adequate meal and plenty of fluids prior to giving. A photo identification must be presented upon signing up to donate. 5555 Grossmont Center Drive.

#### SATURDAY

Jan. 26

#### Sara makes art

St. Madeleine Sophie's Center will present works by local artist, Sara Millet at Sophie's Kensington Gallery. This showcase will feature a collection of paintings by Sara, as well as mosaic art made by three of Sophie's artists including Deborah Gile, Reg Oberg and Victoria Pires. Don't miss your last chance to see this unique collection. 4168 Adams Ave. Free.



#### 'Herland'

The Moxie Theatre presents a hilarious and heartwarming story about growing into yourself and getting what you want. Grace McLeod's unforgettable comedy, "Herland," about rocking out to the beat of your own drum comes to the stage of San Diego's Moxie Theatre. Runs Jan. 26–Feb. 17. Tickets start at \$15. 6663 El Cajon Blvd. Tickets and showtimes available at [bit.ly/2CGqLTC](http://bit.ly/2CGqLTC).

#### THURSDAY

Jan. 29



#### Jessie Chang

Pianist Jessie Chang and the Jewish Men's Choir join the Tifereth Israel Community Orchestra for their latest concert at the synagogue in San Diego, with music by Beethoven, Thomas, Schumann and various choral selections. Show begins at 7:30 p.m. Tickets \$20. 6660 Cowles Mountain Blvd. Purchase tickets at [bit.ly/2MsXP5X](http://bit.ly/2MsXP5X).

#### WEDNESDAY

Jan. 30



#### CoC mixer at Rainbow Travel and Cruise

The La Mesa Chamber of Commerce will host an open house honoring their new addition, Rainbow Travel and Cruise from 5:30–7 p.m. Fun, food, beverages, and an official ribbon cutting will take place at Rainbow T&C, and guests can learn about some of the vacations, cruises and travel services that they offer. This event is complimentary to La Mesa Chamber Members, \$10 per person for guests, and \$20 for all "at door" guests. 8285 La Mesa Blvd. Visit [lamesachamber.net](http://lamesachamber.net).

#### THURSDAY

Jan. 31

#### Greater San Diego Career Fair

Looking to break into a new career field? Then take part in the San Diego career fair at the Handlery Hotel. You'll meet face-to-face with hiring decision-makers from some of the area's top employers. Dress professionally and bring plenty of resumes, because they're here to hire. Save time, money and effort interviewing with multiple companies in one day at one location. Many companies have several openings and are eager to meet with potential

candidates. 11 a.m.–2:30 p.m. Free. 950 Hotel Circle North.

#### SATURDAY

Feb. 2

#### Brew Coffee Classics

Brew Coffee will host a classic car and bike show at its La Mesa location on Feb. 2. Grab a cup of joe and take a look at some beautifully restored classic cars, vintage bikes, and old school Vespa scooters. 10 a.m.–3 p.m. Free. 6101 Lake Murray Blvd.

#### MONDAY

Feb. 4

#### Intro to watercolor

Join Nainsook Framing + Art for a simple and elegant introduction to watercolor painting. This class will give students the opportunity to practice creating pastel skies with watercolor. All materials and snacks provided. \$25. 6–8 p.m. 8130 La Mesa Blvd. Register online at [bit.ly/2FBTlt2](http://bit.ly/2FBTlt2).

#### THURSDAY

Feb. 7



#### Kiss: End of the Road

Kiss, the legendary rock band will perform at Viejas arena on Feb. 7. Don't miss the chance to see what the band is calling "the final kiss tour ever." Tickets start at \$60. 5500 Campanile Drive. Visit [bit.ly/2FVzZi7](http://bit.ly/2FVzZi7) for ticket information and purchases.

#### FRIDAY

Feb. 8

#### More Than Music Festival

SDSU will host a live music festival to benefit SDSU students and communities affected by the recent California fires. Guests will explore curated art galleries with live and interactive art, listen to live music from five local acts, and enjoy food trucks and vendors as they dance the evening away. Tickets \$15 or \$10 for students. Located at the Montezuma Hall in the Conrad Prebys Student

Union. 6075 Aztec Circle Drive. Tickets available at [bit.ly/2FVotD9](http://bit.ly/2FVotD9).

#### 'Magnify'

Sophie's Gallery & Gift Shop in Downtown El Cajon will present "Magnify," a show celebrating contemporary floral images running Feb. 8–28. Photographs taken by Sophie's artists are shot through a magnifying glass, to create more intense and unique effects of light and shadow. The opening night for "Magnify" will include a reception from 5–8 p.m. with wine, hors d'oeuvres and live music. Three local art vendors will also be featured at the reception. Free. 109 Rea Ave.

#### SATURDAY

Feb. 9

#### 'Love Letters'

Lamplighters Community Theatre presents a special staged reading in time for Valentine's day. A romantic story of distant lovers and the love letters that reveal their long history together. This show is open seating, tickets are \$15. 5915 Severin Drive. To purchase tickets, visit [bit.ly/2CGMlQO](http://bit.ly/2CGMlQO).

#### Rummage sale

La Mesa First Methodist Church will host a rummage sale from 9 a.m.–2 p.m. on Feb. 9. Proceeds go towards church community outreach programs as well as those assisting community members in need acquire food and shelter. 4690 Palm Ave.

#### SUNDAY

Feb. 10

#### Yuko Maruyama

Pianist-composer Yuko Maruyama will perform a free concert at Mission Trails Church. She will play songs from her albums as well as Jazz and American classics. A graduate of USC with a master's degree in Jazz Studies, Yuko has toured the U.S. as a Kawai Pianos performing and recording artist. 3–4 p.m. 4880 Zion Ave.

#### MONDAY

Feb. 11

#### Distinguished lecture at SDSU

Join the School of Journalism & Media Studies at SDSU for the Allen H. Center Distinguished Lecture in Public

Relations. President and CEO of the Institute for Public Relations, Dr. Tina McCorkindale, will give the second annual Allen H. Center Distinguished Lecture in Public Relations from 5:30–7:30 p.m. Complimentary parking will be provided for attendees. This event is free and open to the public. 5500 Campanile Drive. Guests are asked to RSVP online at [bit.ly/2RZ56Qc](http://bit.ly/2RZ56Qc).

#### THURSDAY

Feb. 14

#### Cupid is stupid

The Journey Community Church worship center invites you to its 6th annual Cupid is Stupid Valentine's day show. A night of entertainment for anyone who wants to laugh on Valentine's Day. Great for a date night or a night out with friends, an evening of clean comedy where all proceeds are donated to Global Missions programs at Journey. Show goes from 7–9 p.m. Tickets are \$15 online, \$20 at the door. 8363 Center Drive. Purchase tickets at [bit.ly/2R5iTA4](http://bit.ly/2R5iTA4).

#### FRIDAY

Feb. 15

#### Free blood pressure screening

The La Mesa Adult Enrichment Center will be offering free blood pressure screenings from 11:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m. No appointment necessary. Open to the public. 6299 Capri Drive. For information, call 619-740-4214.

#### SUNDAY

Feb. 17



#### 'Focus on Nature'

The Mission Trails Regional Park Foundation is pleased to present a Fine Art Exhibition featuring award winning photographer Gerry Tietje. The public is invited to a reception in honor of the photographer on Feb. 17 from 2–4 p.m. The exhibit will be

on display until March 30. Gallery is open daily from 9 a.m.–5 p.m. Admission is free. 1 Father Junipero Serra Trail.

#### WEDNESDAY

Feb. 20

#### Chamber of Commerce breakfast with Dianne Jacob

Join the La Mesa Chamber of Commerce at Marie Callender's for its first breakfast meeting of the year. Hear firsthand about San Diego County business from Supervisor Dianne Jacob and upcoming projects and other items that are being addressed by the chamber. Enjoy a hearty breakfast of eggs benedict, scrambled eggs, bacon sausage, potatoes, fresh fruit, coffee, juice and more. A raffle will be held during the meeting. \$25 for non-members, \$15 for members. 6950 Alvarado Road. For information and registration, visit [bit.ly/2FLmvpD](http://bit.ly/2FLmvpD).

#### THURSDAY

Feb. 21

#### Bob Seger & The Silver Bullet Band

Classic rock singer-songwriter Bob Seger will perform at Viejas Arena on Feb. 21 with his Silver Bullet Band. Show begins at 7:30 p.m. Tickets start at \$75. 5500 Campanile Drive. Tickets available at [bit.ly/2MrNirM](http://bit.ly/2MrNirM).

### RECURRING EVENTS

#### Thursdays Movie Matinee

The La Mesa Adult Enrichment Center shows various classic and modern films on Thursdays at 1 p.m. in the center's main hall. Cost is \$2 per ticket. 8450 La Mesa Blvd. For movie listings, visit [bit.ly/2FVrOSQ](http://bit.ly/2FVrOSQ).

#### Fridays La Mesa Farmers Market

La Mesa's Farmers Market offers fresh local produce, food, flowers, live music, and arts & crafts. 3–7 p.m. along La Mesa Boulevard. Free. Visit [lamesavillage-association.org](http://lamesavillage-association.org).

#### Sundays

#### Learn to Square Dance

Join the Sundown Squares each Sunday at the Adult Enrichment Center and learn the time-old tradition of square dancing. 7–8:45 p.m. \$5. 8450 La Mesa Blvd. ■

## GET UP TO DATE

With La Mesa's Most Comprehensive Online Calendar  
VISIT [lamesacourier.com/la-mesa-courier-calendar](http://lamesacourier.com/la-mesa-courier-calendar)

## GET THE WORD OUT

about your next event!  
Post or advertise your event on La Mesa's extensive online calendar- FREE posts and reasonable rates for ads  
VISIT [lamesacourier.com/la-mesa-courier-calendar](http://lamesacourier.com/la-mesa-courier-calendar)



Happy Valentine's  
Day to Home  
Lovers Everywhere!

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In a Rapidly-Changing  
Market, Real Estate  
Experience & Knowledge  
Matter More than Ever:

Most Homes Sold in La Mesa Last 16+ Years  
Over \$300,000,000 in closed  
Real Estate Transactions  
Top 1% Agent in San Diego County  
Extraordinarily High Repeat  
and Referral Clientele



JUST LISTED!



La Jolla — \$2M - \$2.25M  
Mid-Century Modern with White Water Views!

ACTIVE!



MT. HELIX — \$750 - \$800K  
Stunning Contemporary on 1/2 Acre with Views!

ACTIVE!



ROLANDO VILLAGE  
\$475K

IN ESCROW!



MT. HELIX — \$700 - \$750K  
For Cowboys Who Like an Ocean View!

IN ESCROW!



LA MESA — \$600 - \$650K  
La Mesa Family Home on Friendly Cul-de-Sac!

SOLD!



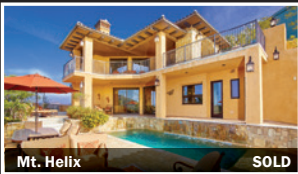
MT. HELIX — EXECUTIVE HOME  
\$900K - \$950K

SOLD!



BORREGO SPRINGS

SOLDS  
in 2018:



Mt. Helix SOLD



Mt. Helix SOLD



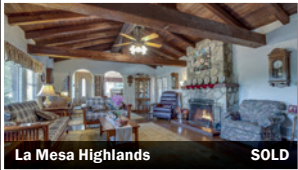
Mt. Helix SOLD



Mt. Helix SOLD



Mt. Helix SOLD



La Mesa Highlands SOLD



Bankers Hill SOLD



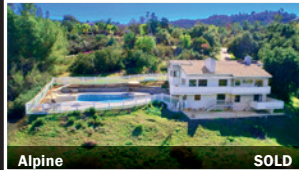
Fletcher Hills SOLD



Windsor Hills SOLD



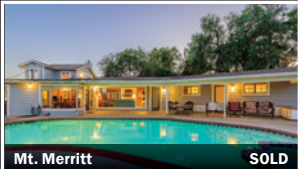
Escondido SOLD



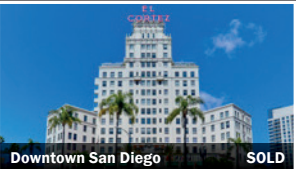
Alpine SOLD



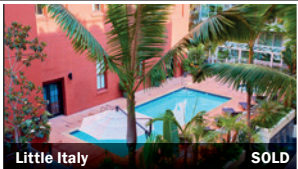
Windsor Hills SOLD



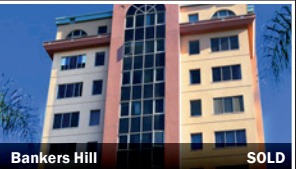
Mt. Merritt SOLD



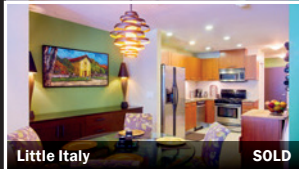
Downtown San Diego SOLD



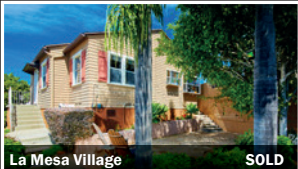
Little Italy SOLD



Bankers Hill SOLD



Little Italy SOLD



La Mesa Village SOLD



La Mesa Village SOLD



La Mesa SOLD



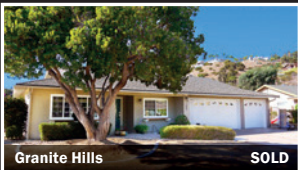
La Mesa SOLD



La Mesa SOLD



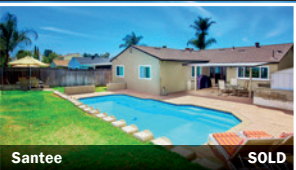
La Mesa SOLD



Granite Hills SOLD



Casa de Oro SOLD



Santee SOLD



Descanso SOLD



Lemon Grove SOLD



City Heights SOLD