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Get festive with our
Holiday Guide
Page 4

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

FEATURE

Field of determination



Little Leaguer overcomes rare disease to keep baseball dream alive. **Page 2**

OPINION

Holiday scams



'Tis the season to look out for the naughty taking advantage of the nice. **Page 16**

FOOD & DRINK

Pho-tastic



Saigon Star offers up a Vietnamese take on soup and sandwich. **Page 14**

ALSO INSIDE

Politics	7
Community	10
Education	12
Mission Trails	16
Classifieds	18
Library	21
Calendar	23

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San Diego Community News Network

MENDING THROUGH MENTORSHIP



Mentor Kaleb Weakly (right) talks with Gold Star child Mekhi Sutton during a Gold Star Corps outing at Mission Trails Park. (Photo courtesy Jessica Merritt)

Programs offer support for Gold Star families and wounded vets

Jeff Clemetson
Editor

Cory and Jessica Merritt know a lot about service to community and country. Cory is an active duty senior chief petty officer in the Navy and for

the last several years Jessica has spearheaded programs started by the couple to help wounded veterans and Gold Star families — the families of servicemen or women killed in combat.

Cory began serving the veteran community after he had

an opportunity to work with some other local organizations, taking wounded vets out on outdoor adventures. But he felt like something was missing from the experience with those other groups.

See **GOLD STAR CORPS** page 20 →

Major flooding hits Grantville ... again

Doug Curlee
Editor at Large

Alvarado Creek in Grantville once again overflowed its channel the first weekend in December.

This has been going on for years — I've written about it several times on these pages.

This time, though, it was different — bigger, faster moving, and more destructive than usual.

It kind of attracts your attention when you see the floodwaters were strong enough and fast enough to lift an 18-wheel semi-truck up and into the creek bed.



Flood water around Alvarado Creek was so severe it carried a semi-truck into the creek bed. (Photo by David Smith)

See **FLOODING** page 21 →

NEWS BRIEFS



Food drive volunteers in Del Cerro
(Courtesy Kassy Kaiser)

Thanksgiving food drive a huge success

The Salvation Army's Thanksgiving Food Drive was a success this year, bringing in almost 4 tons of food — much of it from the Del Cerro community. The food drive is organized by Kassy, Lindy and Tom Kaiser, and other volunteers from Del Cerro.

The food collected was distributed to a new high of 105 families, who each received a box containing a turkey and all of the Thanksgiving dinner trimmings: dressing, Jell-O, pumpkin, cake mix, many cans of vegetables and fruits, dinner rolls, bags of potatoes, apples, and onions, dinner napkins and even a roasting pan and recipes for roasting a turkey, making dressing and gravy.

In addition to the Kaisers' efforts organizing the food drive, other local people and businesses donated time and materials for the food boxes. Windmill Farms and Matt Mann provided the turkeys; Home Depot provided the boxes; Pat and Chuck McGregor provided the roasting pans; Nancy Losek collected food at Pizazz Hair and Nail Salon; and Jack and Candy Kirchner provided the use of their garage to put the boxes together. Each of these donors, along with over 50 volunteers and donors from around San Diego, participated in donating to the food drive.

The Salvation Army selected the recipient families

See **NEWS BRIEFS** page 2 →

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Perfect pitch

Local boy adapts baseball play after bout with mysterious illness

Doug Curlee
Editor at Large

Will Becker, at the age of 8, was already hooked on baseball, and dreaming of joining the pitching staff of his favorite major league baseball team — the Boston Red Sox — may be as a right-handed pitcher. Fast forward to 2018, and you'll see Will Becker thinking of doing it as a left-handed pitcher. There's an unpleasant story behind that switch, and it has to do with the mysterious, polio-like disease that has hit more than 200 people in 31 states. It's called acute flaccid myelitis, and it hit Will in 2014

— robbing the 8-year-old the use of his right arm. "I couldn't throw or use my hand or arm for anything" he remembers. "I couldn't even use my fingers to pick up anything." The virus — if that's what it turns out to be — mainly seems to affect the young, although adults are not immune. Several people have died, while some people seem to be ever so slowly recovering, at least partially. A litany of hospital and doctor visits didn't seem to be doing Will much good, because doctors and researchers really didn't know how to treat it. Its main target appears to be nerve tissue, and that's where Will's family decided to attack it. They wound up at Johns Hopkins on the East Coast, one



Will Becker switched to pitching lefty after contracting acute flaccid myelitis and losing most of the use of his right arm. (Photos by Doug Curlee)

of America's premier treatment and research facilities. There, surgeons took healthy nerve tissue from Will's calf and left hand and built a sort of nerve bridge around his neck to his right shoulder, hoping that would help the right arm recover. "It's starting to work a little," Will said. "I can move my fingers some now, and maybe it'll keep getting better. I sure hope so." So back to his Red Sox dreams. "I just decided that if I'm gonna play baseball, I'd have to learn to do it left-handed, so I just started trying to throw left-handed. I think it's getting a little better all the time. I'd like to at least be able to play high school baseball at Patrick Henry." It's getting better enough that Will, now 12, can play in

developmental leagues for kids coming out of Little League and moving on to the bigger fields. When he's not pitching, Will plays first base. He wears his glove on the left hand, catches the ball, then quickly drops the glove, grabs the ball and throws it. I watched him play a game, and he's very good at it. Batting is still a problem, but that's getting better, too. Will is very cognizant of people like Jim Abbott, who was born without a right hand, yet pitched well in the major leagues for 10 years, including one no-hitter. Will may never pitch for the Boston Red Sox, but if he doesn't, it won't be for lack of trying. —Reach Doug Curlee at doug@sdenn.com.■



(l to r) Will Becker with his twin sister Emma

► **News briefs**, from page 1

and picked up the large boxes of food on Tuesday before Thanksgiving and delivered them to or had them picked up by the selected families. The Salvation Army said that this is the only drive of its kind in San Diego where food is provided for the entire dinner — and beyond. The boxes contained enough food for the family for a week. The Salvation Army honored the Kaiser Family with the Volunteer of the Year Award for their continued support in helping the Salvation Army provide food for less fortunate families for Thanksgiving. "This is only possible because of the generosity and caring of the Del Cerro community and friends," said Kassy Kaiser in a press statement.

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Kiwanis planning 'Sweethearts Ball'

To kick off the celebration of the first families moving into Allied Gardens 65 years ago in 1954, the Kiwanis Club of Grantville-Allied Gardens is planning an "I Love Allied Gardens Sweethearts Ball" on Friday, Feb. 8, 2019. The event will be a dress up, adults-only celebration of the 65th anniversary of Allied Gardens, held at the Allied Gardens Community Center from 7 to 10 p.m. Live entertainment will be provided by The Surf Birdz, playing songs from the '60s and '70s. The gym in the Allied Gardens Rec Center will be decorated with a Valentine's Day theme for the community event and gift baskets, donated by local merchants and friends, will be raffled off during the evening. The Kiwanis will also serve free anniversary cake to all the celebrants.

Allied Gardens was first conceived on June 12, 1952. Walter Bollenbacher and Louis Kelton purchased part of the 6,000-acre Waring Ranch on the north rim of a hillside rising eastward out of Mission Valley, on the outskirts of San Diego, to build the new housing development. The first subdivision map of Allied Gardens was recorded on May 25, 1953 and then grading for lot sites and streets started very soon afterward. Later in 1953, the first houses were constructed on Twain Avenue and then arrival of the first residents began in early 1954. "Living in Allied Gardens, Del Cerro, San Carlos and the Navajo community is indeed the good life and we have much to be thankful for," stated Kiwanis member John Peterson. "Let's celebrate our good fortune with our friends, families, and neighbors at the Kiwanis I Love Allied Gardens Sweethearts Ball." For more information, visit alliedgardenskiwanis.org.

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Credit card balances rise in San Diego

Before San Diegans head to the malls or online retail outlets this holiday season, a

See **NEWS BRIEFS** page 3 —>

6 SMART HOME ESSENTIALS

With so many devices and home automation available these days, turning your house into a smart home is easier than you might think. But, there are some things to keep in mind when deciding which devices are essential – and what kind of internet service you'll need to maximize your smart home experience.



- **A home speaker that doubles as a virtual assistant.** Current models can answer questions, turn on lights, play video, access virtual assistants like Siri or Alexa, share weather and news updates, act as a timer, and play music on demand. Some models even help you shop online.
- **Home cameras.** The latest in home monitoring such as Cox Homelife allows for remote live video viewing from your smartphone, video recording and customizable notifications.
- **Smart lights.** Replace existing light bulbs with energy efficient bulbs that can be controlled remotely with a few taps on your smartphone or tablet. Cox Homelife has an automation feature to control indoor and outdoor lights, bringing you (and your pet) peace of mind while you're away from home, as well as saving energy and money.
- **Smart locks.** Remotely control doors in your home. Features can include voice commands, customized chimes, activity logs, integration with other smart devices, and special codes for friends, dog walkers, and deliveries.
- **Smart thermostats.** Programmable thermostats allow you to remotely turn the air and heat in your home up and down, and on and off. Save money and energy, and arrive to a warm or cool home.

- **Smart Search entertainment.** There are many options to watch TV and stream content online, and Cox's Contour TV service brings smart search options, Netflix integration, a voice-controlled remote, and cool apps together into one service that is easy to navigate. Speak into the remote to find the programming you want to watch – use a famous movie quote, the title of a show, a genre, or the name of an actor. You can even say "free movies," and available titles in the On Demand library will pop up.

Just as important as the devices you select is the internet service you choose.

In San Diego, Cox Communications recently doubled internet download speeds automatically for the majority of its customers at no additional charge. Preferred, the company's most popular tier of service, is now up to 100 Mbps, while Essential and Starter, which are ideal for lighter users with one to five devices connected to the home network, doubled to 30 Mbps and 10 Mbps, respectively.

For households with multiple family members who want to connect dozens of devices simultaneously, are heavy gamers or have the need for the fastest speeds around, Cox's Gigablast service offers download speeds of 1 gigabit (1,000 Mbps).

Take a short quiz on the speed advisor at www.cox.com to determine which speed is right for your household.

Cox is also improving the in-home internet experience with Panoramic WiFi, which provides "wall-to-wall" WiFi coverage so you have a connection wherever you may roam in your smart home.

► News briefs, from page 2

recent report on credit card balances may give them pause before swiping for that gift.

On Nov. 29, CompareCards released a report that found San Diego had the fourth biggest credit card balance increase in the U.S. in the past year. The average credit card balance in San Diego jumped 10 percent from September 2017 to September 2018, according to the report.

San Diego's credit balance increase was much larger than the average of the nation's 50 largest cities, which grew at 3.6 percent. Austin, Texas had the biggest credit card balance increase of 12 percent. St. Louis, San Jose, and Orlando also had double-digit balance growth increases. Only four cities saw balance decreases, led by Nashville.

Of the 50 top U.S. metropolitan areas, 44 saw some increase, though many were small. Washington D.C. had the highest average balances overall and Indianapolis had the lowest.

"It's troubling to me that we're seeing card balances continue to grow," said Matt Schulz, chief industry analyst at CompareCards in a press release. "The truth is that if you're carrying credit card debt when the economy is good, it likely means that you're not putting enough money away for when things head south. Americans need to commit to making 2019 the year they finally tackle their credit card debt because rising interest rates mean it's only going to get harder and more expensive to do so in the future."

For the complete report, visit bit.ly/2QwkH8W.

Weber assumes leadership of Legislative Black Caucus

On Dec. 3, Assembly member Shirley N. Weber, Ph.D., assumed the chair of the California Legislative Black Caucus (CLBC). The CLBC, which addresses policy and budgetary issues affecting black Californians, consists of 10 African-American members of the legislature, including two Senators and eight Assembly members.

"I am extraordinarily grateful to my CLBC colleagues

for their trust and support as we launch into a new and challenging legislative session," Weber said in a press release. "Now more than ever, the CLBC has a vital role in ensuring that the needs of the African-American community are addressed by lawmakers. Aside from tackling the persistent challenges of poverty, educational inequity, over-incarceration and underemployment, we are faced with leadership in Washington that fosters a climate of hatred and violence against minorities, woman and immigrants. This caucus will join in solidarity with our colleagues in the Latino, API, LGBT and Women's caucuses against this destructive trend."

Weber, who was elected by her CLBC colleagues last fall, served as vice chair for the past two years and succeeds Assembly member Chris Holden of Pasadena in the role of caucus leader. She is joined on the CLBC leadership team by Senator Steven Bradford as vice chair, Assembly member Autumn Burke as secretary, and Assembly member Jim Cooper as treasurer.

The CLBC was successful on a number of its policy priorities during the 2017-2018 legislative session, including leave for parenting students, prohibiting unnecessary prosecution of children under 12 and securing \$300 million to assist under-achieving students.

In addition to coordinating legislative efforts affecting the African-American community, the CLBC makes recommendations to the governor on the annual budget proposal, sponsors forums and raises scholarship funds.

SDG&E files request to end high usage charge

On Dec. 4, San Diego Gas & Electric (SDG&E) filed a request with the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) to eliminate the state-mandated high usage charge, which impacted more than 105,000 customers this past summer. Eliminating the charge for high-energy users would minimize bill spikes during months when energy usage is high.

"It was a challenging summer for our customers, particularly for people who experienced dramatic increases

in their bills due, in part, to the high usage charge," said Scott Crider, SDG&E's vice president of customer services, in a press statement. "We're committed to doing everything we can to develop proposals that provide some relief to high bills, and we're starting with requesting to eliminate this charge."

The high usage charge led to higher bills for customers that used more than 400 percent of their baseline allowance. On average, these customers would have saved approximately \$30 per month without the high usage charge.

The company is also exploring other proposals over the coming months. Ideas include eliminating seasonal pricing to stabilize bills, shifting the timing of the climate credit into a one-month lump sum in August to create meaningful savings in a month when bills are higher due to increased energy use, and conducting a new baseline allowance study to reflect changing climate and energy choices. Eliminating the high usage charge along with the other proposals would create real utility cost savings for families.

Pending approval by the CPUC, SDG&E hopes to eliminate the charge prior to the start of summer pricing, which begins June 1. Residents can also avoid the high usage charge by enrolling in one of several Time-of-Use (TOU) pricing plans, which are not subject to the charge. More information about TOU plans can be found at sdge.com/whenmatters.

Veterans to see boost in student services

Just before Veterans Day, the Grossmont-Cuyamaca Community College District announced news about expanded services and new facilities in store for its nearly 1,700 student veterans.

The two colleges have each secured \$200,000 in state grants to expand outreach and services to veterans and their dependents. In addition, both colleges have plans in place to nearly triple the size of their Veterans Resource centers, with construction at Cuyamaca College set to begin next spring.

See NEWS BRIEFS page 7 —————>

How to Avoid Costly Housing Mistakes Before and After a Divorce

San Diego - Divorce is rarely easy and often means a lot of difficult decisions. One of the most important decisions is what to do about the house.

In the midst of the heavy emotional and financial turmoil, what you need most is some non-emotional, straightforward, specific information and answers. Once you know how a divorce affects your home, your mortgage and taxes, critical decisions are easier. Neutral, third party information can help you make logical, rather than emotional, decisions.

Probably the first decision is whether you want to continue living in the house. Will the familiar surroundings bring you comfort and emotional security, or unpleasant memories? Do you want to minimize change by staying where you are, or sell your home and move to a new place that offers a new start? Only you can answer those questions, but there will almost certainly be some financial repercussions to your decision process. What can you afford? Can you manage the old house on your new budget? Is refinancing possible? Or is it better to sell and buy? How much house can buy on your new budget?

To help you know what questions you should ask and how to arrive at the right answer for your specific situation, a FREE special report has been prepared by industry experts entitled "Divorce: What You Need to Know About Your House, Your Mortgage and Taxes".

To hear a brief recorded message about how to order your FREE copy of this report call toll-free 1-800-270-1494 and enter 1009. You can call any time, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Get your free special report NOW to find out how to make this part of your current situation less stressful.

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Non-smokers will also enjoy over 800 slots and table games in the comfort of San Diego County's first and largest fully-enclosed non-smoking room - complete with its own separate entrance and Paipa's Surf & Turf buffet. The Gameday Sports Bar & Grill has 39

wide-screen TVs, including five 90-inch TVs, bar-top slot machines, a stadium-sized menu, over 30 beers on tap, the Party Pit complete with three blackjack tables, an extensive collection of sports memorabilia - and a high-energy atmosphere.

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Stealing hearts

Theater Review

Jean Lowerison



Uh-oh. It's November again. Time for His Grinchiness to reappear (in a moldy green costume that matches his disposition) to growl, grumble and glower about all those happy, smiling Whos down in Whoville.

But instead of just staying up there in his frigid digs on Mt. Crumpit and ignoring them, the Grinch (Ed Watts) wants to meddle and make everybody in Whoville as miserable as he is.

"Dr. Seuss's How the Grinch Stole Christmas!" is narrated by Old Max (Steve Gunderson), the Grinch's old dog who has retired and is about to move away. Old Max narrates the story as he looks around the old homestead one last time.

The thing that really gets the old grouch's goat is Christmas, that cheery time when everybody runs out to buy gifts for friends and family, sings happy holiday songs, and plans a big feast with roast beast. The Grinch can't stand all that cheer, and vows to put an end to it.

This year, he gets a wonderful, awful idea: he'll go down to Whoville and steal Christmas. Surely when everybody wakes up to no gifts, no stockings hung by the chimney with care and no dinner fixings, that'll do the trick.

His poor dog Young Max (Tommy Martinez) is forced to go along when the Grinch dresses Western style (complete with a 10-gallon hat) and goes down to Whoville to case the joint. They bump into several Whos, who think the Grinch weird but graciously invite him to dinner the next night.



(l to r) The Grinch grumbles about the Whos in Whoville with his dog, Young Max (Tommy Martinez) (Photos by Ken Howard)



Cindy Loo Hoo catches the Grinch stealing Christmas from Whoville

You know what happens: the Grinch — and poor, unwilling Max — come to dinner and wait until everyone's in bed. Then the green menace grabs all the packages, stockings and even the Christmas tree and stuffs them all up the chimney. Then they pack the "sleigh"

'Dr. Seuss's How the Grinch Stole Christmas!'

Through Dec. 29

The Old Globe's Donald and Darlene Shiley Stage

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(powered by poor Max) and whisk all the goodies away to Mt. Crumpit.

But what the Grinch doesn't count on is little Cindy-Lou Who (the irresistibly adorable Sadie Tess Coleman) and her ability to touch his two-sizes-too-small heart.

When Christmas Day arrives, the Grinch eagerly listens for weeping and wailing from Whoville. But he's shocked to hear them singing. It makes him wonder if maybe Christmas doesn't come from a store.

This is The Old Globe's 21st iteration of this Christmas tradition. By now there are regular cast members, some of whom have played more than one role over the years. But this whole cast — regulars and newbies — is excellent. And so is the fine orchestra led by Elan McMahan and the tech team that has been in place for some time.

James Vásquez directs and has restaged some of the choreography with great élan.

Every year the Grinch packs houses, and every year audience members leave the show with a smile, many humming the tunes. If you haven't seen it — or even if, like me, you've seen every single one — grab a kid and get down to the Globe. You won't regret it.

—Jean Lowerison is a long-standing member of the San Diego Theatre Critics Circle and can be reached at infodame@cox.net. ■



"Dr. Seuss's How the Grinch Stole Christmas" runs through Dec. 29



Citizens of Whoville gather for the holiday

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Fancy colored diamonds are very hot this year! "Cocoa", black, blue, green, yellow, and pink diamonds are set in many styles ready to surprise her.

Ammolite jewelry is a rare find just like the gem itself. These beautiful fossilized shells feature all the Feng Shui colors of nature in vibrant greens with flashes of blue yellow, red and purple.

Michou designs searches the world for the liveliest, brightest and most beautiful natural gemstones directly from mines in some of the most exotic places around the globe. This beautiful jewelry is inspired by art and nature, and crafted from sterling silver accented artistically with 22k gold vermeil.

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Inox is a unique and innovative line of men's jewelry and bracelets featuring stainless steel mixed with unique metals such as blue enamel perfect for honoring those in military or first responders. They also have a rose gold accented line called Bros Gold that is trendsetting for the man on your list.

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Guest editorials

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AARP Fraud Watch

Online shopping scams

As we near the holiday season, online shopping increases and so do online scams. Only use trusted sites to make on-line transactions and be wary of steeply discounted items. Sometimes scammers will attempt to lure you into making a purchase with phony online sales.

In addition, if you plan to buy or sell your own goods online, use a website or app that uses proper safety measures to ensure that you don't lose your money in the process.

Holiday employment scams

Over 500,000 people take seasonal jobs during the holiday season. Scammers like to take advantage of seasonal workers by posing as potential employers on third-party websites.

When prospective employees apply for these job listings, they will be asked to provide

personal information such as their date of birth, address and Social Security number for "verification purposes." Scammers can then use this information to steal your identity.

One big red flag to look out for is a job which offers a lot of money for very little work. If the position seems too good to be true, it is probably a scam. If you have questions about a job listing you see online, go directly to the business website or give them a call.

Holiday travel scams

Many people travel during the holidays to visit with family and friends. Be cautious of false rental advertisements online.

Do not use third-party websites to book hotels and be particularly wary of home rentals. Verify listings through online consumer feedback before you close the deal.

Some scammers will copy photos and details from real rental listings. They then accept pre-payment for booking

the house or apartment. You may only discover that you have nowhere to stay on the day you're supposed to check in.

Never give someone money before you see the place you are supposed to stay, and always verify the listing with hotels directly before booking any rooms.

Bill scams

During the winter season, we see an increase in scammers calling consumers and pretending to be a representative from their local utility provider. The fraudster will claim that your previous payments haven't cleared or that you owe them money. They will tell you that you need to pay the outstanding balance over the phone, or else your power, heat, or water will be turned off within the hour. The swindler will insist that you didn't pay the bill (even if you know you did), and will tell you to pay over the phone with a credit card or a cash transfer.

Scammers are banking on your fear that your heat will be shut off during the cold winter season in order to collect your personal information. Hang up and call your utility provider directly to confirm your billing status.

Be a fraud fighter! If you can spot a scam, you can stop a scam. Report scams to local law enforcement. For help from AARP, call 1-877-908-3360 or visit the AARP Fraud Watch Network at aarp.org/fraudwatchnetwork.

—AARP is the nation's largest nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to empowering people 50 and older to choose how they live as they age. With a nationwide presence and nearly 38 million members, AARP strengthens communities and advocates for what matters most to families: health security, financial stability and personal fulfillment. To learn more, visit aarp.org or follow @AARP and @AARPadvocates on social media. ■

Preventing gun violence before it happens

Mara W. Elliott

Mass shootings and everyday gun violence have become so commonplace in America that many are losing hope that we can stop the senseless loss of innocent lives.

In San Diego, my office and the Police Department are restoring hope by leading the state in using a relatively new tool that prevents gun violence when red flags appear: the Gun Violence Restraining Order.

Courts issue GVROs against a person who poses

a clear threat to themselves or others, preventing them from possessing, accessing, or purchasing firearms or ammunition.

My office has obtained more than 80 GVROs this year, leading to the surrender of more than a dozen assault weapons, 200 other firearms, and 80,000 rounds of ammunition. In each case, we presented a judge with clear and convincing evidence — warning signs that could not be ignored.

There's no telling how many lives we've saved. Some GVRO respondents had made

specific threats to kill. Others threatened suicide. Many used their firearms recklessly because of addiction or mental health issues.

The California law was prompted by the 2014 mass shooting in Isla Vista, a community where I felt safe as a student while attending UC Santa Barbara. A GVRO could have prevented that tragedy and hundreds like it. Yet few California cities were obtaining GVROs until I became your City Attorney and made this program my priority.

Our success was noticed in Sacramento and we were

asked to conduct GVRO training for law enforcement agencies and their attorneys throughout California. Our fourth training is this month, in Anaheim. Previous trainings were held in San Diego, Riverside, and San Bernardino counties.

Here are examples of how we've used GVROs to prevent predictable tragedies:

A car dealership employee made disturbing comments to his coworkers, praising the Las Vegas mass shooter for setting a modern

See GUN VIOLENCE page 9 →

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A look back at Republican Women’s 2018



Pat Boerner

Navajo Canyon Republican Women, Federated (NCRWF) kicked off the holiday season on Dec. 11 by celebrating with a festive party at the home of Ginny Wisley. A generous amount of toys and gifts were collected and donated to Military Outreach Ministries (MOM) to make the holidays a little bit merrier for our local young military families. It has been our pleasure to donate to this group for several years and it is always rewarding to know how much these gifts are appreciated.

We took the opportunity at this holiday gathering to review some of the activities and accomplishments of 2018. At our January meeting at the Brigantine in La Mesa, San Diego GOP Chairman Tony Kravaric spoke and got us all fired up for a great political year. In February, Kirby Horrell from Saved In America told how his organization rescued children being held in foreign countries. In March, Jason Roe, top political consultant and strategist, brought us up to date on the happenings in Washington.

April was special as we held an evening event where popular radio talk show host Mike Slater emceed the evening and even held a live auction.

Mark Larson and Sherriff Gore came to the Brigantine in May and enlightened us with what is going in in our very own San Diego County. As part of the effort to repeal the gas tax, Carl DeMaio was our featured speaker in June.

After our summer break, Steven Frank, well-known political activist and consultant, kept us focused on the California political climate. October was our very successful annual fundraising Fashion Show at Bali Hai and we also participated in the La Mesa Oktoberfest. November was our final regular meeting of the year and Senator Mike Morrell did an excellent job of giving us reasons to be optimistic for the future of our conservative principles.

All that plus the precinct walking, the phone calling, the voter registration effort, the sign waving, the poll watching and the tireless effort throughout the year to spread the word about the principles that Republicans hold dear.

Our president Kat Culkin guided us through a productive, fun-filled and educational 2018 and we all appreciate her leadership. We were so proud when she was awarded the Louisa Akins Woman of the Year award last March.

Please join us Jan. 8, 2019 at the Brigantine Restaurant



Graham Ledger (Courtesy NCRWF)

in La Mesa as we welcome two-time Emmy Award-winning newsman Graham Ledger as our speaker. Ledger, now hosting “The Daily Ledger,” is a well-known, well-respected television newsman in Southern California.

Check-in begins at 10:30 a.m. for the 11 a.m. meeting. A full-course lunch is served with the speaker to follow. Cost is \$25 and reservations are required. Cash and checks are accepted, but sorry, no credit cards. Please RSVP to ncrwf99@gmail.com or call Marjie at 619-990-2791 and she will confirm your reservation.

2019 will be a year of announcements and exciting plans, so please come get involved and learn what we are all about. For more information on our activities, please visit our website at navajo-canyon-rwf.org and check us out on Facebook.

—Pat Boerner writes on behalf of the Navajo Canyon Republican Women, Federated.■

► News briefs, from page 3

“The men and women in our armed forces have always been there to serve us, and we are proud and honored to in turn to provide them with the services they need to secure the education needed to reach their goals,” stated Grossmont-Cuyamaca Community College District Chancellor Cindy Miles in a press release. “Our district is deeply committed to helping them embark and stay on their journey to future success.”

California community colleges enroll approximately 80,000 veterans and active duty service members each year. More than 1,100 veterans are enrolled at Grossmont College and 562 enrolled last year at Cuyamaca College.


The Grossmont College grant will pay for a veteran program specialist tasked with providing operational support for the Veterans Resource Center and coordinating events and activities to help keep veterans on track and involved. In addition, Grossmont is in the planning stages of building a new, near-3,400-square-foot Veterans Resource Center with a large computer lab and quiet commons, a study center, a meeting room, counselors offices, a lounge and an outdoor patio, said Veterans Counselor Maria Martinez. The new center is scheduled to open in 2021.

At Cuyamaca College, the grant is paying for a part-time Veterans Resource Center coordinator, several new computers, a food pantry for veterans and their family, an expanded

textbook library, and an “academic survival kit” complete with a flash drive, calculator, stationery, and pens, pencils and highlighters, said Veterans Counselor Osvaldo Torres.

In addition, Cuyamaca College is expanding its Veterans Resource Center from 870 to 2,487 square feet, with construction set to begin this spring. Veterans Services will be housed in a bungalow near the library while construction is under way.

Besides the Veterans Resource centers, those who have served have access to priority registration, tutoring, specialized counselors and more.■



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Atkins to headline next Dems meeting



La Mesa – Foothills Democratic Club

Tina Rynberg and
Jeff Benesch

Most of the nearly 500 members of the large and influential La Mesa Foothills Democratic Club live within the boundaries of the 39th State Senatorial District and are represented by State Senate President pro Tempore Toni Atkins. We are thrilled to be hosting Atkins at our 2019 kick-off meeting on Wednesday night, Jan. 2.

We'll be starting with a year in review and hear the senator talk about initiatives that she put forward in 2018. She'll be concentrating on issues that directly impact the 39th. Her take on the future of the stadium property, and SDSU's future expansion into Mission Valley should be fascinating. All of us will be affected in some way by major developments in Mission Valley East, especially the river park, campus expansion, traffic and housing challenges and a new sports stadium.

This past year, we've had meetings touching on women's health and breast cancer, affordable housing, human trafficking, San Diego River conservancy (and the stadium measures), women empowerment in corporate institutions, global climate action, and the homelessness crisis. Atkins has had bills passed and signed on most of these important issues, so

to have her discuss her initiatives will be a great follow-up to our previous discussions in these important and relevant areas.

And lastly, she'll look into 2019, what's in store legislatively and politically, and what her role will be in countering the Trump agenda and it's destructive policies at the border, on trade, global warming, women's rights, and immigration reform. It should be highly instructive and interesting given that Democrats hold a super majority in both houses, and every state-wide elected office, including new Governor Gavin Newsom. How exactly will the "blue wave" manifest itself in California's legislature in 2019? Bring your questions as Atkins will conduct an extensive Q&A session after her remarks.

Atkins served as an aide to San Diego City Councilmember and LGBT trailblazer Christine Kehoe, and, in 2000, was elected to replace Kehoe as the council's District 3 representative. During her eight-year tenure, Atkins provided steady leadership as interim Mayor of San Diego amid a challenging and tumultuous time at City Hall.

Elected by voters to the state Assembly in 2010, Atkins served there for six years. In 2014, her colleagues selected her to be the Speaker of the Assembly – she became the first San Diegan and the first lesbian to hold the position. Atkins counts a major \$7.5-billion water bond, creation of the state's first Earned Income Tax Credit, and passage of two on-time, balanced budgets among her proudest accomplishments.



Sen. Toni Atkins (Courtesy LMFDCC)

In 2016, Atkins was elected to represent the 39th District in the state Senate and was appointed to the prestigious Rules Committee, in addition to the committees on Transportation and Housing, Health, Labor and Industrial Relations, and Natural Resources and Water. Among the bills she got passed and signed was SB 2, which created a permanent source of funding for affordable housing, a signature piece of legislation she had worked on for seven years.

In January 2018, after just one year in the Senate, she was elected by her colleagues to be the next Senate President pro Tempore. In March 2018, she was sworn in, becoming the first woman and the first openly LGBTQ person to lead the Legislature's upper house.

The Jan. 2 meeting starts at 6:30 p.m. at the La Mesa Community Center, 4975 Memorial Drive, La Mesa. Please view our website at Lamesafoothillsdemocraticclub.com and like us on Facebook.

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

Making government more efficient for residents

District 7 Dispatch



Scott
Sherman

Recently, Mayor Kevin Faulconer announced the expansion of an online portal that will make the application process for single-family home improvements easier and more efficient.

The new residential feature is an expanded function of an online business website called OpenCounter, an innovative web portal that streamlines the process of locating, expanding, and getting permits for a business in the city.

Now, the program will be expanded to help homeowners, contractors, and builders with information on potential permits required for home-improvements. The program guides users through the permitting process such as building or repairing a secondary structure such as a pool or a deck; installing solar panels or graywater systems; and upgrading building exteriors like replacing a roof or windows.

By moving the permitting process online, the City is providing customized assistance 24 hours a day and giving city officials a new level of insight into economic trends. Since 2017, OpenCounter logged more than 75,000 site visits and launched more than 23,000 business projects, becoming a valuable one-stop-shop for entrepreneurs and residents.

I am proud that the city of San Diego continues to move services online and implement innovative ideas to better serve taxpayers and businesses. To access this new and convenient tool please visit: business.sandiego.gov.

If District 7 residents have other ideas on how the city can better improve services, please contact my office at 619-236-6677 or email at ScottSherman@SanDiego.Gov.

—San Diego City Councilmember Scott Sherman represents the District 7 neighborhoods of Mission Valley, Grantville, Allied Gardens, Del Cerro and San Carlos.■

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► **Gun Violence**, from page 6

record for killing, fantasizing about shooting up a mosque, and vowing to return to work with a gun if he were fired. My office obtained a GVRO and the man surrendered a semi-automatic rifle with significant killing capability.

After a student discussed conducting a school shooting on social media, police found disturbing images on his

social media, including racist posts and photos of him shooting an AK-47 rifle, and learned he had killed small animals on campus. Our GVRO prevents the student from accessing firearms.

A wife heard her husband cocking a pistol in their bathroom during an argument over their divorce and hid the pistol the next morning. The husband returned two days later and said he was going to shoot her and their infant child. Our

GVRO allowed police to confiscate the pistol.

A man made a suicide threat to his fiancé, and later assaulted his elderly father for refusing to hand over his firearms. Police arrested him and he threatened to shoot a police officer on his release. With our GVRO, police confiscated seven guns, including three AR-15 rifles.

A man believed to be in the early stages of dementia threatened to shoot his wife

and a neighbor because he erroneously believed they were having an affair. His 75-year-old wife escaped the house, barefoot, by climbing over a fence and running through a cactus garden. We obtained a GVRO and police seized a rifle and two pistols.

These examples show how GVROs prevent gun violence in a range of situations where other laws do not allow so quick a response to an immediate threat.

As the mother of young children, I was forever changed by the massacre at Sandy Hook Elementary School. Now, as your City Attorney, I work every day to protect San Diego's children, and everyone else who could be the victim of foreseeable gun violence.

— Mara W. Elliott is the San Diego City Attorney. Reach her at cityattorney@sandiego.gov or at 619-236-6220. ■

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Del Cerro Action Council news

Jay Wilson

At the Jan. 24 Del Cerro Action Council (DCAC) meeting, we should have an update on the All People's Church.

We received some input from Del Cerro residents regarding the land use designation of the property because it was designated as institutional. The Community Plan amendment now shows the designation specifically as a church. This can be verified by viewing Figure 24 in the Navajo Community Plan. To view the plan, go to sandiego.gov and type in "Navajo Community Plan" in the search window in the top right hand corner of the page. There is now a symbol of a cross on the property in question.

On Dec. 4, I attended the San Carlos Area Council meeting to hear a presentation by Johnnie Perkins, the deputy chief of operations for the city of San Diego on the Pure Water program. Mr. Perkins gave a very thorough presentation on this new program. When completed, it will produce 30 million gallons of potable water per day. In addition to providing potable (drinking) water

for the city of San Diego, it will reduce the out-flow into the ocean from the Point Loma Sewage Treatment Plant by 50 percent.

Perkins was in Washington D.C. recently and received a grant check from the Environmental Protection Agency for \$614 million towards the construction of the \$1.4 billion Pure Water treatment plant. Construction is to begin next year and will be completed in 2023.

In 2000, the city was purchasing water from the Metropolitan Water District for \$400 per acre-foot. Today it is \$1,300. Perkins emphasized that this new source of potable water is beneficial to the city for three primary reasons: it will help the environment; it is prudent financially; and it is reliable. Currently, 85 percent of our water is imported from Northern California and the Colorado River. We are going to ask Perkins to present the same program at a DCAC meeting.

About three months ago, CalTrans installed a gate on the SDSU side of the Alvarado Creek/storm drain where it goes under the Interstate 8 freeway

and comes out by Adobe Falls. The purpose was to keep people from using it as a gateway to Adobe Falls. Unfortunately, during one of the recent rainstorms, pressure from the water ripped the gate away from the tunnel entrance. At this time, there is not an update on replacing the gate.

The rainstorm during the week of Dec. 3 produced extensive flooding in Grantville. One casualty was a semi-truck parked on property adjacent to the Alvarado Creek Storm Drain in Grantville. The truck and trailer was pushed into the storm drain by the force and amount of floodwaters. Portions of roads in Grantville were also closed and many businesses were flooded. It is likely that the lack of vegetation due to the 40-acre fire in the Adobe Falls area exacerbated the runoff into the creek.

Please mark your calendar for Thursday, Jan. 24, 2019 for the next DCAC meeting. We meet at 7 p.m. at Temple Emanu-El.

—Jay Wilson is secretary of the Del Cerro Action Council. For more information, visit delcerroactioncouncil.org. ■

News from the Allied Gardens-Grantville Community Council

Shain Haug

The Allied Gardens-Grantville Community Council (AGGCC) Nov. 27, 2018 Town Hall Meeting addressed the Zephyr housing project for homeless veterans at the old Motel 6 on Alvarado Canyon Road, the Stella housing project for previously homeless persons on Twain, and the Blue Water development for employed low-income families on Fairmont Extension. There will be about 80 dwelling units in each and all will be supported through public housing resources.

The meeting was attended by representatives of Affirmed Housing, the owner/builder, and PATH (People

Assisting The Homeless), the organization that supports residents during their transitions from homelessness. More information will be found in the minutes of the meeting that will be published in the next AGGCC newsletter.

Residents will begin moving into Zephyr in January. These folks will be coming off the street to their new homes with little in the way of household supplies. We hope that the community will step up to give each new resident a "Welcome Home" package. If we each make a small financial investment, we can create kits consisting of the following type of items: Cooking

See AGGCC page 19



Volunteers set up lights on the fly over bridge on Dec. 1. (Photo by Sophia Frost)

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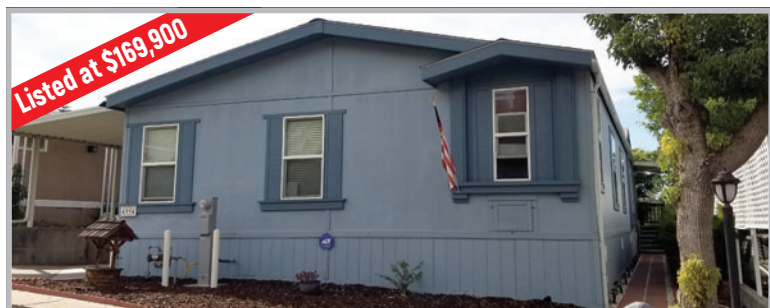
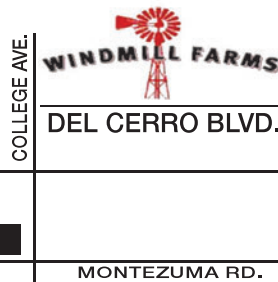
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**PATRICK
HENRY**
High School

Patrick Henry High School News

Elizabeth Gillingham

Letter of Intent Signing Day

Three Patrick Henry seniors who are going to participate in athletics at the college level got to celebrate National Letter of Intent Signing Day at Petco Park on Wednesday, Nov. 14. This opportunity celebrates years of dedication, hard work, and sacrifice. Patriot Athletics wants to celebrate:

Johanna Wood – San Francisco State (Volleyball)

Allison Arend – New Mexico State (Soccer)

Heather Amancio – Allegheny College (Field Hockey)

In addition, baseball coach Sheldon Watkins forwarded early commitments for our spring sports:

Jonathan Marshall has committed to Occidental University where he will be pre-med and play baseball. He was their top recruit and he had many other offers but wanted to stay in California.

Andrew McAlpin received almost 70 percent on an athletic scholarship to play at Northwest Nazarene University just outside of Boise, Idaho. NWU is a Division 2 school where he should really thrive.

Dante Juliano has also committed to Northwest Nazarene.

The head coach at NWU is someone coach Watkins played with at Point Loma Nazarene and he was the head coach there until he made the move to Boise. NWU is really excited to get a couple California kids, Watkins said.

Coach Watkins is very proud of their accomplishments and is thrilled to see Patrick Henry Baseball getting the attention of college recruiters before the season even begins. Go PHHS Patriots!

Student of the Month

Senior Kalani Piotrowski was nominated for the Kiwanis student of the month for November and was honored last month at the Kiwanis Breakfast. Principal Elizabeth Gillingham accompanied Piotrowski and her mother.

Gillingham stated she was honored to recognize Piotrowski and noted her for her leadership both inside and outside the classroom. She was cited last year as being instrumental in Patrick Henry receiving the EcoChallenge award for our energy efficiency use and recycling efforts. As part of the NJROTC community service club, Piotrowski led different students to participate in various activities in the community to make our world better and help raise awareness among the students at Henry.

In her nomination, PHHS science teacher Leah Silverman noted that “Kalani is enthusiastic and inquisitive; she participates regularly and puts effort in everything she does in physiology. I absolutely love having Kalani in class. She’s the ideal student — helpful, hard-working, and has a great energy about her. Way to go, Kalani!”

Senior Naval Science Instructor Ron Flaherty stated in his recommendation, “Kalani has taken on the roles and responsibilities as the



Kalani Piotrowski (Photos courtesy PHHS)

commanding officer of NJROTC. She volunteers so much of her time with all the community service events and campus clean ups. She is the color guard team commander for the Navy League field meet team. She leads and mentors the students in NJROTC. She is an amazing young lady who thinks of others before herself.”

National Youth Soccer player Mia Fishel



Senior soccer player Mia Fishel

PHHS is proud of the accomplishment of senior soccer player Mia Fishel who played last month in the 2018 FIFA Under-17 Women’s World Cup Championship held in Uruguay Nov. 13–Dec. 1. The competition was fierce and though they were only able to

play in three games, the experience was something Fishel will never forget.

In the first game, the U.S. team won 3-0 against Cameroon where Fishel played the entire game and scored the team’s first goal for the tournament in the first 22 minutes of the game. They played North Korea next and lost 0-3 and later played against Germany where they also lost 0-3. In both games, Fishel credited the opposing team for being very skilled and fast. Although, she also noted in the last game that her team kept missing shots within inches of the goal as they bounced off the goal posts.

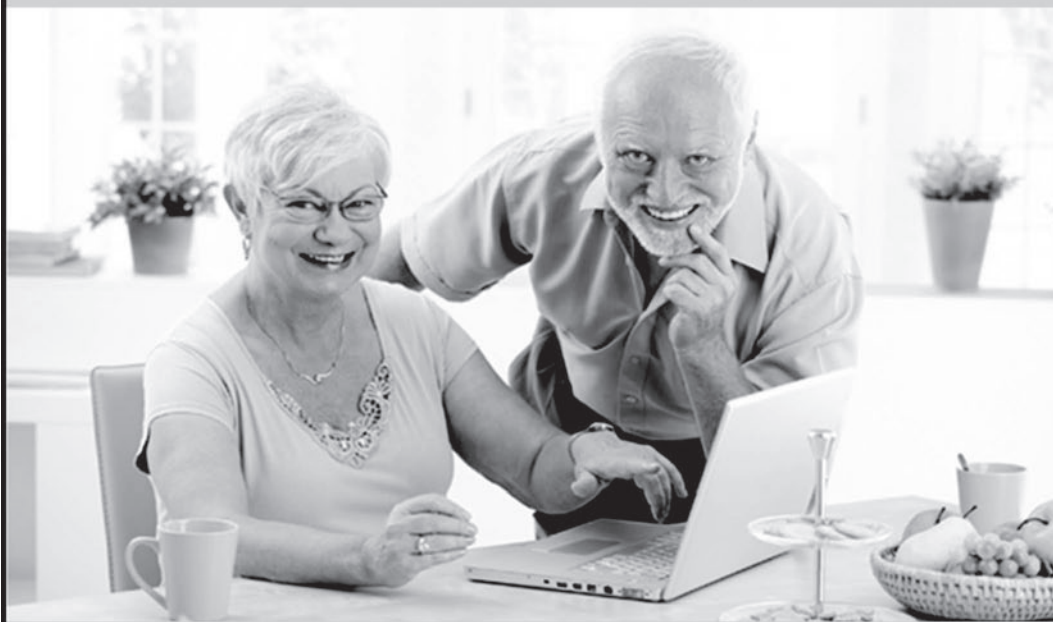
Fishel learned the importance of adapting to a team and the players you’re working with. She also shared the importance of building the team spirit by sleeping, eating and training together constantly, avoiding the other teams’ players so they couldn’t get in your head. She shared how they traveled in a motorcade with police escorts and flags on their shuttles.

Fishel has traveled and played soccer internationally for many years and has played in places such as Italy, China, Mexico, and Amsterdam. She hopes to continue to play soccer in Europe on a professional level and she has also committed to UCLA with a full-ride soccer scholarship.

In her letter written to the staff at PHHS, Fishel stated: “I would like to thank you all for the support and cooperation with the U.S. Soccer National Team over the past four years. My success would not have been possible without everyone’s help. Also, I want to say thank you for the overall support from the school when I was competing in Uruguay. I got supportive emails, school broadcasts, and social media posts from teachers and students. That helped me realize my dream and be inspired. I will continue this journey at UCLA next year, and I hope

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See PHHS page 13

► PHHS, from page 12

you will continue this journey with me.”

Fishel is humble and kind and has maintained a 3.88

GPA cumulatively even while pursuing her active adventures in soccer. She credits her teachers at Henry who she feels have gone the extra mile to help her and she can’t thank them enough for their support!

ASB Improvement Project

Toria Tolley, from our ASB (student government), asked every student to bring in a new or in-good-condition toy to school last month as part of her ASB School Improvement Project. For every toy any student donated, their name was put into a raffle to win two Universal Studios tickets.

Tolley wanted her peers to understand what children in the hospital go through and how these toys can make a difference. At the end of her drive,



Toria Tolley drops off toys at the Sunny Morning Show as part of a toy drive.

she had collected more than 100 toys and dropped them off at the Sunny 98.1 radio station, where she was recognized on air for her amazing efforts in helping others.

Model United Nations begins

The Henry Model United Nations (MUN) team sent a tiny, but powerful delegation to participate in the Bruin MUN Conference at UCLA last month. After completing many hours of research and position paper writing in advance of the weekend’s conference, two Henry sophomores — Olivia VanHouten and Ainslie Mellinger — won the Best Research award as co-delegates to N.UNHCR, the committee dealing with international refugee issues. Freshman co-delegates Ava Lewison-German and Garrett Mellinger represented Henry in the N.UNESCO committee dealing with women’s education, violent extremism and free speech around the globe.

While Ainslie’s health prevented her from making the second trip to UCLA, she and Olivia both did significant advance research and position paper writing (turned into the UCLA MUN chair in advance of conference weekend for review). Their joint work led the duo to the Best Research



(l to r) Olivia Van Houten, Ava Lewison-German and Garrett Mellinger (Photos courtesy PHHS)

award. Special mention that VanHouten deftly handled the issues for both she and

Ainslie in person at the weekend’s conference — a lot of work!

‘Old teacher, New Physical Education’

[Editor’s note: Written by P.E. teacher Terri Clark]

Fall brings us cooler weather, the holidays and lots of great food. It seems an appropriate time, as my physical education students traverse through their freshman year, that we take a look at food and what nutrition and diet mean to a 14 to 15 year old.

In order to properly look at the issues, we start with looking at the big/ macro picture of food. We look at it from a broad perspective, across the country, by asking questions like: What is food scarcity? What is a supply chain? What is factory farming? And what does an obesity map look like and what does it mean to me?

We eventually take it down to the micro, or personal level, where we analyze the content of what goes into our body daily, and unpack what the consequences those daily choices have on us.

The goal here is to help students make meaningful connections to the bigger picture of nutrition. We look at things like: Where does my food come from; what happens when kids eat a nutritionally deficient diet; and what are the long-term outcomes of poor or improper nutrition? We start with the obvious questions such as: Where does that carne asada burrito come from and what nutritional impact does it have to their short-term and long-term health?

The real challenge here is to get the Insta-Snap-Twitter

generation to make that long-term connection. It isn’t easy, but here I go. We’re on a journey to discover how food works for or against us.

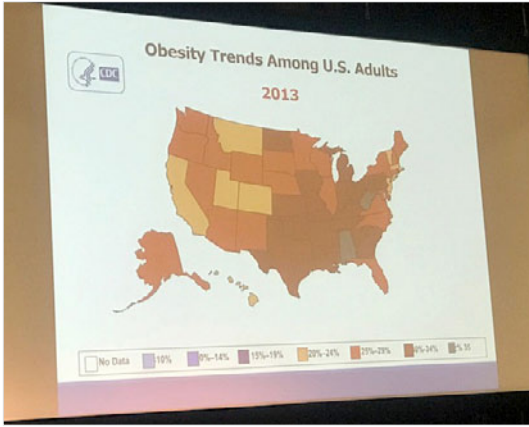
My professional journey on this adventure of “Old Teacher, New Physical Education” is one of learning to navigate the world of educational technology. When I began teaching physical education over 25 (short) years ago, I didn’t even own a personal computer, and did

not have one in my work setting either. Flash forward, and students are walking around with a “computer” in the palm of their hand. Learning to engage students in meaningful

work through technology has definitely been a mental workout, building a whole new set of muscles for this teacher. TED Talks, Promethium Boards, and Google Classroom are a few of the workouts I’ve engaged in these past few years. The workouts are hard, but

as with any exercise, if you stick with it long enough, you will reap the benefits. You can follow our journey on twitter @teachingthemasses.

—Elizabeth Gillingham is principal of Patrick Henry High School.■



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Soup and sandwich, Saigon style

Restaurant Review

Frank Sabatini Jr.



herbs. I traditionally gravitate to the beef varieties because the broth is laced with higher measures of rich bone marrow. This, however, didn't let me down.

The house-made broth was crystal clear, making it hard to imagine such liquid could offer the depth of flavor it did. Imagine the most comforting, medicinal-tasting homemade chicken soup you've ever eaten, and this will likely match up with its semi-salty and herba-ceous notes.

The noodles are made in-house as well. You'll find them in various widths depending on your choice of pho, which come with such options as rare or well-done steak, meatballs made of marinated ground beef, vegetables with tofu, or shrimp.

For the chicken pho, the noodles were exactly the slimness I prefer — just a notch thinner than spaghetti, and in just the right amount.

(Nothing ruins a bowl of pho more than scads of noodles crowding the bowl and inundating the precious broth with starch.)



Chicken and noodle pho



A place for Vietnamese specialties with a touch of elegance (Photos by Frank Sabatini Jr.)

Saigon Star Vietnam and China Bistro

10450 Friars Road, Suite E (Grantville)

619-640-2985, saigonstar-restaurant.com

Prices: Soups, salads and appetizers, \$4.75 to \$12.95, banh mi sandwiches, \$5.25 to \$6.50, pho, \$7.95 to \$10.75, stir fries and specialty plates, \$8.50 to \$14.95

Served alongside were the requisite garnishments: basil leaves (still on their branches), bean shoots, sliced jalapenos, and halved limes. Adding a little of each to the bowl goes a long way in terms of nudging the flavor to your liking. In my book, this was flawless pho.

From eight different types of spring rolls that include rib eye, pork, chicken, and grilled fish with ginger, I chose the

sugarcane shrimp rolls. Served in pairs, they're constructed

with finely ground shrimp molded around handy stalks of sugarcane, which infuses the seafood with a tinge of sweetness. Similar to skewers, they're tossed onto a grill and land on your table decently seared.

That same grilled essence came up a few notches in charred pork that was piled into a superior banh mi sandwich I ordered.

Starting with a melt-in-your-mouth baguette made by a local Vietnamese bakery, the crusty bread also captured sliced cucumber, shredded carrots and a faint smear of mayo. The curly pork pieces were deeply marinated in sweet Vietnamese barbecue sauce, making it one of the most lovable banh mi sandwiches I've had in years. In keeping with the traditional

See SAIGON STYLE page 15 —>

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► Saigon style, from page 14

low cost of these French-inspired creations, the cost was an easy \$5.75.

Prices across the menu are otherwise moderate. The spring rolls average about \$5.50 per order. Appetizers such as salt and pepper calamari (or shrimp) cost \$9.95, while stir fries such as spicy lemon grass with beef, or seafood fried rice are \$10.50 each. On the highest end of the price scale are specialties

like filet mignon served over fresh greens for \$12.95, and sizzling fish fillet with turmeric and ginger for \$15. The menu also features several Chinese dishes

such as orange chicken, kung pao chicken, and beef and broccoli for \$10.50 per plate. Saigon Star is located between a nail salon and dental office in the Friars Village plaza—a few doors away from San Diego Brewing Company.

It's been around for nearly 10 years, although it's now under second ownership by a Vietnamese family whose members and employees are endearing and efficient. Along with other customers filtering in during a fairly busy lunch hour, I was greeted warmly; my food arrived promptly; and the courses were properly staggered.

The clean, Zen-like dining room greets with dried branches and live greenery. Dark-wood booths and bamboo window shades further impart an earthy elegance you might not expect from a strip-plaza restaurant. Based on this single visit, Saigon Star gets a top-star rating for its delightful food, personable service and relaxing atmosphere.

—Frank Sabatini Jr. is the author of “Secret San Diego”



Pho garnishments include fresh basil, bean shoots and jalapenos (Photos by Frank Sabatini Jr.)

(ECW Press) and began his local writing career more than two decades ago as a staffer for the former San Diego Tribune. You can reach him at fsabatini@san.rr.com.■



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News from Mission Trails Regional Park



Jennifer Morrissey

The weather has cooled, and the recent rain brought much-needed water to Mission Trails Regional Park (MTRP). As you consider your visits to the park in the coming months, please note that, depending on the severity of the storm, trails may be muddy and impassable. Trails closed by the park rangers will be marked. Also, Mission Trails' rangers will close parking lots if they are muddy and there's too much puddling. The Visitor Center parking lot often remains open, but it, and all of our lots, close at 5 p.m. this time of year. Please note that the MTRP Visitor Center will be closed on Christmas and New Year's Day, but its parking lot and restrooms will be open, both closing at 5 p.m.

Visitor Center Gift Shop

Gifts that give twice! Take care of your holiday shopping and support Mission Trails at the Visitor Center Gift Shop. You can find books for adults and children, walking sticks, MTRP-branded items including our new 5-Peak Challenge T-shirt, toys, puppets, jewelry, stocking stuffers, and pottery and baskets made by indigenous peoples in Baja. Your purchase supports the park through the Mission Trails Regional Park Foundation. The

Gift Shop is open 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. daily.

Mission Trails holidays Itinerary

If you have friends and family visiting this holiday season or simply want to have new experiences at MTRP during the holiday break, we have outing ideas for you.

At the MTRP Visitor & Interpretive Center, explore our stunning 14,000-square-foot facility that includes educational exhibits, films, a library, gift shop, and expansive terrace with a stunning view of Mission Gorge. On view at the Visitor Center is "Wilderness Views," an art exhibit featuring artworks by students from the Grossmont Union High School District, including the following schools: El Cajon Valley, El Capitan, Grossmont, IDEA Center, Monte Vista, Steele Canyon, Valhalla, and West Hills. The students' works will be on view through Jan. 4, 2019. Admission to the Visitor Center is free and it is open 9 a.m.–5 p.m. daily.

Take one of our frequent and free Guided Nature Walks with Mission Trails' volunteer Trail Guides. Learn about Mission Trails' history, flora and fauna, geology, and wildlife on these 90-minute walks. See our calendar for dates and times.



Baskets and pottery items like these can be found in the MTRP gift shop. (Photo by Jennifer Morrissey)

Families with children of all ages can go on one of our monthly Family Discovery Walks, this month taking place on Sunday, Dec. 23 at 3 p.m. These walks help children and youth discover the wonder and beauty of nature. The trails used are easy, but have uneven surfaces so be sure to wear sturdy, closed-toe shoes and bring along water. A hat and sunscreen are also recommended. The walks are free and open to the public, with no reservations required, but cancelled if raining.

Also on Dec. 23, MTRP Ranger Andrew Miller will lead a 90-minute nature walk

MISSION TRAILS REGIONAL PARK CALENDAR OF EVENTS*

- Wildlife Tracking Walks:** 8:30 a.m., first Saturday each month – Visitor Center
- Guided Nature Walks:** 9:30 a.m., Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays each week – Visitor Center
- Guided Nature Walks Kumeyaay Lake Campground:** 8:30 a.m., second and fourth Saturday each month – KLC Campground
- West Sycamore Nature Walk:** 8 a.m., third Sunday each month – Stonebridge Parkway in Scripps Ranch
- Birding Basics Class:** 1 p.m., last Saturday each month – Visitor Center
- Bird Walks:** 8 a.m., third Saturday each month – *check website calendar for meeting locations*
- Family Discovery Walks:** 3 p.m., forth Sunday each month – Visitor Center
- Discovery Table Activity:** 10 a.m.–1 p.m., second Saturday each month – Visitor Center
- Live Hawk Talk Activity:** 9 a.m.–noon, first Sunday each month – Visitor Center
- West Sycamore Volunteer Crew:** 8 a.m., first Sunday each month – *check website calendar for meeting locations*
- Habitat Restoration Volunteer Crew:** 8 a.m., second Saturday each month – *check website calendar for meeting locations*
- Trail Improvement Volunteer Crew:** 8 a.m., third Sunday each month – *check website calendar for meeting locations*
- Park Beautification Volunteer Crew:** 8 a.m., fourth Saturday each month – *check website calendar for meeting locations*
- Kids Nature Story & Craft with a Ranger:** 10 a.m., every third Saturday – meet at KLC Campground Kumeyaay Lake Picnic Structure, RSVP to 619-668-3279
- Native American Flute Circle:** 1 p.m.–3 p.m., second Sunday each month – Visitor Center Outdoor Amphitheater
- Free Concert Series:** 3 p.m., Sunday, Dec. 16, Santee Chorus – Visitor Center Theater

*Partial listing of monthly events at Mission Trails Park. Visit mtrp.org for full calendar of free activities, programs, and updates, or call 619-668-3281.

at the park's northernmost property, West Sycamore. This area encompasses 1,128 acres and includes seven miles of trails to be explored by hiking, mountain biking, or horseback riding. Learn about the native plants and wildlife commonly found in this area of the park.

Meet at 8 a.m. at the West Sycamore Staging Area, at the very east end of Stonebridge Parkway in Scripps Ranch.

The West Sycamore Staging Area will also be the site of one of our regular nighttime

See MTRPF page 19 →



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iNaturalist observation: Belted kingfisher

Patricia Simpson

Some birds are difficult to identify, namely those LBJs (little brown jobs) while others are distinctive and almost instantly recognizable. Such is the belted kingfisher (*Megaceryle alcyon*). Its unique body shape gives it away — a stocky medium-sized body mounted by a large head and an impressive weapon-of-a-beak. When feeling feisty, either due to the presence of people or competition, the kingfisher displays an impressive crest on its head. Both male and female have a rich slate-blue color on the head, back and wings and a white collar and chest, but the female is easy to distinguish from the male by a rust colored stripe across her chest.

At Mission Trails Regional Park, you might find the bird around Lake Murray, where it was spotted a couple of times in September, as shown in the observation posted on iNaturalist by thumb-wave at bit.ly/2zDgXZK. Though there are no earlier observations of the species recorded on iNaturalist within the park, records on eBird reflect a regular resident at Kumeyaay Lake and a few sightings along the San Diego River.



A belted kingfisher holding a fish at Kumeyaay Lake (Photo by Craig Chaddock)

The kingfisher is a marvel of nature. It will often perch on a branch or post near water to stalk his prey — mostly smaller fish below the surface up to two feet deep. Once the prey is located, the kingfisher will dive at 10 to 20 mph, enter the water headfirst and clasp the fish in its beak. It will then return to the perch and whack the prey a few times to “finish it” before swallowing it whole. (Who’d want a wiggly thing in the stomach? Yikes!)

The kingfisher does not digest bones or scales and will regurgitate pellets, much like raptors do. On occasion, the kingfisher will hover over the prey,

beating its wings at 8 beats-per-second before diving. This exercise costs a lot of energy as the bird uses its tail for balance while keeping its head completely still to spot the prey.

A year-round resident of San Diego County, the kingfisher needs earthen banks to nest in. Habitat fragmentation and heavy recreation (the bird doesn’t like disturbances) might be a factor in the slow but steady population decline of the bird. You can find many amazing kingfisher videos available on YouTube; check them out.

—Patricia Simpson is a trail guide at Mission Trails Regional Park.■

Birds signal changing seasons at 32 degrees

Millie Basden

“I miss the changing seasons” is a lament often expressed by San Diegans who have moved here from more northern climes. At a latitude of roughly 32 degrees north, San Diego lies within the subtropical zone of our planet. Without the frosty nights of temperate areas, our deciduous trees are not triggered to change colors like they are up north.

The leaves of our native maple tree, boxelder (*Acer negundo*), found along the San Diego River in Mission Trails Park, turn yellow before falling to the ground. Western sycamores (*Platanus racemosa*) and Fremont’s cottonwood (*Populus fremontii*) may also show fall colors, or the leaves may just turn brown and then drop. These subtle hues do not thrill folks in the same way as the vibrant palette of a New England autumn.

But changing leaves are not the only indication that fall has arrived with winter soon to follow. I find



Yellow-rumped warbler



Whitecrowned sparrow (Photos by Peter R. Thomas)

satisfaction in another source that tells me the seasons have changed: the arrival of white-crowned sparrows and yellow-rumped warblers.

These two birds are not closely related. As their names suggest, one is a mostly seed-eating sparrow and the other, a mostly insect- and fruit-eating warbler. What they share, however, is the distinction of being the most abundant birds in San Diego, including in Mission Trails, during the winter months. Except for an occasional straggler, they are completely absent from coastal San Diego beginning sometime in May until September.

White-crowned sparrows (*Zonotrichia leucophrys*) are one of our larger sparrows, stretching about 7 inches from the tips of their beaks to the tips of their tails and weighing about an ounce. Male and female white-crowned sparrows look alike. The adults have black and white stripes on the top of

See BIRDS SIGNAL page 22 —————>



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Candlelight Service of Lessons & Carols
Monday, December 24th, 7:00 pm

Prepare your hearts for the celebration of our Savior’s birth by joining us for worship on Christmas Eve. With a Christmas message by Rev. Martha Wingfield, this reflective service will be filled with inspirational lessons, familiar carols, and special music by our adult choirs. Childcare will be provided.

Family Services
Monday, December 24th, 3:30 & 5:00 pm

During these children-focused services, we celebrate the miracle of Jesus’ birth. All children are invited to participate in the manger story as we bring the meaning of Christmas to life. The service includes a puppet performance and a small gift for every child.





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SUDOKU & CROSSWORD PUZZLE ANSWERS FROM P. 19

San Carlos Area Council News

Patricia Mooney

As I write this, rain is about to descend upon our long-parched neighborhoods. We need it badly because San Diego has been suffering through a long drought for decades. Driving past El Capitan Reservoir last week on Interstate 8, it was lower than I've seen it in the 40-plus years I've lived in San Diego. A local swimming hole we love to frequent in the springtime was completely dry last year. Old Mission Dam was also reduced to sand dunes this past summer. These are the kinds of moments that give you pause for reflection; the kinds of moments that thankfully also give our city officials a reason to pursue creative ways to bring water to our region.

At our December San Carlos Area Council (SCAC) meeting, the city of San Diego's Deputy Chief Operating Officer Johnnie Perkins gave a presentation on the San Diego PURE Water Program coming to a faucet near you by 2035. We learned that this multi-year program will unfold in three phases and that we will rely less on water imported from Colorado and Sacramento. Sustainability is key and therefore water purification technology will be employed to clean recycled water resulting in safe, high-quality drinking water. Environmental organizations including Surfrider, San Diego Coastkeeper, San Diego River Park Foundation and San Diego Audubon Society have signed on as supporters of this initiative.

"When you look at the fact that we are at the end of the



Deputy Chief Operating Officer Johnnie Perkins discusses the San Diego PURE Water Program with members of the San Carlos Area Council. (Photo by Mark Schulze)

pipe, that we import almost all of our water, this is going to give us a new reliable local source of water that we just haven't had before," said Marco Gonzalez, executive director of the Coastal Environmental Rights Foundation.

A San Carlos resident himself, Mr. Perkins invited all neighbors on a tour of the PURE Water facility, to see the infrastructure behind our radical new water source. SCAC President Mark Schulze and I plan to take him up on that invitation.

Our new liaison from the office of Councilmember Scott Sherman's office, Roarke Shanley, also paid us a visit to introduce himself and give us a status update on a resident homeless man who has sparked multiple threads on NextDoor and has many neighbors concerned about safety in the neighborhood. He said that if we have any issues, we need to express them to Councilmember Sherman, and send an email to RShanley@sandiego.gov.

Mission Trails Interpretive Center will end its reign as host of The Mission Trails Sunday Concert Series this month, handing the torch over to Mission Trails Church at 4880 Zion Ave. in Grantville. Popular troubadour Gregory Page will head the new lineup on Jan. 13, 2019 at 3–4 p.m. And the series will continue on the second Sunday of every month. The church offers a larger venue and more parking spaces. You can learn more about the Mission Trails Sunday Concert Series at bit.ly/2rrfFMN.

Our next SCAC meeting will be Wednesday, Jan. 2 at 6:30 p.m. in the San Carlos branch library, 7265 Jackson Drive. Local city and county representatives are slated to share their news.

Check out our Twitter page at twitter.com/CouncilSCA and on Facebook, look for San Carlos Area Council.

—Patricia Mooney is vice president of the San Carlos Area Council. Email patty@crystalpyramid.com■

► AGGCC, from page 10

utensils and dining sets such as pots and pans, mixing and measuring spoons, dish towels, and tableware; bedroom items such as pillows, linens, and blankets; bathroom supplies such as towels, soap, toiletries, and shower curtains; cleaning supplies; and miscellaneous items that you found out you needed only after your moved into your first apartment. Kathryn Johnson, the librarian at Benjamin Library, volunteered the services of the library to accept the packages and to see to their delivery to our new neighbors.

AGGCC volunteers lit up the flyover bridge on Dec. 1. The lighting crew included Edie Ordierno, Marilyn Reed, Barry Price, Omaira Solis, Shain Haug, David Peterson, Tripp Frost, Pat Haug, Julie Stollenwerk and Sophia Frost. The tree and lights at the Waring Road Triangle went up on Dec. 9.

Our next Town Hall Meeting will be on Tuesday, Jan. 22 at 6:30 p.m. at the Benjamin Library, at the corner of Zion Avenue and Glenroy Street. We have not decided on a topic yet. What would you like us to bring to the community? Look for more information in our January 2019 Mission Times Courier article, on Nextdoor,

and on our website. Our March 26 meeting will feature the president of San Diego State University.

The AGGCC board of directors meets on the first Tuesday of each month at 6:30 p.m. at Benjamin Library. We are dark in December. The next meeting will be on Tuesday, Jan. 8 (delayed one week because of the New Year's Day holiday).

There is so very much the council would like to take up in 2019, but there are only 10 of us who are active on the board. If you join us, we promise you that we will support and encourage your special passions for the neighborhood. You will not be asked to do more than the tasks you agree to take on and, of greater importance, we will help you on the projects that you bring to the council.

The Allied Gardens we love is ours to preserve and Grantville is beginning a momentous change in which we must be a part. The communities need you. This is an opportunity to be proud of your part in our important work.

—Shain Haug is president of the Allied Gardens-Grantville Community Council. Reach him at aggccshain@yahoo.com. For more information about the council, visit aggcc-council.org.■

► MTRPF, from page 16

Star Parties. From 5–10 p.m. on Friday, Dec. 21, join members from the San Diego Astronomy Association for viewings of the night sky through telescopes. If you come, please avoid the use of flashlights and white light in the area of the events. Cloudy skies and/or rain cancels the event, which is free, and no registration is necessary. See the West Sycamore webpage at mtrp.org for more information.

Finally, among our monthly volunteer work crew opportunities is our Park Beautification Crew. From 8 a.m.–noon on Saturday, Dec. 22, you can help maintain and beautify Mission Trails doing projects that include pruning brush, hauling and spreading mulch, doing litter abatement, riverbed clean-up, and fence repairs. To RSVP, please e-mail Ranger Julie at jaeilts@mtrp.org. This is a great way to give back to the park, get some exercise, and enjoy the outdoors with fellow park enthusiasts.

—Jennifer Morrissey is the executive director of the Mission Trails Regional Park Foundation.■

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PUZZLES

ANSWERS ON PAGE 18

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

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CROSSWORD Hit the Deck

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
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CREATORS NEWS SERVICE By Charles Preston

- ACROSS**

1 Foxiness
6 Tender, in Turkey
11 Buffalo lady
14 Gimlet kin
15 Alice Ghostley vehicle
16 Actress Meyers
17 Box office biggie
19 Kurosawa opus
20 Emulate 2 Live Crew

21 Globetrotter's requisite
22 Fiddle ____
24 Cricket team
26 Vexes
28 Hellenic vowels
30 Drained
33 Elevators, to an Etonian
36 Tintinnabulates
38 The Greatest
39 ____ Well That ...

40 Edible
41 Geek, e.g.
42 Ending for pay or gran
43 Ex ____: one-sided
44 Nobles
45 Heart contraction
47 Arboretum item
49 Whole entity view
51 Fed the kitty
55 Sometimes 11 Across

57 Emilia's spouse
59 ____-Magnon
60 Chicken-king connector
61 Library aid
64 Needlefish
65 "T's" group
66 Sidestep
67 Plus
68 Tweak
69 Cloys
- DOWN**

1 Key group
2 Beyond exurban
3 Yawning
4 Hardly any
5 Cooks' stands
6 Brings up the rear
7 Machu Picchu denizens
8 Geneticist's concern, briefly

9 Landing strip
10 Soothes
11 Poker pro
12 Nuncupative
13 Sommelier's offering
18 Foch or Simone
23 Calendar abbreviation
25 Animal docs
27 Mercury, for one
29 Skyline sights

31 Nobelist Wiesel
32 Brief swims
33 Vientiane's land
34 Badly
35 Teaching aid
37 Gourmandize
40 Confirm
41 Tuneful twosome
43 Skunk
44 Indicates
46 Crag

48 Hindu melody
50 Gold man
52 Acclaim
53 Rub down
54 Venetian magistrates
55 Chronicle
56 Economist Green-span
58 Pinnacle
62 Cartoonist Gardner
63 Actress Gardner

► Gold Star Corps, from page 1

"I noticed it wasn't as much of a personal feel, but I did notice the impact it was having," he said. Soon thereafter, Cory talked with Jessica and introduced the idea of starting their own organization. "I told her, 'We can do this, and we can do it better and it's making a difference. We can make an impact with this.'"

The couple then started Special Liberty Project, which brings wounded veterans together on hiking, camping,

hunting and fishing excursions. And it was on one of these trips that the idea for the couple's second organization came into focus.

"[Cory] was sent on deployment and I still hosted all the [Special Liberty Project] events while he was away, and we have 8-year-old twins who help me with all our events," Jessica said. "We were up in Julian on a turkey hunt and I had 11 veterans up there and I noticed throughout the day during the event that my kids were naturally drawn to this group of veterans that we were serving, and I realized that my own kids need something more in their life than what only I can provide while their dad is deployed — they need a mentor."

And in thinking of her own children's needs, she realized that Gold Star children — those who lost their fathers or mothers in combat — would need mentoring even more.

The Merritts then founded Gold Star

Corps — a program that fosters positive relationships for Gold Star kids and mentors with military backgrounds — some of whom are active duty, some retired and some are even wounded vets from the Special Liberty Project.

"Which is really cool for the kids because it's very special to be a military child [but] once their parent passes away who was in the military, they don't have that aspect anymore," Jessica said.

The Gold Star families and mentors meet up at quarterly events, which also revolve around outdoor activities — the kind that a father would traditionally take his children on.

"There are just certain things that men take care of and sometimes [military moms] don't have that around," Jessica added.

Mark Kirkland has attended four Gold Star Corps events as a mentor. He is now retired but got involved with the group through Cory, who he served with in the Navy. In the most recent event — a hiking trip to Mission Trails Regional Park on Dec. 1 — he mentored two siblings, a boy and a girl. During the event, he took the children on a scavenger hunt that featured a military theme with questions about the military, the flag, the Pledge of Allegiance, and the mentors and children even did pushups together at one station.

"We also built a tool box," Kirkland said. "On the scavenger hunt, you were getting pieces and in the very end, we helped them build a toolbox and even got tools to go in that toolbox."

Jewel Carruth said her son was especially excited by the toolbox project at the Mission Trails trip.

"He said he wanted to do it all by himself," she said adding that he did the drilling and screwed together pieces with just a little guidance from his mentor.

Carruth lost her husband Gary, a Marine, to a car accident that also took the life of her second oldest daughter. Before that, Gary suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder.

"The year it all started, I was reluctant to do anything in getting help for the kids and myself and it turns out once I started looking into different organizations, I met other widows who went through the same



Mentor Zach Webb (right) helps Makaylin Gibson build a tool box at a Gold Star Corps event on Dec. 1 at Mission Trails Park. (Photo by Jessica Merritt)

thing I went through," she said. "As we meet [other Gold Star] wives and we start sharing our stories, we realize we're not alone in what we feel — how we feel in what we went through."

Part of the Gold Star Corps program, in addition to providing activities for the kids, is providing the mothers a chance to relax and do activities of their own. At the Mission Trails event, the moms made ornaments with Polaroid pictures of the families with their mentors.

"I always provide something really special for the moms," Jessica said. "At our first event, we did manicures and massages in the park while their kids were off with their mentor and they knew their kids were safe and doing something productive."

The whole family approach of Gold Star Corps is what keeps Carruth making the trip from Riverside County to participate in the quarterly events.

"It's our time where we can get away from the normal day-in-day-out activities of stress and school and work and be able to just relax and enjoy a fun-filled day of family involvement," she said. "And having the mentors is great because my son, who was barely 4 years old at the time [of his father's death], internalizes everything. But by having the mentors, he's slowly but surely coming out of that and starting to open up a little."

It's that connection, as well as the fun outdoor activities, that motivates Cory's dedication to the organizations and has him looking forward to spending more time with them when he retires in two years.

"It's the most emotional and rewarding thing I've ever experienced," he said. "It's incredible to be able to see the impact and the feedback firsthand. When a child opens up to you and starts engaging with you and participating in whatever activity with you and you get that response and feedback, it's incredibly rewarding. You notice you're making a difference right away. And its validated when the Gold Star spouses come up and say, 'My son or daughter hasn't opened up like that to somebody in a very long time.'"

Kirkland is also motivated by the rewards of helping his fellow servicemen and their families.

"For most of the guys who do this, it's almost like a privilege, I think — that they let us do this," he said. "I served for a long time and I have friends who didn't come home — they paid the ultimate sacrifice. So I guess I feel like I'm paying it for them. And I guess I always hoped that if I was one of those guys who didn't [come home], that someone would do this for my kids. And it's stuff I like to do anyhow, so it's great."

For the Merritts, growing and expanding the Special Liberty Project and Gold Star Corps programs is what they have decided on for their future. The couple is looking to purchase a ranch in San Diego's back country — somewhere near Julian, they hope — and offer weekend retreats for the growing number of vets and families they serve. Currently, there are around 40 families in the Special Liberty Project and 35 families in the Gold Star Corps program.

"It's grown really fast and we've been able to serve a lot of people," Jessica said, adding that they had only planned on holding four events this year, but instead held 20, due to an outpouring of support from sponsors and donors. The new year already looks like it will be busy with a spa day for Gold Star wives planned for January, and a kayaking trip and tour of the Living Coast Discovery Museum planned for March.

For more information about the Special Liberty Project and Gold Star Corps programs or to make a donation, visit their websites at speciallibertyproject.org and goldstarcorps.org.

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



Cory and Jessica Merritt (Courtesy Jessica Merritt)



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News from the Allied Gardens Library

Kathryn Johnson

Calling all picture book lovers. Our seasonal gift book program has started and will run through Dec. 2. Young patrons are encouraged to select a wrapped book, check it out, unwrap it and enjoy it at home. After reading the book, simply return it to the library and check out another one.

On Saturday, Jan. 5, we will be making tote bags out of recycled T-shirts as part of our Handmade @ the Library craft series. Interestingly, this simple but utilitarian craft requires no sewing or special skills. This program is free, but we ask that you please bring a T-shirt that you don't mind repurposing. Please register at sandiego.librarymarket.com.



Wrapped books for the gift book program (Photos courtesy Allied Gardens Library)

We will be hosting another popular Zentangle class on Jan. 11 at 2:30 p.m. Get a head start on your Valentine's Day by making this Valentine's Day Surprise. For those of you who may not know about Zentangle, it is simple method of creating unique designs with repetitive patterns. It is well known for being relaxing and increasing a sense of personal well-being.

The wonderful Liz Gary will return for another vegan cooking demonstration in January. Just in time for the chilly winter months, Liz will make and share delicious winter soups and vegan grilled cheese sandwiches. Everyone is welcome to join us for this delicious event on Tuesday, Jan. 8 at 6 p.m.

This month the library is partnering with Jersey Mike's and our new Allied Community Garden to raise funding so that more plots can be constructed for interested individuals. On Friday, Dec. 21 and Saturday, Dec. 22, 20 percent of your purchase at Jersey Mike's will go to our wonderful garden. Please be sure to pick up a mini flyer at the library before you head over to Jersey Mike's.

In early 2019, Allied Gardens will be welcoming new residents into the community at the Zephyr housing complex for homeless veterans. In partnership with the Allied Gardens Community Council, the library will be collecting items for our new neighbors as part of a "Welcome Home" goods drive. The new residents will need a variety of items ranging from cleaning supplies to kitchenware. Donations will



Elvis Pez dispensers are part of the new Pez display at the Allied Gardens Library.

be accepted through the end of January.

We have a lovely new display of Fiestaware and Pez dispensers from our very own volunteer Ellen. The Pez display is sure to teach you something new about this candy that came into being in 1927. Learn how Pez got its name, some of the more unique flavors they have had such as chlorophyll, and exactly when and why they added feet. Items will be on display through the end of December.

Upcoming closures: All San Diego Public Libraries will be closed on Tuesday, Dec. 25 and Tuesday, Jan. 1. We will remain open for our regular hours on all other days during the holiday season.

Speaking of the holidays, myself and the entire staff of the Allied Gardens/

Benjamin Library would like to extend a very warm happy holidays to all our patrons and readers! We greatly appreciate your support, enthusiasm for the library and continued patronage in the coming year.

—Kathryn Johnson is managing librarian of the Allied Gardens/Benjamin Branch Library.■

► Flooding, from page 1

Property owners in the area are fed up. They have been for years, but this flood was too much.

"We have to get something done. This keeps happening, and the city and the Metropolitan Transit System keep promising that it's going to be fixed, but nothing happens" said David Smith, vice president of El Dorado Properties in the 5800 block of Mission Gorge Road. "The city Planning Department sort of addressed this in the Grantville Redevelopment plan it put together, and that was fine as far as it went. But the city Transportation and Storm Water Department now has to take over. They have to do their own report and can't base it on what the planning people found in their research. All of this is because they're all competing for funding to do the studies, and then they'll be fighting for funding to actually fix the problem."

Smith said the Transportation and Storm water bosses say they can't get started on their study because they just don't have enough staff to do the job.

"They said it could be five years before they got to it," he added.

Anthony Santacrose from Transportation and Storm Water disputes that. "The Alvarado Creek is slated for work sometime in 2020," he said.

He also points out that some of the creek area is in private hands, and the city is not responsible for those parts.

Smith agrees with that, and said private parties are willing to assume their share of the costs, but not without guarantees that the publicly funded work is underway.

Meanwhile, the creek overflows every time there's

a storm. Businesses along Mission Gorge Road and Mission Gorge Place once again find themselves cleaning up flood damaged businesses and offices and looking again at a creek that is far too narrow (in some places, only 13 feet wide), far too shallow, and far too overgrown with non-native vegetation that isn't even supposed to be there.

They look at a concrete box culvert under Mission Gorge road that is supposed to have four channels for water to run through—right now, two of them are clogged, and who knows when the city will clean them out.

Another box culvert will be needed to channel the runoff to where it's supposed to go — into the San Diego River. Right now, the flood flow is a threat to a large car dealership, a Chili's restaurant and Home Depot across Mission Gorge Road to the west.

Part of the problem with the creek is that there is so much concrete in huge chunks in the channel, that it gives places for vegetation that might have flowed downstream a place to get caught and snag more vegetation, thereby creating even more blockage in a channel that didn't need any more blockage.

Much of that concrete came from demolition of structures in the area to make room for the Grantville Trolley Station. The Trolley folks admit that it is their problem to clean up.

"We know it has to be done" said Rob Schupp, spokesman for Metro Transit. "We don't



Offices near Alvarado Creek were flooded with inches of water. (Photo by David Smith)

have a firm start date, but we are planning to start the clean-up in four to six weeks, and get it done as soon as we can."

Most of the area that finds itself underwater when it rains is on properties that may one day become housing — apartments and condos surrounding the Grantville Trolley stop. It's in line with the city's philosophy of trolley-oriented residential communities. Grantville needs the business — it is one of the least-used trolley stops in the entire trolley system. But converting that area of Grantville into a mixed-use housing neighborhood will never happen if the flooding problem isn't addressed.

—Doug Curlee is Editor at Large. Reach him at doug@sdenn.com.■

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Sue Hotz



2019 SCFOL board of directors elected

The San Carlos Friends of the Library (SCFOL) officers and Members at Large for 2019, were elected at the annual SCFOL General Membership Meeting. The officers are: Joan Hayes (president), Evie McGhee (secretary) and Jerry Hotz (treasurer). Members at Large are: Bill Bischoff, Ruth Coleman, Bobbi Dennis, Sue Hotz, and Ron McFee. Congratulations to all, and we thank them for the many volunteer hours they donate to the library and our community.

We also thank artist Terry Naughton for his very enjoyable talk. Joan Hayes reviewed SCFOL's 2018 activities, and introduced our 2018-SCFOL Life Members, whose names have been added to the branch's Honor Wall located in the Winer Family Community Room & Art Gallery.

My final column

In January, SCFOL will be turning the writing of this column over to our wonderful San Carlos branch librarians, David Ege and Sarah Hendy-Jackson. I have very much enjoyed the experience, but would now like to move on to other endeavors.

News from the San Carlos Library

I will continue to promote the activities of SCFOL and the San Carlos Branch Library via our monthly newsletters and on the SCFOL website, sancarlos-friendsofthelibrary.org. Happy holidays, and I'll see you on the web, Sue Hotz.

Christmas stockings

Until Jan. 3, stop by the San Carlos Branch Art Gallery to select your beautiful hand sewn, unique Christmas stocking designed by Grace Gabriel. They are available for the small price of \$12 each. Purchase instructions are on the wall.

Small quilt wall art

Jan. 7–31, the colorful, wall art small quilts of Noreen Ring will be on display in the Winer Family Community Room & Art Gallery. These beautiful small quilts are of Ring's own design, and created by selecting bits of 100 percent commercial or hand-dyed cotton fabric. Each bit of fabric is hand stitched into a quilt "sandwich" (top/batting/backing) using a variety of different threads, embellished with beads, crystals and yarns, and then sprayed with a UV protector and framed behind glass or Plexiglas. Discuss this unique art form with Ring at her artist reception on Jan. 19, noon–2 p.m., in the art gallery.

OASIS: 'Genealogy: Be an Ancestor Detective'

Dec. 21, 2–3 p.m., OASIS presents, "Genealogy: Be an Ancestor Detective." How much

do you know about your ancestors? This class covers the where and how to begin your search for answers of when they came to the U.S., their homeland, and lots more. One warning should be given to prospective class members: This is a very addictive hobby, and once started, the need to know more grows and grows!

Library Book Club selection

On Jan. 10, 12:30–2 p.m., the Library Book Club is discussing "The Paris Wife," by Paula McLain. In Chicago during 1920, Ernest Hemingway and Hadley Richardson fall madly in love, quickly married, and then honeymooned in Paris where they continued to live and socialize for 10 years with a well-known group of fast-living expatriots. The experiences of those years formed the basis for "The Sun Also Rises." Despite their intense love, the unstable Parisian life style tore Hemingway and Hadley apart.

A holly jolly book surprise

Our library elves have wrapped up some great kids books that are ready for you to borrow. During the entire month of December, kids ages 12 and under, can check out a surprise, good read! Kids won't know what book is in their package until they unwrap it at home, and enjoy a great story.

From the managing librarian

As this year ends, we are so pleased that the San Carlos

Branch Library could offer so much opportunity, discovery and inspiration in 2018! We partnered with many local organizations for feature events and had great attendance at our monthly programs. This year we held our first Robotics Showcase Extravaganza, which featured unique robotic creations built for competitions by local robotics teams from Dailard Elementary, Pershing Middle, Cajon Park Junior High and Patrick Henry High schools.

So far this year, we held 190 programs for children with 5,416 participants. Our youth services librarian coordinated many special programs to engage young people. The library's annual Spring into STEAM program included a When Stars Go Boom interactive display and the Where's Waldo Button Design Contest attracted record numbers to the Summer Reading Program. Children participated in the science-based Challenge Island series, Artifact Junction with the San Diego Archaeological Center, Incredible Insects with a local entomologist, and South African Music & Dance with the Center for World Music. We worked with the Environmental Services Department to co-host an All About Recycling event and our Halloween Trick-or-Read program gave free books to kids. Families also enjoyed our Clifford the Big Red Dog Party, and Clifford even made a special appearance.

We have held 166 programs for adults that attracted 2,311 attendees in 2018. San Diego County Health & Human Services presented on good mental health and taught people to avoid scams in the Don't Get Hooked program. Patrons learned about the development of the city with the Old Town, New Town and San Diego During WWI presentations by



"Tending Grounds" quilt on display in the library art gallery (Courtesy SCFOL)

the San Diego History Center, and the Save Our Heritage Organization had us remembering the Marstons. We had a Persian New Year Celebration, which featured beautiful music and singers, and partnered with the San Carlos Garden Club for the annual Art & Flower Show. The community also enjoyed listening to authors speak about their works at our monthly author talks.

The dedication and hard work of the San Carlos Friends of the Library made these wonderful events possible and we appreciate their support. A special thank you to the staff and volunteers that make our library such a friendly community gathering place!

—David Ege, branch manager San Carlos Branch Library

Dates to remember

All recurring adult and youth activities will continue at their regularly scheduled times during the holidays.

- Dec. 25: CLOSED, Christmas Day
- Jan. 1: CLOSED, New Years Day
- Jan. 4, 1:30–3:30 p.m.: Friends of the Library only, Used-Book Pre-sale. Join SCFOL during the sale
- Jan. 5, 9:30 a.m.–3 p.m.: SCFOL Monthly Used Book Sale

—Sue Hotz is publicity chair and board member of the San Carlos Friends of the Library. ■

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► Birds signal, from page 17

their heads. During their first year of life, the head stripes are brown and off-white. At all ages, this sparrow has a light-colored (dark pink or yellow) cone-shaped bill. Like most sparrows, they often feed on the ground and will flush to nearby bushes or trees when disturbed.

Male white-crowned sparrows sing year-round. Various mnemonic devices have been suggested to help humans recognize the song. To my ear, it sounds like they are singing, "Oh, my, what to do."

When they leave our area each spring, white-crowned sparrows head north as far as subarctic regions of Alaska and Canada.

Yellow-rumped warblers (*Setophaga coronata*) are also large for a warbler, stretching about 5.5 inches from the tips of their beaks to the tips of their tails, but weighing only about half an ounce. True to their name, the grayish birds always have a yellow rump patch. Depending on age, sex, and season, they may also have yellow on their throats, flanks,

and top of their heads, along with dark streaks on their undersides and backs. Males in breeding plumage add contrasting black patches to their chests and heads. Their thin bills are always dark.

Yellow-rumped warblers are often seen foraging through the leaves of trees or bushes, seeking insects and fruits. They also sally out like flycatchers, grabbing insects on the wing.

The most frequently heard vocalization of this warbler during winter is its insistent call, which can be described as "chep" or "chup."

Yellow-rumped warblers spend the breeding season in coniferous forests, mostly to the north of San Diego County, but breeding has occurred in our highest mountains.

Look around you. Enjoy the white and yellow markers of the season. The white crowns of sparrows and the yellow rumps of warblers will only be with us for a few months. When they arrive each year, you know the season has changed at 32 degrees north.

—Millie Basden is a trail guide at Mission Trails Regional Park. ■

MISSION TIMES COURIER
COMMUNITY AND ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT CALENDAR

ONGOING EVENTS



An Old-Fashioned Christmas
Through Dec. 17
Join Lamplighters Community Theatre for a celebration of Christmas set in the mountain town of Julian, California during the 1980s. Residents of the local retirement center long for an old-fashioned Christmas, like those they remember from their childhoods. They gather together to make that wish come true with hilarious consequences. \$15 for adults, \$10 for children. 5915 Severin Drive. For show times and tickets, visit bit.ly/2qRZ6cM.

FEATURED EVENTS



Enchanted Village
Noah Homes presents an Enchanted Village complete with lit trees, magical cottages, live performers, a snow machine, interactive exhibits and more to entertain guests of all ages. All proceeds benefit adults with developmental disabilities. Friday through Sunday, Dec. 14-16 and Dec. 21-23, 4-8 p.m. at Noah Homes, 1256 Campo Road, Spring Valley. Adult tickets \$14.99; children 3-12 \$9.99; children 3 and under free. Tickets and information at enchantedvillage.org.



House of Hip-Hop
Join Public Square Coffee House for a night of live music and good vibes with a line-up of four artists. Tickets are \$8 per artist. Show starts at 7:30 p.m. 8278 La Mesa Blvd. Tickets available at bit.ly/2rowSqu.

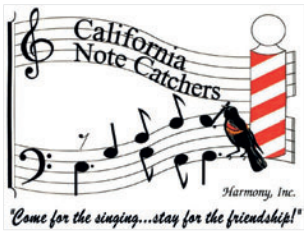


Artist Reception: 'Wilderness Views'
The Mission Trails Regional Park presents an exhibition featuring works from students within the Grossmont Union High School district.



Titled "Wilderness Views," the exhibit includes artwork created by students from: El Cajon Valley, El Capitan, Grossmont, IDEA, Monte Vista, Steele Canyon, Valhalla and West Hills. This exhibit will be on display from Dec. 8, 2018-Jan. 4, 2019 in the Mission Trails Regional Park Visitor Center Art Gallery, 1 Father Junipero Serra Trail. The public is invited to a reception honoring the artists on Saturday, Dec. 15 from 2-4 p.m.

Buddha for You
Join Buddha for You gifts and books as it celebrates 20 years of business at the Dharma Bum Temple. Enjoy and afternoon of meditation, food, art, and more. Take 20-50 percent off the entire store. Store will be open 11 a.m.-7 p.m. Guests are invited to explore the Dharma Bum Temple as well as they will be hosting an open house in addition to the celebration. 1531 Tyler Ave.



California Note Catchers
The Liberty Theatre in Paradise Village presents an afternoon with the California Note Catchers, a nonprofit women's a cappella chorus in San Diego. Join them for their Holiday Harmonies concert featuring family-friendly holiday music in the barbershop style. Show starts at 3:30 p.m. \$10. 2700 E. 4th St.

Hemlock Society Film Series
The Hemlock Society of San Diego will show the film "Wit," starring Emma Thompson, at the Mission Valley Library 1:30-3:30 p.m. There will be a discussion of the film afterwards. Free. 2123 Fenton Parkway.



Parade of Lights
The 47th annual San Diego Bay Parade of Lights returns this year to dazzle crowds

along the bayfront. Ships will float through the bay decorated to this year's theme: "Tropical Island Christmas." A parade will take place at 5 p.m. starting at Shelter Island and ending at Ferry Landing in Coronado. Free.



The Giving Season
Write Out Loud, an organization committed to inspire, challenge and entertain by reading short stories aloud for live audiences, announces its annual Holiday Program: The Giving Season. Come cozy up at the Cygnet Theatre for a reading of six festive stories by professional actors. Show begins at 7 p.m. \$25 or \$5 for students. 4040 Twiggs St. Purchase tickets online at bit.ly/2G8Rq09.



Blood Pressure Screenings
Have your blood pressure checked by a registered nurse at the College Avenue Senior Center. Free. No appointment necessary.



'Let it Flow'
Citizen Brewers and Om With Me - Yoga with Ro, present "Let it Flow: An evening of yoga, beer, and good cheer." Guests are invited to don their most festive — and comfortable — holiday attire, enjoy a complimentary beer, and flow with an hour of yoga set to fun, energetic holiday classics. 7-9:30 p.m. \$15. 5837 Mission Gorge Road. For tickets and more information, visit bit.ly/2r1Cul8.



Talmadge Art Show
The Holiday Talmadge Art Show Pop Up is Sunday, Dec. 23 10 a.m.-4 p.m. at the Talmadge home where it all started. Twenty local artists will be selling handmade crafts including clothing, pottery, all types of jewelry, purses, and more. Two food trucks will also be on

location as well. Join in the holiday celebration and find those last-minute gifts. Free. 4514 Norma Drive. Directions, list of artists and more at bit.ly/2Fxx0FE.



Christmas Open House
The Christian Science Reading Room will put on a Christmas Open House with special Christmas program, complete with refreshments and free gift wrapping. Public is invited. 2-4 p.m. at 8370 La Mesa Blvd. For information, call Vienna at 619-737-6093.



Christmas Day
Merry Christmas from your local community news team!



Kwanzaa
Happy Kwanzaa from your local community news team!



SDCCU Holiday Bowl
The Holiday Bowl returns to America's Finest City this year at SDCCU Stadium. Event sponsors SDCCU and Dexcom have announced a pregame party and invite everyone with a Holiday Bowl ticket to attend for free! Take part in interactive football challenges, watch live games or highlights in the sports lounge, and enjoy some of San Diego's best local food trucks, live music and drink specials while gearing up for the big

game. Located in the SDCU Stadium Concourse from 1:30-4 p.m.



New Year's Day
Have a great start to your 2019 year!



First Aid Gone Wild
The Sharp Grossmont Hospital, in partnership with the American Red Cross, will hold a three-day wilderness and remote first aid class to provide individuals a foundation of first aid principles and skills to be able to respond to emergencies and give care in areas that do not have immediate emergency medical services. This 16-hour course/class will take place Jan 4-6. Participants must possess current adult CPR/AED certification. \$155. For more information, class times, or to purchase tickets, visit bit.ly/2G5rpPk.

—Calendar compiled by Jules Shane. To submit events for consideration to be added to the calendar, email information to jeff@sdCNN.com.

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Ideal Named Finalist of 2018 BBB Torch Awards for Ethics

We're proud to announce that Better Business Bureau serving Pacific Southwest has named Ideal Plumbing, Heating, Air & Electrical a finalist of the 2018 Torch Awards for Ethics in the 25-99 Employee Category. Winners and finalists in each category were named during the awards lunch and ceremony Friday, December 7th at the Hyatt Regency La Jolla at Aventine.

"The Torch Awards have given us the opportunity to show the San Diego community our commitment to ethics and our customers," says Don Teemsma, President/CEO of Ideal. "We have made a conscious effort to conduct our business with integrity in the name of enhancing excellence in our marketplace. We are a business consumers can trust and the Torch Awards have given us the platform to share that."

The BBB Torch Awards for Ethics were established to recognize outstanding businesses that maintain a solid commitment to ethics and trust in the marketplace. Companies are selected by an independent panel of volunteer community leaders based on criteria established by the Council of Better Business Bureau's International Torch Award.

All finalists completed an evaluation where they demonstrated their commitment to ethics in six categories:

- Leadership's Commitment to Ethical Practices
- Communication of Ethical Practices
- Leadership Practices to Unify the Organization
- Organizational Commitment to Performance Management Practices
- Organizational Commitment to Ethical Human Resource Practices
- Organizational Commitment to the Community

"Doing the right thing is not always easy, and these companies have demonstrated a commitment to ethical business practices even in the most difficult times," said Shelley Bradley, BBB Director of Programs & Special Events. "This year's winners and finalists represent BBB's community of trustworthy businesses that operate with integrity at the forefront."

We're incredibly proud of our Ideal Plumbing, Heating Air & Electrical team for receiving this notable award!



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