



MISSION VALLEY News

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

NEWS

Pedestrian fatalities



It was a deadly 2015 for crossing the street. **Page 4**

DINING

A hidden gem



You should check out Charlie's. **Page 10**

GARDENING

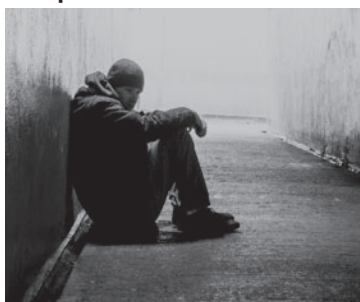
Add a pop of color



Houseplants brighten the décor. **Page 17**

FEATURE

The problem worsens



Homeless numbers on the rise. **Page 19**

ALSO INSIDE

Politics	5
Opinion	6
Dining Out in San Diego	8
Music Notes	11
Community Calendar	15

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The front entrance to the time-share building at the proposed Morris Cerullo Legacy International Center in Mission Valley (From city documents)

Ken Williams
Editor

The massive Morris Cerullo Legacy International Center proposed for 18 acres of prime real estate at 875 Hotel Circle South along Interstate 8 has temporarily stalled in front of the Mission Valley Planning Group.

The volunteer planning group voted 13-0-1 on Feb. 3 to ask the applicant to return — likely for the March 3 monthly meeting — to answer more questions after the Environmental Impact Review (EIR) had been

made public and the first round of city responses are known. A standing-room-only crowd asked tough questions about the \$125 million project, most concerned about the impact on traffic and the environment. Most of the answers they got from the presenters were vague or evasive.

The project, commonly called the Legacy Center, cleared its first hurdle on Feb. 1 when the planning group's Design Advisory Board (DAB) voted 6-0 to recommend approval of the architectural design for the eight buildings in the complex totaling 315,000 square feet. The approval came despite remarks from DAB members who called

the design "repetitive and boring" and "looking like a low-budget hotel."

Nevertheless, the DAB vote bounced the project up to the full planning group for review.

The Legacy Center would feature a five-story timeshare building, an office and security building, a training center, a Welcoming Center, plus tourist-style attractions such as catacombs, an Old World bazaar, an amphitheater, and a History Dome theater and artifact museum.

Mission Valley News has extensively covered this project

See LEGACY page 14

An inn with a royal theme still reigns in Hotel Circle

Frank Sabatini Jr.

As two landmark resorts in Hotel Circle prepare for dramatic transformations, and after a few other smaller properties nearby underwent minor facelifts, the Kings Inn has tipped its crown in favor of the area's evolution — but without selling out to it.

Built in 1959 by Charles Brown under Atlas Hotels, the 145-room inn at 1333 Hotel Circle South was considered back then what travelers with discerning taste today would call a "boutique" hotel.

"It was upscale, smaller and not necessarily



Kings Inn and its trademark sign have been a fixture on Hotel Circle South in Mission Valley since 1959. (Photo by Frank Sabatini Jr.)

See KINGS INN page 16

Strangers on a death train

María José Durán

The Death Café brings people together to talk about life, death, living and dying — over tea and cake in various locations around San Diego.

Jessica Dulliver lost her boyfriend when she was 18. She became suicidal. She grieved her first love's death for 10 years. She's in her 30s now, loquacious, skinny and energetic.

"I don't want everybody to be so devastated when somebody dies, like 'Oh my God my life's over.' Well, actually you might be



Karen Van Dyke, founder of the Death Café in San Diego (Photo by María José Durán)

one day closer, but it's certainly not over," Dilliver said.

Mojdeh Memarzadeh's mother died of cancer last year. She

See CAFÉ page 17



MARK YOUR CALENDARS

• Mission Valley Community Update Plan Subcommittee will meet at 3 p.m. Friday, Feb. 12, at the Mission Valley Library, 2123 Fenton Parkway.

• Mission Valley Planning Group's Design Advisory Board will meet at 3:30 p.m. Monday, Feb. 29, at the library.

• Mission Valley Planning Group will meet at noon Wednesday, March 2, at the library. ■

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The state of San Diego

Local leaders weigh in on Mayor Faulconer's annual address

Hutton **Marshall**

Mayor Kevin Faulconer gave his second State of the City address on Jan. 14 at the Balboa Theatre in Downtown San Diego. Local leaders praised the Republican mayor's middle-of-the-road policy proposals and glowing portrayal of San Diego's private sector growth.

Faulconer, who is seeking reelection for the first time since winning San Diego's highest office in a 2014 special election after Bob Filner's departure, looked back on San Diego's civic accomplishments and proposed several new policy initiatives in his 50-minute address.

Recent successes praised by Faulconer included the city's ambitious climate change mitigation plan, continued negotiations to keep the Chargers in San Diego, and better response times for historically underserved sectors of San Diego.

With a tone similar to his previous address in 2015, Faulconer ultimately provided a very favorable view of the state of San Diego.

"The foundation of our city is strong," Faulconer said. "And ladies and gentlemen, the state of our city is strong."

Where Faulconer diverged from last year's address, however, was in the speech's forward-looking policy initiatives, which were markedly bolder and more numerous than last year's address given 10 months after Faulconer's inauguration.

Such policies included strengthening ties with Tijuana, merging public school education with San Diego's private science-driven economy and forging ahead with a robust infrastructure spending plan. Faulconer even declared that San Diego researchers would succeed in their long search for a cure for Alzheimer's disease.

His keystone policy announcements, however, were his ambitious plan to expand the city's park system and the "Housing Our Heroes" initiative, which aims to house 1,000 homeless veterans currently on the streets of San Diego.

Regarding San Diego's parks, Faulconer promised to create a new master plan for the city's park system, open new green spaces in Mid-City, Mission Valley, Mira Mesa and Serra Mesa, and, most consequently, Faulcon-

er promised the groundbreaking of 50 new or upgraded parks over the next five years.

"For me, protecting our parks is the reason I became involved in public service," Faulconer said. "Some of my best memories growing up are the summers my family and I spent at the local rec center or hanging out at the beach. And when I became a father myself, Katherine and I wanted our children to have the same experience."

Kris Michell serves as the executive director of the Downtown San Diego Partnership, a nonprofit business improvement organization. She said that parks fill a critical need in a hyper-urban neighborhood like Downtown.

"For an urban environment like Downtown, parks are people's front yards, side yards and backyards, so they become critically important," Michell said.

Faulconer's parks expansion relies in part on converting public

to rent to homeless veterans entitled to existing federal housing subsidies and by improving the city's rapid-rehousing efforts.

San Diego was one of 25 U.S. municipalities to join the "25 Cities" pledge to end chronic homelessness among veterans by 2016. Faulconer said he will request that the City Council approve \$4 million for the initiative.

"A successful veteran community helps drive a successful city," Faulconer said. "But a relatively small group of veterans has a difficult time transitioning to civilian life. Today's unfortunate reality is that almost 1,700 veterans are without stable housing or call our sidewalks and alleys home."

Gloria, a long-time supporter of efforts to address homelessness, praised the mayor's plan for its ability to rally resources behind existing support systems for homelessness, such as the Section 8 housing vouchers.

"If the mayor can assist in

getting property owners and landlords to rent their available units to veterans and accept [housing] vouchers, 300 people could immediately transition out of homelessness, and from there I am confident we can eventually meet the goal [to end homelessness] among San Diego's veterans," Gloria said.

"This sort of coordination and collaboration between the city, property owners, the county, and service providers will make a difference throughout our region."

Infrastructure improvement has long been among San Diego's most pressing concerns, and in his address Faulconer made it a central issue of his plans for the coming year. The mayor promised \$50 million on infrastructure improvements, which includes new construction, street repair and building improvement. To accomplish this, Faulconer urged the approval of Councilmember Mark Kersey's infrastructure proposal, "Rebuild San Diego," which would secure as much as \$5 billion for infrastructure projects over the next 30 years.

"I've pledged to dedicate half of the City's new revenue each year to infrastructure," Faulconer said. "I did it last year. I did it this year. And I'm going to do it every year."

"But there's no guarantee that this practice of dedicating funds to neighborhood infrastructure will continue under future mayors. That's why I'm asking the City Council to place a measure authored by [Kersey] the city's Infrastructure Chairman, on the ballot so voters can guarantee funds for neighborhood infrastructure decades into the future."

Michell, who previously served as chief of staff under former May-



Mayor Kevin Faulconer practices his State of the City speech. (Courtesy of City of San Diego)

school parks to "joint-use parks," which would be open to the general public after school hours.

"Today, there are fields and green spaces across San Diego that our communities could use on evenings and weekends, but because they're on school property, they get locked up whenever class isn't in session," Faulconer said. "Our communities and our school system are fundamentally linked. We shouldn't let government bureaucracy stand in the way of making our neighborhoods great."

Since 2008, Councilmember Todd Gloria has represented District 3 on the City Council, which includes Downtown. Gloria said joint-use spaces are already a welcome addition to his district.

"Joint-use fields have served a meaningful role in helping our neighborhoods meet their need for recreation space for decades," Gloria said. "From Birney Elementary in University Heights to Adams Avenue Park in Normal Heights, most District 3 neighborhoods have seen and benefited from joint-use facilities. I'm looking forward to breaking ground on our District's next joint-use field at McKinley Elementary in North Park later this year."

After the parks plan, the second biggest policy proposal of Faulconer's address was the "Housing Our Homeless" initiative, which seeks to house 1,000 homeless veterans this year, primarily by encouraging landlords

See S0TC page 14

Is the city about to get serious about the affordable-housing problem?

Dave Schwab

Though it's no longer an "emergency" the City Council reaffirms every month, the lack of affordable housing in Mission Valley, Mid-Town, Uptown and throughout San Diego remains a serious problem community leaders continue to grapple with.

"We're no longer declaring once a month that there's an affordable housing emergency, because we realized doing that was symbolic and wasn't really accomplishing anything," said District 3 Councilman Todd Gloria, who represents much of Uptown and Downtown. "The council and the city are very much committed to [resolving] this issue. We have some big things planned for addressing this this calendar year, though there is a substantial amount of work to be done."

In December 2015, the City Council's Smart Growth and Land Use Committee (SGLUC) unanimously voted to have staff study and report back on a series of proposals designed to alleviate San Diego's lack of affordable housing.

The San Diego Housing

Commission (SDHC) presented SGLUC with 11 ideas that would require government action at the local, state and federal levels, to address the need for more affordable housing. The suggestions generally involve lowering costs for developers, because government red tape often makes it more expensive to build affordable housing projects, according to building industry leaders.

Among the commission's proposals:

- Setting annual goals for producing affordable housing
- Providing incentives for developers to make at least 20 percent of their housing units affordable
- Lowering parking requirements
- Reducing requirements for ground-floor commercial space, which raises project costs
- Shortening the time it takes to process permits and entitle properties
- Supporting efforts to reform the California Environmental Quality Act

"The majority of all these, to me, make a whole bunch of common sense on how to get the cost down so we can actually provide more doors and more units for people," District 7 Councilman Scott Sherman, who represents



Metro Villa Apartments are affordable housing in City Heights. (Courtesy of sdhc.org)

Mission Valley, has said, adding that "affordable housing costs so much more than market-rate (projects). We can put so many more doors onto the market if we cut into the costs."

City staff was directed by SGLUC to come back soon with proposed ordinances, resolutions and lobbying efforts to help implement SDHC's proposals.

That San Diego is one of the increasingly more expensive places in the nation — and state — to live is indisputable.

In an August 2015 report from the California Housing Partnership Corp. (CHPC), a San Diego renter household needs to earn more than three times the state minimum wage in order to afford average asking rents. The report

showed that inflation-adjusted median rents in San Diego County increased 25 percent from 2000 to 2013, while inflation-adjusted median renter household income declined 4 percent.

That report also concluded San Diego County needs 142,564 additional affordable rental homes to meet the needs of its extremely low income (ELI) and very low-income (VLI) renters.

"The vast majority of San Diego County's low-income renters spend more than 50 percent of income on rent, leaving little left for food, transportation and health care," said the CHPC report, which also determined that, when housing and other costs of living are factored in, San Diego County's poverty rate

rises from 14.5 percent to 21.7 percent: about one in five people.

Overcrowding for low-income renters in San Diego County is also 50 percent above the national average, contributing significantly to poor health and academic achievement among low-income children.

Plus, reductions in federal and state funds, including elimination of redevelopment funding, have reduced San Diego County's affordable housing funding by over \$139 million since 2008, a 67 percent reduction.

"What I'm hearing from my constituents is that they feel squeezed," Gloria said about today's real-life situation for lower-income renters. "They are dealing with stagnant wages and that, coupled with rising energy, water, food and housing costs, is a lot for them to absorb."

Gloria added many Mid-City residents, who used to get a rent break because their housing was 40-plus years old, are benefiting no longer because housing construction has lagged behind.

"Landlords are now able to ask for top-dollar rents in the market, even in buildings that are older and have been considered less desirable," Gloria said.

Gloria said part of what needs to be done to address housing shortfalls is to lay the groundwork for setting — and accomplishing — the goal of creating more affordable units through the community plan update process.

—Dave Schwab can be reached at dschwabie@journalist.com.■



SEX IN OUR CITY

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A RISING TOLL

54 pedestrian lives lost in 2015 traffic fatalities

Dave Schwab

Fifty-four pairs of shoes lined the steps of City Hall signifying pedestrian lives lost to traffic accidents in 2015, as community activists on Feb. 2 called upon the city to spend more money to make San Diego's streets safer.

"We're here today to honor the 54 lives that were lost last year in the city of San Diego in traffic accidents, a 17 percent increase from the previous year," said North Park resident Kathleen Ferrier, director of advocacy for Circulate San Diego, a regional nonprofit working to improve mobility choices and create healthy, more vibrant neighborhoods.

Noting that adding those pedestrians seriously injured "brings the total of injured or dead on the road to about 200," Ferrier touted Vision Zero, a

strategy adopted by the city last fall to reach zero traffic fatalities and serious injuries in San Diego by 2025.

"Now is the time to invest in the improvements that will save lives," Ferrier said. "We are call-

ing — and demanding — for money to be allocated to implement Vision Zero, especially for safe street design, and especially to protect our most vulnerable: our children, our older adults, and people walking and bicycling in our neighborhoods, especially our lower-income

neighborhoods."

"In San Diego, you should not have to cross your fingers before you cross the street," said Bob Prath, a livable communities volunteer for the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP).

Prath noted diminishing faculties makes senior pedestrians especially vulnerable.

"Pedestrian fatality rates sig-

"In San Diego, you should not have to cross your fingers before you cross the street."



Nichole Leon and Jose Miranda share how their friend Jaime Leonen (seen in the fliers) was killed while crossing the street. Fifty-four pairs of shoes symbolized the number of pedestrians who lost their lives in traffic accidents in 2015. (Photos by Dave Schwab)



nificantly rise by age 45," he said. "By age 75, a pedestrian is more than twice as likely as a 16- to 20-year-old of dying by being hit by a car."

Prath noted that "some Vision

Zero solutions require engineering, but many do not."

"It's as easy as changing a traffic light's timing, giving pedestrians a few more seconds start so they can be seen better in the crossway, or providing education to show neighbors how to work for safer streets," Prath said.

City Heights resident Samantha Ollinger, executive director of Bike San Diego, a nonprofit advocacy group promoting everyday riding and advocating for bicycling infrastructure, read a long list of pedestrians killed in San Diego traffic accidents during the past few years.

"This is a very small sample of San Diegans who've lost their lives to vehicular violence," Ollinger said. "They would be alive today if our streets were safer. But our streets aren't safe."

Noting that pedestrian traffic deaths are "100 percent preventable," she said, "The cost of a simple human mistake should not be paid with someone's life. That's unacceptable."

"The only reason people continue to die on our streets, is because our leaders continue to prioritize vehicle convenience over public safety," Ollinger said. "The time for half measures must end. We cannot continue to simply sit back and continue to let the lives of our family members, friends and neighbors be endangered every single day."

Ollinger said law enforcement "must take aggressive steps to curb dangerous driving. Our elected officials must become leaders and say no to prioritizing vehicle convenience. We can't afford to keep losing our loved ones to a cause that's completely avoidable."

Jaime Leonen, 29, was killed by a car in 2015 while crossing the street with his father-in-law near Sharp Mary Birch Hospi-

tal in the 3000 block of Health Center Drive in Kearny Mesa. Leonen's friends, Nicole Leon and Jose Miranda, spoke on his behalf Feb. 2.

"There's no safe area to cross in front of Sharp," Leon said, noting that both her children were born there. "I used to pass by and only have happy memories. Now I think of Jaime, of the night he died, because there's no safe area to cross. We just want to make awareness that there is something that can be done to prevent accidents like this from happening."

Miranda read excerpts from a letter from Jaime's father: "My son was taken away too soon. I imagine holding Jaime when he was 2 days old and feeling the warmth of him. ... My biggest hope is that he will help others to remember the men, women and children all involved in, and affected by (car) crashes. They were not statistics. They were people just like we are, with the same hopes, dreams — and very imminent fear."

The city has experienced an alarming increase in traffic deaths, especially among pedestrians, over the past several years. The numbers increased significantly in 2015 for all modes of transportation, including people walking, bicycling, driving and motorcycling. People walking experienced the biggest increase, with 23 deaths and 54 people seriously injured, 42 percent higher than 2014.

Vision Zero is supported by Mayor Kevin Faulconer and the City Council, as well as a coalition of leading transportation, business and community-based organizations.

—Dave Schwab can be reached at dschwab@journalist.com.■



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Congressional Watch

Andy Cohen



Welcome to the latest installment of the San Diego Congressional Watch! The new year off started rather strongly for **Scott Peters (D-52)**, who, as reported by the San Diego Community News Network (SDCNN), was invited along with 14 other members of Congress to the White House by President Obama last month. The group previewed and discussed — with the president and Attorney General Loretta Lynch — a series of executive actions on guns that Obama subsequently introduced.

The invitation came after Peters took to the floor of Congress over the course of several days to condemn Congress’ lack of action on gun safety in the wake of a myriad of mass shootings, all taking place after the Sandy Hook Elementary school shootings on Dec. 14, 2012, where 20 elementary school children and six adults were killed by a lone, deranged gunman.

“I wanted to remind people that we need to take action on this,” Peters said in an interview with SDCNN. “The president did everything he could to enforce existing laws, but it’s still going to leave a hole that Congress has to address.”

Obama’s executive actions, were predictably, roundly criticized by Republicans. Before the measures were even released, House Speaker Paul Ryan released a statement excoriating the president for attempting to act where Congress would not.

“While we don’t yet know the details of the plan, the president is at minimum subverting the legislative branch, and potentially overturning its will,” Ryan said in a statement. “This is a dangerous level of executive overreach and the country will not stand for it.”

“It takes a lot of onions to criticize the president for strengthening existing laws,” Peters responded, noting that his Republican colleagues have long insisted that enforcement of existing laws was the only remedy necessary for reducing the unprecedented rash of gun violence in recent years. “Enforcement of existing laws is exactly what President Obama is trying to do. Ninety-percent of Americans think expanding background checks is a reasonable thing to do.”

Rep. Darrell Issa (R-49) is convinced that FBI Director James Comey is chomping at the bit to indict former Secretary of State and current Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton, along with her longtime aide Huma Abedin, for conducting State Department business via a private email server during Clinton’s tenure.

“I think the FBI director would like to indict both Hillary and Huma as we speak,” Issa told the Washington Examiner. “I think he’s in a position where he’s being forced to triple-time make a case of what would otherwise be, what they call, a slam dunk.”

Clinton stepped down as Secretary of State in 2012, after serv-



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ing during the first of Barack Obama’s two terms in office. Numerous Congressional investigations into potential violations of law have turned up empty. And while the State Department has determined that Clinton’s emails did contain a handful of items with classified information, none of that information had been declared classified until well after the fact, in some cases years after the fact. Clinton turned her email server over to the FBI in August, and the Bureau continues to investigate, but to this point has announced no findings of wrongdoing on Clinton’s or Abedin’s part.

It should be noted that Issa has made such accusations before, most notably in relation to the terrorist attacks in Benghazi, Libya, where in his role as chair of the House Oversight committee Issa insisted there was evidence of criminal wrongdoing on Clinton’s part that led to the death of Ambassador Chris Stevens and three other Americans. After years of

handwringing, no such evidence was ever found.

Meanwhile, **Duncan Hunter (R-50)**, in a fit of hyperbole, has determined that Navy Secretary Ray Mabus is a “bigger threat to the Marine Corps than ISIS.”

In December, Defense Secretary Ash Carter ordered all military combat positions be opened to women. The Marine Corps has insisted on maintaining some infantry positions for men only, while the other branches of the military have been working diligently to comply.

The Marines had conducted a study that found that integrated units underperformed in comparison to their all-male counterparts, but that study was rejected as flawed.

“Evidently, to the White House, the findings within reports and surveys are subjects of convenience,” Hunter wrote in an op-ed published on Fox News. “They only matter when they conform to the broader agenda, otherwise they’re meaningless. The dismissal of the Marine Corps and the special operations community in the gender integration process is proof of that fact.”

Hunter, among others, made similar arguments in response to the repeal of “don’t ask, don’t tell,” insisting that allowing gay members of the military to serve openly would destroy unit cohesion and undermine the military’s effectiveness. Our armed forces seem to have survived that sea change quite nicely, despite the dire predictions of Armageddon that preceded the end of that policy.

In a petulant response to the president’s final State of the Union address, Hunter told the Washington Times that Obama was “naïve” on foreign policy and that he has contributed to the “complete and utter chaos in the world.”

“He doesn’t understand the world,” Hunter said. “He simply doesn’t understand the world, even after being president for seven years. He’s naïve and almost childish in his world views. He lives in a house of mirrors where reality does not intrude in any way whatsoever in his world. There’s no reality in Obama’s world. None.”

But then again, Barack Obama wasn’t the one who insisted the U.S. should use tactical nuclear weapons in a preemptive military strike against Iran. It’s almost as if the war in Iraq had nothing whatsoever to do with the current circumstances in the Middle East. Almost.

—Andy Cohen is a local freelance writer. Reach him at ac76@sbcbglobal.net.

POLITICS

Notes from Toni

Toni G. Atkins



Claim your EITC!

Notes from Last month, the Assembly passed HR 33, a resolution that I co-authored with Assemblymember Mark Stone proclaiming Jan. 22 to be California Earned Income Tax Credit Awareness Day.

That day, I held an event at the Jacobs Center in Valencia Park aimed at promoting the state’s new Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). I want everyone who’s eligible for this benefit to claim it on their tax return. It’s extra money for the lowest-income workers and their families.

I can tell you from my own experience growing up poor in Virginia how much every little bit helps when it comes to putting better meals on the dinner table and new shoes on the kids’ feet.

I’d like to acknowledge a few of the people who participated in the kick-off on Jan. 22; Dr. Shirley Weber (who moved the EITC through the budget process last year), and entrepreneur and investor Joe Sanberg, who has generously funded the outreach campaign CalEITC4me.

Also speaking were Mark Caferty, president and CEO of the San Diego Regional Economic Development Corporation; Doug Moore, executive director of the UDW Homecare Providers Union; and Laura Tancredi-Baese, CEO of Home Start, one of several San Diego agencies where local residents can obtain free tax assistance through the VITA program.

We also want to thank everyone who attended the kick-off.

The federal Earned Income Tax Credit is widely recognized as one of the most effective ways to fight poverty. But too many people who are eligible for the benefit — which can add up to thousands of dollars every year — don’t file for it, not only depriving themselves and their families of money they are entitled to, but also depriving local communities of an economic boost.

Now, many low-income Californians have a second benefit that they can claim, and so we have yet another reason to spread the word and make sure people know how easy it is to get these helpful credits.

The state credit will help roughly 1.5 million low-income

working Californians and pump \$380 million into local economies throughout the state. Families can get up to roughly \$2,600, depending on their number of children and level of income, lifting tens of thousands of people out of poverty.

But for that to happen, people have to know about it. That’s where Joe Sanberg is helping.

CalEITC4me is a public-private partnership that is funding a statewide outreach campaign and hosting a website, CalEITCforme.org, that provides all the information people need to find out if they qualify for the state and/or federal EITC, and how to claim them.

The state’s economy is rebounding from the recession, but the recovery hasn’t reached all Californians. Wages are still lagging. But the state’s budget is strong, so in addition to paying down debt, saving more money for a rainy day, and bolstering education, the Legislature is continuing to strengthen the social safety net for those who are struggling.

The state EITC is the cornerstone of those efforts, and an effective way to invest in people. Please help me spread the word.

Editor’s Note: See our full report on the Cal EITC on page 7.

Around the district: Taxpayers also should be aware that the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program is available throughout San Diego. Generally, those with incomes less than \$54,000 qualify. To make an appointment, please call 2-1-1 for the site nearest to you ... Human trafficking is modern-day slavery — and unfortunately, the FBI has identified San Diego as one of the cities with the highest intensity of incidents. That’s why I’m proud to have introduced two bills to give law enforcement more tools in the fight to rescue these victims, some of whom are trafficked for sex. The first bill would establish a pilot housing program for young victims so they can be safe from their captors and have access to the appropriate services to recover. The second would establish a statewide task force made up of law enforcement officials, courts and social service providers to determine best practices to detect and prevent this crime.

—Toni G. Atkins is the Speaker of the California State Assembly. For more information, visit her website, asmdc.org/speaker or follow her on Twitter, @toniatkins.■

Business Spotlight

■ **Valley Furniture**
906 E. Main St.
El Cajon, CA 92021
619-442-9233
tuckersvalleyfurniture.com

■ **Cash and Carry Furniture**
858 E. Main St.
El Cajon, CA 92021
619-442-7706

Jan. 20, 1947 is when it all began...

Valley Furniture first opened its doors on the corner of Main Street and Molli-

sion Avenue in El Cajon, with the simple philosophy of always conducting business

with the highest of integrity, honesty, ethics and giving the best price up front. Several years later Cash & Carry (C&C) opened. Although we have grown through the years and our appearance and furniture styles have changed, our core value of how to do business has never wavered ...

Valley Furniture is all about choices. We are proud to specialize in American made products and also offer the largest selection of Amish-made furniture in San Diego.

C & C Furniture focuses on brands you know at prices you will love, with a fresh, eclectic mix of priced-right furniture.

Both stores offer a welcoming atmo-

sphere that helps you find the right piece of furniture or accent for your home. Hiring the friendliest, most helpful, non-commissioned staff — we strive to bring you a great shopping experience.

Don’t let our name fool you because both stores offer in-home delivery service anywhere in San Diego County and we take all forms of payment. We are also the only store with an onsite 50,000 square foot warehouse for immediate pick up.

So take the short drive to El Cajon and discover San Diego’s best furniture store for over 69 years.



GUEST EDITORIALS

Scott
Sherman



Fire Station 45 open house scheduled



Fire Station 45 will have its open house on Feb. 20. (Photo by Ken Williams)

My office has teamed up with the San Diego Fire-Rescue Department to hold an open house of the recently completed Fire Station 45 in Mission Valley.

The family-friendly event Feb. 20 will allow residents to tour the fire station and receive first-aid medical training from Project Heart Beat. Balloons and inflatable play structures will be available for kids to play on as well as free food courtesy of Lynx Grills.

Fire Station 45 is an important addition to the Mission Valley community that will improve response times and increase safety in the area. This is the first fire station built in District 7 in more than 20 years and I want to make sure that residents have the chance to take a

tour and learn more about the new facility that will improve safety in our community.

The open house will be a great event for the family as well! In addition to tours, kids will have the chance to see a fire truck up close, meet Sparky the Fire Dog, the popular mascot of Fire-Rescue. The San Diego Rescue Foundation

will have the "Inflatable City" bounce house available where children can have fun while learning how to safely exit a burning home.

The event is also a great opportunity to meet with San Diego's public safety personnel and thank them for their hard work and dedicated service to our community.

The open house will also give me an opportunity to meet with you and hear your concerns and ideas on improving our community. In order for me to be the best councilmember I can be, it is important that I hear from you about problems or concerns in your neighborhood.

Fire Station 45 is located at 9366 Friars Road across the street from Qualcomm Stadium. Parking will be available in the adjacent lot that is accessible off of Mission Village Drive. The event runs from 11 a.m. — 1 p.m.

To RSVP or for more information about the event, contact my office at 619-236-6677 or email me at ScottSherman@SanDiego.Gov. Hope to see you there!

—Scott Sherman represents District 7 on the San Diego City Council.■

Renters can improve their chances of receiving full security deposit back

Molly Kirkland

One of the top priorities most tenants have when they move out of an apartment is to get their full security deposit back. There are a few things you should understand if you want to maximize the amount you'll receive.

When you moved in to your rental, you may have walked through the unit with your landlord to make note of existing damage or items in need of repair. You also may have also taken photos of the unit to document its condition. The "move-in checklist" and photos are useful tools in determining who is responsible for any damage that remains when you

move out.

If you have taken good care of your apartment and kept your landlord informed about needed repairs over the term of your lease, there shouldn't be any surprises when you move out. State law says your landlord is required to let you know that you have a right to request a "move out" inspection, a step recommended by the San Diego County Apartment Association.

If the move out inspection finds repairs are needed, discuss next steps with your landlord before doing work yourself; the landlord may want a professional to do the repairs.

Departing tenants are sometimes surprised at the cleaning fees that can be de-

ducted from the deposit. When you return the keys to the landlord, the unit should be just as clean as it was when you moved in. Normal wear and tear, such as worn carpet or chipped paint, is acceptable, but you should make an effort to give your unit a thorough cleaning after you've moved your belongings.

There are a few areas that tenants often overlook. Be sure to clean:

- Inside the refrigerator, including drawers and shelves
- Under and around the refrigerator
- Under the oven. If your oven has a removable storage drawer at the bottom, take it out and clear out any crumbs or dirt that have accumulated.
- The stove top (including burners and drip pans if your stove is electric)
- Cabinets, drawers and shelves throughout the apartment
- Window blinds should be

wiped down

- Scrub all hard floors, sinks and bathtubs

Your landlord may use your security deposit to pay for a professional cleaning service if more cleaning is needed after you move out. The deposit may also be used to pay for damages beyond normal wear and tear. If you owe anything to the landlord, such as unpaid rent or late payment fees, this can also be deducted from your deposit.

The law requires the landlord to return the balance of the deposit — less any deductions — within 21 calendar days of vacating the unit. If the landlord is returning less than the full amount of your original deposit, he or she must also include an accounting of how the deposit was spent. Check to make sure your landlord has your new forwarding address.

—Molly Kirkland is director of public affairs for the San Diego County Apartment Association.■

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Tax relief for working families

New state program gives extra cash to most vulnerable

Jeff Clemetson

“Good news” and “tax season” are phrases that are rarely seen together, but a new statewide program really is good news for low-income workers this tax season.

The California Earned Income Tax Credit (CalEITC) initiative is a cash-back tax credit that is new this year. The program was designed to complement the impact of the federal EITC by giving an additional check to the most vulnerable low-income workers.

“Adding the new California EITC is a tremendous opportunity for hard-working Californians to keep more of the money that they earn and help them to take care of their families,” Assembly Speaker Toni Atkins said in a statement. Atkins was instrumental in getting the CalEITC added to the 2015-16 budget.

To qualify for CalEITC funds, you must be an individual with zero dependents who earned less than \$6,850 last year; or a household with one dependent who earned less than \$9,880; or

a household with two or more dependents who earned less than \$13,870.

Also, all filers must be over the age of 25 to qualify. The maximum refund a family can receive is \$2,653 but the average refund will be around \$900.

Families eligible for CalEITC are also eligible for federal EITC benefits, which have a higher income threshold to qualify. Individuals with zero dependents who earned less than \$14,820 and households with three or more children who earned less than \$53,267 qualify for federal EITC money.

Many of California’s working families are eligible for both state and federal EITC benefits. However, being eligible doesn’t mean a person will automatically receive a check. Workers must file their tax returns to collect — and that doesn’t always happen.

According to studies by the Tax Policy Center and IRS, eligible workers with no children are less likely to file for EITC money than those with children.

“This could reflect the fact that these workers are eligible for relatively small credits,” said Alissa Anderson, senior policy analyst at the California Budget & Policy Center. “Participation rates are also thought to be lower among workers who are eligible for smaller credits just in general, regardless of how many

qualifying dependents they have; which again suggests that some people may not think it’s worth it to file taxes and claim the credit if they are eligible for only a small credit.”

Studies also show that people with incomes so low that they aren’t required to file a tax return also do not participate in EITC programs.

“It could be that non-filers are not aware that they can receive a refund even if they don’t owe personal income taxes or they may not think it’s worth the time and effort to file, particularly if they are eligible for only a small credit,” Anderson said.

Historically, California is ranked among the lowest in filing for the federal EITC, leaving \$1.8 billion on the table that otherwise would have been available to those who need it the most. Now with nearly \$400 million available through the CalEITC, an estimated \$2.3 billion is available for Californians between both the state and federal programs.

A joint public and private information campaign called CalEITC4Me is underway “to keep these much-needed dollars with the people who earned them,” according to a statement released by the campaign. CalEITC4Me estimates that between the federal and state EITC refunds, it is possible for some households to receive up

to \$6,000 this year.

“This tax season, nearly \$600 million is available between the state and federal EITCs for San Diego’s working families,” Assemblymember Shirley Weber said in a statement. “That’s an estimated 50,000 filers who are eligible for CalEITC in San Diego County, benefiting up to 120,000 people.”

The majority of those who are eligible are “part-time, working single mothers,” said Holly Martinez, a spokesperson for CalEITC4Me campaign.

The campaign also researched other demographics of potential candidates for CalEITC help. Of households with incomes under \$15,000 in targeted ZIP codes, 39 percent are Latino; 17 percent are African-American; and 11 percent are Asian. Only 16 percent of households are married and 48 percent are single without children; 35 percent have at least one child. Fifty-eight percent of people who make less than \$15,000 are women. Ninety-one percent worked less than full-time. One in six moved in the last year and more than three-quarters are renters.

In Mission Valley (ZIP code 92108), an estimated 200 to 299 filers are eligible for the state credit and 945 for the federal credit. Mission Valley’s neighbors have similarly low numbers of eligible filers, except Kearny Mesa (ZIP code 92111) where an estimated 700 to 799 filers are eligible for state credits and 3,690 for the

federal. For a more detailed examination of where potential EITC filers live, visit the CalEITC4Me Campaign’s heat map at bit.ly/1IPXq3W.

For low- to moderate-income individuals or families who cannot prepare their own tax returns, the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program offers free tax help from qualified tax professionals.

“Sixty percent of Californians who were eligible for free tax assistance ended up paying to file their taxes at an average of cost of \$200,” Martinez said. “That’s money families could have for food, transportation and other every day needs.”

According to the IRS, VITA generally helps people who make less than \$53,000 annually, people with disabilities, the elderly, and people with limited English. All volunteers are IRS-certified and provide basic income tax preparation and help with electronic filing.

For a complete list of VITA sites throughout San Diego County there are two useful websites to visit. The Tax Prep Finder Tool at caleitc4me.org/get-it/ allows you to search for local VITA locations and lets you know the languages offered at each location and how to set appointments. The 211 San Diego site has a detailed list of VITA locations and information on what filers need to bring to appointments at bit.ly/1QCjvIF.

—Write to Jeff Clemetson at jeff@sdenn.com.

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11am to 9pm Saturday. 10am to 9pm Sunday. 2660 Calhoun St. 619-297-1874

DINING OUT IN SAN DIEGO

BITS OF FOOD NEWS FROM MISSION VALLEY AND BEYOND



Barbara Hurst samples the new Station 45 craft beer, made in honor of the new fire station in Mission Valley. (Courtesy of Oggi's Restaurant and Brewhouse)

Barbara Hurst, owner of **Oggi's Restaurant and Brewhouse** in Mission Valley, tells Mission Valley News that the eatery's award-winning brewer, John Wilson, has created an Imperial IPA that was named Station 45 in honor of the restaurant's newest neighbors, the firefighters now residing in their new firehouse across from Qualcomm Stadium. Oggi's offers 13 other in-house brewed craft beers as well. Wilson, by the way, is one of the earlier brewers in San Diego County. *Fenton Marketplace, 2245 Fenton Pkwy. Suite 101. missionvalley.oggis.com.*

French cheeses will be in abundance at a free two-day tasting event in front of Macy's at Fashion Valley mall, from 11 a.m. – 6 p.m. Feb. 19 and 20. Presented by **The Cheeses of Europe**, an organization financed by the European Union that promotes French cheeses in the U.S., samples will include brie, Camembert de Nomandie, Fromager d'Affinois and more than 25 other types available for sale. **Green Flash Brewing Company** will augment the event with beer pairings. *7007 Fashion Valley Road. thecheesesofeurope.com.*



French cheeses will be showcased at a free event at the Fashion Valley mall. (Courtesy of The Cheeses of Europe)



Fans of **P.F. Chang's** will have a chance at winning free meals at the restaurant chain for a year if they find certain trees on or near the grounds at each location hiding vibrant red envelopes that might contain the grand prize. Only five of them will be awarded nationwide, although other envelopes can potentially hold certificates for one-time free entrees or added points toward the company's "preferred club" program. The promotion is being held randomly throughout the month of February at all outlets in celebration of the Chinese New Year, which began Feb. 8. In addition, the company will donate \$1 to the Boys & Girls Clubs of America from purchases of select entrees on a limited-time menu. *Fashion Valley mall, 7077 Friars Road. pfchangs.com.*



A new craft brewery opens on Morena Boulevard. (Photo by Scott Linnett)

San Diego's burgeoning brew scene has come to include **Bitter Brothers Brewing**, a 3,200-square-foot facility that opened recently in Bay Park by siblings and craft beer enthusiasts Bill and Kurt Warnke from Detroit, and Monica Andresen, formerly of Waters Fine Catering. The project launched with eight types of beer in the offing. They include session IPA, porter on nitro, hefeweizen, dunkelweizen and a pomegranate Berliner Weisse. Food trucks roll in on Friday evenings and Saturday afternoons. *4170 Morena Blvd. 619-961-6690.*

Rubio's has announced that it will begin using only "all-natural" chicken raised without antibiotics as well as nitrate-free bacon across its entire menu at all locations beginning this spring. As part of its "Made with a Mission" effort, the 33-year-old chain is also intent on removing artificial flavors and colorings contained in some of the foods (flour tortillas, fire-roasted corn and a few desserts) while exploring sources for sustainable fish and hormone-free beef. Those changes are slated for late 2017. *Fashion Valley mall, 7077 Friars Road; and 2075 Camino de la Reina. rubios.com.*



Bully's East in Mission Valley celebrated its 45th anniversary on Feb. 5 with a party at the restaurant and sports bar. Bully's East was named Best Steak House, Best Business Brunch and Best Happy Hour in the 2015 Best of Mission Valley awards. *2401 Camino Del Rio South, 619-291-2665. bullyseastsd.com.*



North Park resident Matthew Lyons is breaking ground in a section of the former North Park Post Office for a late-spring opening of **Tribute Pizza**, his first brick-and-mortar venture after conducting pop-up pizzerias throughout the neighborhood for the past two years. He has also served as a consulting chef for various pizzerias in San Diego and helped open one in Nairobi, Kenya.

Tribute will occupy 3,000 square feet within the building and feature pizzas he describes as "neo-Neapolitan style" that take three to four minutes to cook in a wood-fire oven. The menu will extend also to salads, appetizers, a few protein entrees, house-made charcuterie, and desserts. *3077 North Park Way. tributepizza.com.*

—Frank Sabatini Jr can be reached at fsabatini@san.rr.com. ■

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(above) "Great balls of fire" over fries; (below) the house "Rita" at Joe's Crab Shack in Mission Valley (Photos by Dr. Ink)

The first time's a charm

**Come On
Get Happy!**
Dr. Ink

It isn't what connoisseurs consider the Cadillac of seafood restaurants. And for that very reason, I've never B-lined into Joe's Crab Shack for their famous shellfish steampots and Southern-style catfish. At least not yet.

After encountering the Shack in multiple cities while traveling, I finally paid a visit to the Houston-based chain right here in Mission Valley. But for happy hour only, when the drafts, hurricanes and house margaritas are only \$3 and various appetizers, including a few incorporating crab meat, are \$5.

The restaurant is the size of a grand ballroom and located on the second level of the Hazard Center. The vibe is playful, if not boisterous on Friday and Saturday evenings, as I've witnessed when ducking into Yogurtland directly below.

I went on a Monday and learned when I arrived that it's the day kids eat for free. To my relief, there were only two tykes in the whole place and the atmosphere was rather relaxing.

Dividing the bar lounge from the main dining room is a merchandise station resembling a souvenir shop at an airport. It's filled with T-shirts emblazoned with

peace symbols, the same as what the servers wear.

I took a table in the bar area and was greeted immediately by a young waiter who slipped me a ticket-size menu listing the happy hour specials. A hurricane seemed too festive a cocktail for drinking solo, and the draft beer selection, mainly common crafts and the usual domestics, didn't grab me. So I chose the house "Rita" served in a wide, tall glass.

A lively cocktail it was, given that the mediocre-grade Sauza

Tequila is complemented by Triple Sec and sweet-and-sour syrup, which my waiter couldn't confirm as house-made. Neither could the bartender when asked. Either way, the drink maintained a bright citrus flavor and reasonable kick right to the end, even after most of the chipped ice melted into it.

Salivating over various seafood buckets passing my table, most of them seemingly loaded with crab legs and lobster tails, I caved into my seafood craving with a \$5 order of "great balls of fire."

Served in a metal bin over decent French fries were eight panko-breaded balls filled with warm cream cheese, diced jalapenos and minced crab. Crispy on the outside and decadently flavorful on the inside, I'd order them again in a heartbeat, perhaps when trying out the place for dinner sometime.

In addition to happy hour — offered twice each day Monday through Friday — the Shack features other midweek specials such as \$2 "bites and drinks" on Tuesdays; all-you-can-eat snow crab for \$29 on Wednesdays; and \$15 whole main lobsters along with \$2 Sauza Blue margaritas on Thursdays.■

Joe's Crab Shack

7610 Hazard Center Drive
(Mission Valley)
619-574-8617
joescrabshack.com

Happy Hour:

4 – 7 p.m. and 9 p.m. – close,
Monday through Friday

RATINGS

DRINKS: ♂♂♂♂

The beer selection is somewhat pedestrian, but if you're hankering for a bright-tasting margarita, they're a couple notches above what you'll find in other chain establishments.

FOOD: ♂♂♂♂

Based only on an appetizer called "great balls of fire," they're similar to jalapeno poppers, but better because they contain crab meat.

VALUE: ♂♂♂♂♂

The prices on beer, cocktails and noshes come down by nearly 50 percent during happy hour.

SERVICE: ♂♂♂

The staff was young, friendly and fast, but not entirely knowledgeable about the ingredients used in the drinks.

ATMOSPHERE: ♂♂♂

Both the bar lounge and main dining room have a mess-hall feel conducive to large parties. Bright lighting throughout the rooms and a merchandise area near the entrance confirm you've entered into a corporate-run chain.



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A meat smoker, Dalmatian and expert chef team

Frank Sabatini Jr.

Amid copious flora, quirky statuary, and a layer cake of architectural styles spanning 63 years across 32 acres of the Town and Country Resort & Convention Center is Charlie's, a hidden gem to locals on the hunt for solid barbecue. But the clock is slowly ticking before it becomes history.

Situated in a Googie-style building fronted by a redbrick courtyard, hotel guests may not even find the restaurant so easily without meandering to the far eastern end of the property, past vine-covered gazebos and along narrow pathways lined with roses and greenery.

A six-tiered birdbath nearby marks the spot, along with a shiny metal smoker parked out front and a life-size cement statue of a Dalmatian sitting at the door. That's Charlie.

The restaurant doubles as a sports bar, offering ample indoor-outdoor seating and validated parking. Although it wasn't until several months ago that Charlie's became a desirable destination for dining and drinking, after receiving a much-needed interior redo and a culinary rescue by chef Paul McCabe and pastry wizard Jack Fisher. Both hail from the local



Charlie's
500 Hotel Circle North
(Mission Valley)
619-291-7131, ext. 3264
destinationhotels.com
Prices: Salads and appetizers,
\$6 to \$9; sandwiches, burgers
and hot dogs, \$12 to \$17;
entrees, \$12 to \$24

(clockwise, from bottom left) Chicken wings with hot sauces; half order of ribs with baked beans and a barbecue baked potato; Chef Paul McCabe tending to the smoker; the Dalmatian statue (Photos by Frank Sabatini Jr.)



fine-dining scene.

McCabe previously helmed the kitchens at La Valencia Hotel, Delicias and Kitchen 1540 before taking a two-year gig at the Royal Palms in Scottsdale, Arizona. As food and beverage

director for the Town and Country, he will oversee the development of two new, full-service restaurants slated for the resort's \$80 million renovation, which begins later this year under the management of

Destination Hotels.

Charlie's, he said, will remain open to hotel guests and the public through the sweeping transition, although it will ultimately be bulldozed in the last phase of the project "sometime in late 2017."

Fisher's resume includes jobs at Jsix and Nine-Ten. In addition to crafting Charlie's soul-warming rum raisin apple pie sundae, super-moist cocoa nib cake and other elevated desserts, he makes all the sandwich buns in-house.

What you'll find between his breads are Nathan's-sourced "monster dogs" covered in beef chili or the ambitious "big Texas burger" featuring two patties buried in brisket, Jack cheese and red onions. We tried it, and it was frightfully wonderful.

The big draws, however, are the meats that originate from the smoker parked out front. They're plated with various side dishes also worthy of a few blue ribbons.

Chicken wings never tasted so good in this non-crispy form. Juicy to the bones, they're smoked for hours in a mix of cherry wood and cedar, then flash-fried and dressed in Buffalo, barbecue, honey-Dijon or Carolina sauces.

To those with a brawny tolerance for heat, ask for the off-menu sauces on the side — habanero, scorpion or Carolina reaper, the latter of which will numb your gums if applying more than a miniscule eye drop onto your food. Otherwise, it's actually high in flavor.

Brisket and ribs are the biggest sellers. The former flaunted excellent bark (the outer edges) that wasn't overly concentrated in spices, but rather a peppery segue to moist, tender meat charmed by hickory wood.

The ribs were zesty and fairly

supple, with the meat requiring a little more chew compared to some in other barbecue joints that over-smoke them to a ridiculously soft texture. There is a limit in my book when it comes to Texas-style barbecuing.

We loved the side dishes. The plates come with a choice of two, with the brisket-stuffed baked potato ranking as a meal in itself, given that it also carries a payload of melted cheese and sour cream.

My companion gravitated to the mac n' cheese made with a silken blend of Gruyere, American and cheddar cheeses. The baked beans were thick and flavorful, although more novel was the "warm tater salad" combining fried pee wee potatoes with shallots, red bell peppers and garlic aioli — not the kind our mothers made.

That, along with everything else on the menu, isn't something you would have found here before McCabe arrived. Nearly everything now is made in-house as a primer for what's on the horizon, when the Town and Country is razed and rebuilt in a modern mid-century style that will bring exciting dining choices to Hotel Circle.

For now, the gastronomic wheels are in motion at Charlie's.

—Frank Sabatini Jr. is the author of "Secret San Diego" (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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Greer Grimsley as Scarpia in "Tosca" (Courtesy of San Diego Opera/Ken Howard)

Puccini's genius is on full display

David Dixon

Giacomo Puccini's dark achievement, "Tosca," features brutal deceit, immoral behavior, and a cunning villain that represents pure evil.

In other words, it's just another night at the opera.

For a very limited engagement, San Diego Opera brings Puccini's popular work to the San Diego Civic Theatre. Adapted from the Victorien Sardou play, "La Tosca," the music-filled epic has resonated with audiences since the very early 1900s.

Those that have never seen a production of "Tosca" before should know that the plot involves an Italian singer, Fiona Tosca (Alexia Voulgaridou), living in early-19th century Rome. Although she has a romantic relationship with a passionate painter, Mario Cavaradossi (Gwyn Hughes Jones), Fiona is an easily jealous woman who does not always trust her boyfriend.

Their lives become gloomier when the villainous chief of police, Baron Scarpia (Greer Grimsley) searches for an escaped prisoner. His quest to find the fugitive ultimately puts Fiona and Mario's lives in danger.

The events take place on June 14, 1800.

Director Lesley Koenig (the current managing director at Weston Playhouse Theatre Company in Vermont) knows a lot about the historical context of "Tosca" and the events have increased her appreciation of the libretto by Luigi Illica and Giuseppe Giacosa.

"Almost every action that happens on that day to the protagonists is because of the Battle of Marengo between French forces and Austrian forces," she said. "Looking at the political context of 'Tosca' doesn't change how the characters act on stage. However, it helps the audience understand the importance of the day."

Even though "Tosca" has not been modernized, there are still aspects of this interpretation that have modern relevance.



Lesley Koenig, the opera's director (Courtesy of Lesley Koenig)

Puccini's "Tosca"
Feb. 13 – 21
San Diego Civic Theatre
1100 Third Ave. (Downtown)
sdopera.org
619-232-7636.

Grimsley, a bass-baritone, feels that Scarpia remains a haunting antagonist, even today.

"In present-day situations, there are still abuses of power and privilege," he said. "The character is not so unbelievable, because we have seen a heinous abuse of that sort of power in the past century."

The singer respects Puccini's ability to express the emotions of each character through music.

"He is able to describe musically what the characters are feeling," Grimsley said. "You completely understand the state of mind every person is experiencing."

Like Grimsley, Koenig appreciates the deeply layered roles throughout Puccini's major ac-

complishments.

"His pieces are so complex and the characters are so real," she said. "There are many dimensions to them."

According to Koenig, plot and music weave together perfectly in operas by Puccini.

"He knows how to tell a story and within three notes can make audiences cry," Koenig said. "Puccini is just masterful at storytelling."

Koenig wants to honor the beloved music, while also breathing new life into the drama.

"I think the production will be respectful of the composer/librettist, but a fresh look," she said. "It's going to be really good theater."

For people who have never been to the opera before, Grimsley highly recommends "Tosca."

"This is a great first opera," he said. "The plot is very engaging and deals with injustice with haunting results. Puccini combines music and theater in the best way."

The rest of the 2015-16 season will give Puccini aficionados their money's worth. San Diegans have the opportunity to see "Tosca" and another classic from the composer, "Madama Butterfly," which comes to town in April. Bring the tissues and get ready to listen to timelessly beautiful music.

—A fan of film and theater from a very young age, David Dixon has written reviews and features for various print and online publications. You can reach him at daviddixon0202@gmail.com. ■

PUZZLE ANSWERS FROM PAGE 19

SUDOKU

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

CROSSWORD

DOWN	1	3	5	7	9	11	13	15	17	19	21	23	25	27	29	31	33	35	37	39	41	43	45	47	49	51	53	55	57	59	61	63	65	67	69	71	73	75	77	79	81	83	85	87	89	91	93	95	97	99
ACROSS	2	4	6	8	10	12	14	16	18	20	22	24	26	28	30	32	34	36	38	40	42	44	46	48	50	52	54	56	58	60	62	64	66	68	70	72	74	76	78	80	82	84	86	88	90	92	94	96	98	100

MUSIC NOTES

JAZZ

Thursday and Fridays: Antonio Fe at the Cosmo in The Cosmopolitan Restaurant and Hotel. Free. 6 p.m. 2660 Calhoun St., Old Town. OldTownCosmopolitan.com.

Fridays: Jazz Happy Hour at Handlery Hotel's 950 Lounge. Free. 5 p.m. 950 Hotel Circle North, Mission Valley. SD. Handlery.com.

Saturdays: Douglas Kvandal with the LiveJazz! Quartet at the Amigo Spot at Kings Inn. Free. 7 p.m. 1333 Hotel Circle South, Mission Valley. KingsInnSanDiego.com.

Feb. 21: Navy Band Southwest SeaBreeze Jazz Combo at Mission Trails Regional Park Visitor Center Auditorium. Free. 3 – 4 p.m. 1 Father Junipero Serra Trail, San Carlos. MTRP.org.

CLASSICAL

Feb. 20: Symphology: The Science of Sound (A Family Festival Concert) at Copley Symphony Hall. \$15+. Pre-concert activities at 1 p.m.; concert at 2 p.m. 750 B St., Downtown. Visit SanDiegoSymphony.org.

March 4: One Singular Sensation - A Tribute to the Music of Marvin Hamlisch at Copley Symphony Hall. \$20+. 8 p.m. 750 B St., Downtown. Visit SanDiegoSymphony.org.

ALTERNATIVE / ROCK

Feb. 13: Mariner at Pal Joey's. Free. 9 p.m. 5147 Waring Road, Allied Gardens. PalJoeyOnline.com.

Feb. 20: Get Back Loretta and Brothers Weiss at Brick by Brick. \$10. 8 p.m. 1130 Buenos Ave., Linda Vista. Visit brickbybrick.com.

Feb. 22: Sara and Roger present: The Fictitious Dishes, Listening at Rocks and The Anomaly at Casbah. \$5. 9 p.m. 2501 Kettner Blvd., Little Italy/Middletown. CasbahMusic.com.

POP

Tuesdays: Suzanne Shea and Bob Wade at Bistro Sixty. Free. 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. 5987 El Cajon Blvd., College Area. BistroSixtySD.com.

Fridays: Nathan Welden at Bistro Sixty. Free. 6:30 p.m. 5987 El Cajon Blvd., College Area. BistroSixtySD.com.

Feb. 26: Suspicious Minds (Elvis Tribute) at Tio Leo's Lounge. Price TBD. 8 p.m. 5302 Napa St., Linda Vista. TioLeos.com.

OTHER

Wednesdays: Blues Jam at Proud Mary's Southern Bar and Grill in the Ramada Conference Center. Free. 6:30 p.m. 5550 Kearny Mesa Road, Kearny Mesa. ProudMarysSD.com.

Sundays: Jazz 88.3 Blues Brunch at Proud Mary's Southern Bar and Grill in the Ramada Conference Center. Free. 11:30 a.m. – 3 p.m. 5550 Kearny Mesa Road, Kearny Mesa. ProudMarysSD.com.

Feb. 26: MRCH, Natalie Emmons, PRGRM and Garden Echo at The Merrow. \$8. 9 p.m. 1271 University Ave., Hillcrest. Visit TheMerrow.com.

March 6: Many Strings (hammered dulcimer and guitar) at Mission Trails Regional Park Visitor Center Auditorium. Free. 3 – 4 p.m. 1 Father Junipero Serra Trail, San Carlos. MTRP.org.

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

Broadway San Diego celebrates four decades

Charlene Baldridge



At the Balboa Theatre Jan. 23, Broadway San Diego (BSD) tossed itself a party celebrating 40 years. Barbara-Lee Edwards of CBS-TV Channel 8 acted as emcee of the event.

There was no birthday cake, just a lot of visual and aural frosting designed to entice on-lookers to subscribe to what the organization describes as, "one of their biggest and most chart-topping seasons yet!"

One wonders by whose chart; it looks pretty much like more of the same thing they've been doing for the past 20 years at least.

We are, nonetheless, lucky to have the series here, presenting the latest Broadway tours under the auspices of A Nederlander Corp., whose Broadway San Diego Vice President Joe Kobryner, stated in a news release that he is thrilled with the 40th anniversary 2016-17 season, consisting of six touring shows, four additional events, and four shows remaining in the 2015-16 season.

Most of the shows are presented at the San Diego Civic Theatre, located at 1200 Third Ave., Downtown.

"We have everything from the classics that have thrilled audiences for years and are now reimagined to some of the biggest titles coming straight from Broadway," Kobryner stated in the release.

An example of this would be "If/Then," starring Idina Menzel, which played Jan. 5-10.

The filmed portions of the celebration consisted of clips from the upcoming shows and commercials for the season's sponsor, San Diego County Credit Union (replete with the "money, money" TV ad that shows how much those other guys can ding you).

There were also filmed testimonials from satisfied BSD attendees who enjoy the benefits of membership in the President's Club.

The promotional film also included an informative segment about the Ben Vereen Awards (the third annual local talent competition takes place at the Balboa Theatre May 29, with Vereen in attendance). The competition emphasizes the abundance of San Diego's high school talent. The winners move on to compete in additional cities, including New York.

Though we expect to see portions of the film in the form



(clockwise, from top left) Disney's "Newsies" is headed to San Diego; Morgan Reynolds in "The Wizard of Oz" as the Scarecrow; "The Book of Mormon" scene; and "Rain: A Tribute to the Beatles" (Photos courtesy of Broadway San Diego)

of TV commercials this year, the live talent displayed Friday night at the Balboa was the best part of the celebration.

Tshidi Manye, who came direct from the Broadway "The Lion King" cast, sang "Circle of Life." "The Lion King" returns to San Diego for the third time, Sept. 7-Oct. 2, (the first time in seven years).

Danielle Dalli from the touring company of "The Sound of Music" (directed by former Old Globe Artistic Director Jack O'Brien) closed the evening with the title song from that show plus the inspirational number, "Climb Every Mountain," at which point hordes of kids from The J* Company trooped down the Balboa Theatre aisles to contribute live support to the emotional climax. "The Sound of Music" plays Nov. 15-20.

So, what else is new and old?

Newer shows I'm most looking forward for the upcoming 2016-17 season are "Cabaret"

(Aug. 23-28), which kicks off the new season; Time Magazine's show of the year, "Matilda the Musical" (Jan. 31-Feb. 5, 2017); "Finding Neverland" (April 4-9, 2017), and "The Bodyguard" (June 13-18, 2017).

"The Bodyguard," which has been touring Great Britain, debuted in London's West End, where it played for two years and then went on tour in Great Britain. It is a remake of the film that starred Whitney Houston and Kevin Costner and features such Houston songs as "I Will Always Love You" and "Saving All My Love (For You)."

I also look forward to seeing the Broadway tour of John Cameron Mitchell's über-rock musical, "Hedwig and the Angry Inch" (Nov. 29-Dec. 4), which fails in its description to tell exactly what that inch might be, only stating that the musical may be inappropriate for those 12 and under due to strong language and adult themes.

In addition to shows men-

tioned above, Broadway San Diego has added engagements of two San Diego-connected Broadway hits, "Rent" (Jan. 10-15, 2017) and "Jersey Boys" (May 9-14, 2017).

Other shows remaining in the current 2015-2016 season are "The Realish Housewives of San Diego" (Feb. 2-7, at the Balboa Theatre); "The Book of Mormon" (Feb. 23-March 6); "The Wizard of Oz" (March 15-20); "Rain: A Tribute to the Beatles" (March 29-April 3, Balboa Theatre); Disney's "Newsies" (May 31-June 5) and "Beautiful: The Carole King Musical" (Aug. 2-7).

That's a lot to digest and a lot to anticipate. Readers may find additional information regarding shows and dates at broadwaysd.com

—Charlene Baldridge has been writing about the arts since 1979. You can follow her blog at charlenebaldridge.com or reach her at charb81@gmail.com.

Medical Minute

Popular New Weight-Loss Procedure Now Offered

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"The procedure makes your stomach smaller so you require less food to feel full faster," said Dr. Vadim Avulov. "Patients are left with a small capacity for food storage, thus limiting their intake."

Recent research has found that the hunger-producing hormone ghrelin was significantly lowered in gastric sleeve patients. This hormone signals your brain when you are full.

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sdrep.org or 619-544-1000



(clockwise, from top left) Carla Harting and Manny Fernandes; Mike Genovese and Ellen Crawford; and the three-piece Irish band with Jim Mooney, Richard Tibbits and Alicia Previn. (Photos by Daren Scott)

Rep presents extended 'Mullingar'

Charlene Baldridge



"You're a bit of a lump," says Rosemary Muldoon to Anthony Reilly. The two, middle-aged now, have lived on adjoining cattle and sheep ranches outside Mullingar, Ireland, since childhood. In fact, Anthony toppled Rosemary on the playground one day when they were 7 — he doesn't remember — and family lore has it that she has hated him ever since. Hated him so much in fact, that she persuaded her doting father, back in the day, to give her the right of way strip on the property Anthony will inherit.

When John Patrick Shanley's 2014 Broadway play "Outside Mullingar" opens (directed by Associate Artistic Director Todd Salovey, the play has been extended until Feb. 21 at San Diego Repertory Theatre) Rosemary's father has died. There's been a funeral and what's left of the Muldoons and Reillys meet, as neighbors do, to pick over the past and prognosticate the future. Present are Rosemary's admirably stubborn mother, the

just widowed Aiofe (Ellen Crawford), and Anthony's beyond-irascible father, Tony (Mike Genovese).

While Rosemary (Carla Harting) stands outside in the rain so she can smoke (she claims to like cigarettes better than people), Tony proposes leaving the ranch to Anthony's American cousin. While Aiofe stands up for Anthony (Manny Fernandes), and Anthony attempts to bring Rosemary inside, we receive the backstory from the elders.

As it turns out, there is much more to it than they know. The ensuing scenes, a year later and four years later, reveal the truth and the depth of Rosemary and Anthony's feelings. She is a seething kettle of passion, and he, as she says, an inept lump. The two are fascinating receptacles of repressed longings and unspoken truth, as well as victims of the hard environment and parental insensitivity.

In addition to his pitch-perfect company, Salovey gathers a terrific design team for "Outside Mullingar." Giulio Perrone's scenic design morphs into three distinct cottages replete with kitchen appliances and sitting areas. It also suggests porches, barns and fields. Sherrice Mojgani's

lighting design evokes the landscape, and Anastasia Pautova's costumes, the sort of every day and dress-up wear that church-going people close to the land affect. David Scott's sound design and the three-piece Irish band (Jim Mooney, Alicia Previn and Richard Tibbits) add much color.

I can't imagine a better company or more sensitive direction. All the actors are sublimely enmeshed in their imperfect, can-

tankerous, yet loveable characters. None goes too far. This is an absolutely delicious production. The reconciliation scene between Tony and Anthony is one of the best father-son scenes ever witnessed, and the working out of the younger couple's long denied truth is both hilarious and heartbreaking.

Due to the magic of Shanley's poetry and the music of his language, we care so much we dread the denouement. I felt much the same about Shanley's Italian family in the film, "Moonstruck." Now, he's re-

turned to his own, Irish roots. His description of how that felt is reprinted in the Rep's program from an article Shanley wrote in The New York Times.

Shanley is also author of the highly successful play, "Doubt: A Parable," which received a Tony Award for Best Play in 2008 as well as the Pulitzer Prize for Drama.

—Charlene Baldridge has been writing about the arts since 1979. You can follow her blog at charlenebaldridge.com or reach her at charb81@gmail.com.



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► SOTC, from page 2

or Jerry Sanders, also praised the measure's ability to make an impact "on everyone in San Diego, including Downtown."

"That infrastructure and neighborhood investment will be directing over \$500 million to rebuilding neighborhoods and filling 27,000 potholes in the first year, so Downtown's getting a portion of that just like every community," Michell said. "So really when you think about it, that's 10 million in community improvements every week, which I think is fantastic."

Gloria, on the other hand, said that "Rebuild San Diego" doesn't go far enough to address the systemic problems in San Diego's neighborhood services, and believes the proposal is a ticket to financial struggles down the road.

"The proposal Mayor Faulconer is supporting sounds good on the surface but upon closer inspection is bad public policy that fails to solve San Diego's infrastructure problem," Gloria said. "The city's nonpartisan Independent Budget Analyst has made it clear that if we hope to fix our potholed streets, broken sidewalks and outdated facilities, we need a new funding source. This proposal ducks that difficult conversation and attempts to pay for a fraction of our infrastructure needs by diverting limited resources from neighborhood services like public safety, library hours, and code enforcement."

"While some are telling the public they can have their cake and eat it too, the truth is that if enacted, this proposal will starve neighborhood services for up to three decades, and at the end of that exceptionally long time, will still fail to fix our roads."

"There are no free lunches, and this proposal is no exception," Gloria said.

Overall, Michell said that Faulconer's address reaffirmed the positive outlook many San Diegans have for the city's future.

"I was incredibly impressed with Kevin because of two things," she said. "One, he talked in specifics about what our community would see from his office, meaning where he would spend his time, but he also had broad big vision. ... And he's really the one that can tell us, 'are we heading in the right direction or the wrong direction?'"

"He gave us a very positive outlook, which is wonderful, because I feel that, I believe that, and he validated that for all San Diegans," Michell said.

Along this vein, the mayor said that positive times are well on the horizon, and he continued to push his centric "One San Diego" message, promising shared prosperity among all San Diegans.

"We have laid the groundwork for building our better future," Faulconer said. "Now, in 2016, we begin the next phase of One San Diego, a city where every neighborhood has the chance to succeed and every person has the opportunity to prosper."

—Hutton Marshall is a freelance writer and former editor of San Diego Uptown News. Contact him at jhuttonmarshall@gmail.com.



Architectural drawing of the proposed Morris Cerullo Legacy International Center at 875 Hotel Circle South, just off eastbound Interstate 8. At the far left is a five-story parking garage, followed by a building containing the Training Center. Top right is the Welcome Center, the underground catacombs (colored red), which leads to the History Dome. The time-share building is shown at the bottom right of the drawing. The ministry's offices and security team would be housed in the building at the far right. (From city documents)

► LEGACY, from page 1

since December and attended every public meeting involving the Legacy Center. It should be noted that two members of the planning group — Jim Penner and Steve Abbo — have conflicts of interest and must recuse themselves from any votes concerning the project. Abbo was dismissed from the meeting, which was held at the Mission Valley Library, while the project was being discussed. Abbo is one of the owners of a liquor and convenience store that will be demolished if the Legacy Center is built. Penner was allowed to answer questions about the Legacy Center, because he is executive director of the Legacy Center Foundation at Morris Cerullo World Evangelism.

The Legacy Center has come under scrutiny for various reasons and raised a number of questions, some asked publicly and some not.

- What would happen if Morris Cerullo, who is 84 and was recently hospitalized, died suddenly? Would the multimillion-dollar project get tied up in probate court for years? Who would inherit Cerullo's ministry and TV empire, and would they have enough money to complete the project?

- Is the project fully funded? Or does the ministry have to raise more money?

- Why is Mark Harrah, the original architect who is no longer involved in the project, still speaking for Cerullo? How can a planning group make a monumental decision — about such a massive project that will impact Mission Valley for many years

to come — when it has not even questioned the new architect, Carrier Johnson?

- Is this really a tourism attraction, as Penner keeps telling the planning group? Or is it actually a training ground to "train an army for God who will then be able to train others," as Cerullo's website proclaims? Penner shies away from talking about the conflicting information, focusing only on the tourism angle.

- Planning board member Marco Sessa asked Harrah if the EIR contained any negative public comments. Harrah started evading the question, shaking his head to suggest that there were none or that they had been sufficiently addressed by his group. Sessa interrupted him, saying it was a "yes or no question." After some audience members raised their voices, Harrah finally answered yes. A representative from the UCSD Health Services spoke up, saying UCSD had commented on the EIR, expressing concerns about the traffic impact on Bachman Place, a two-lane road off Hotel Circle North that leads up the canyon to the Hospital District, Hillcrest and Mission Hills. He said UCSD was also worried about delays for emergency vehicles that sometimes use Bachman Place to get to the Hospital District when the freeways or surface roads are slow-moving due to traffic or accidents. UCSD Medical Center employs hundreds of people, and is a teaching hospital for medical students, and the parking spots along the entire length of Bachman Place are typically full.

- Harrah said the EIR would show that the Legacy Center

would have less of a traffic impact than what's there now: the 202-room Mission Valley Resort Hotel, a liquor store (owned by Abbo), several restaurants and shops, and a shuttered fitness center. The audience grumbled in disbelief. Harrah said the Mission Valley Resort Hotel has about 40 percent occupancy rate; but later, Penner contradicted him by saying it has a 75 percent occupancy rate. But audience members noted that the Legacy Center would have underground parking as well as a five-story parking garage, offering a combined total of 878 parking spots.

- Legacy Village would contain 127 timeshare units, in a five-story structure totaling 136,000 square feet, which would be located on the far southeast portion of the property where the vacated Senior Frog's fitness complex is. Harrah said they expected people would check in for five or six-day visits. So why is there a need for a 500-seat theater and a 300-seat amphitheater? Even with two people occupying each unit, the demand would appear to be less. Or are they expecting other visitors to pack other nearby hotels?

- Harrah insisted the Legacy Center would be "open 24/7, 365 days a year to the public." But do San Diegans, a diverse population of many ethnicities and faiths, want to visit a place built by a controversial personality as Morris Cerullo, who proclaims himself a faith healer, miracle worker and prophet? Would a "world class health spa" and a "world class restaurant" attract people who do not agree with Cerullo's strict religious beliefs?

- Why does the planning group chair, Dottie Surdi, feel

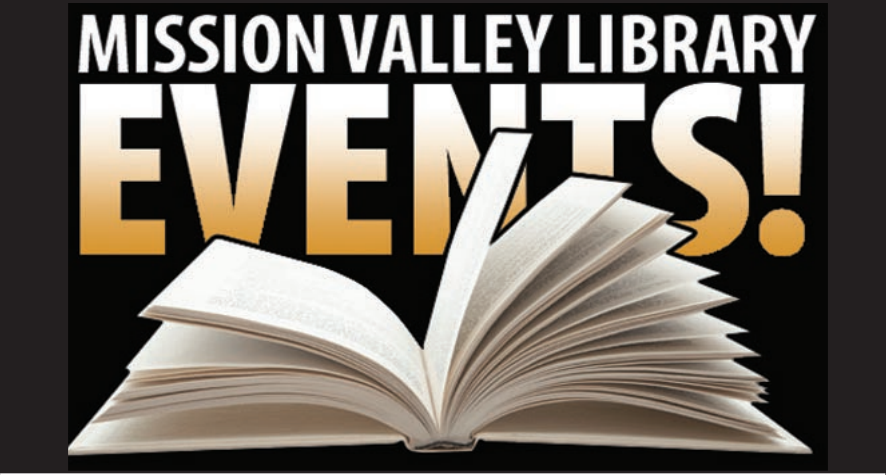
compelled to remind the audience about the Religious Freedom Restoration Act of 1993 (RFRA)? The act protects the free exercise of religion. Has the planning board been warned by the Cerullo ministry? But is the Legacy Center about religion? Doesn't Penner keep saying this is a tourism attraction? If so, does the RFRA really apply in this case?

- Harrah said most of the eight buildings would be taxable. Religious exemptions would include the three-story, 23,000-square-foot Executive Offices building that would house the ministry and security team.

According to the planning group, "The proposed mixed-use project requires a Process Five Community Plan Amendment, Atlas Specific Plan Amendment, Rezone, Site Development Permit, Planned Development Permit, Conditional Use Permit and Vesting Tentative Map to construct a mixed-use development with religious, non-denominational, faith-based entertainment center, museum, timeshare, administrative, recreational and commercial uses."

To review 10 documents related to the EIR, visit bit.ly/1XQvuJo. To learn more about the ministry, visit bit.ly/1XXcrI2. To read more about Cerullo's vision for the Legacy Center, visit bit.ly/1R5W8tp and bit.ly/1IQu5Go.

—Ken Williams is editor of Mission Valley News and San Diego Uptown News and can be reached at ken@sdenn.com or at 619-961-1952. Follow him on Twitter at @KenSanDiego, Instagram at @KenSD or Facebook at KenWilliamsSanDiego.



Assemblymember Weber’s mobile office

Tuesday, March 8, 6 – 8 p.m.
Connect with Assemblymember Shirley Weber’s staff in your community, get help with any problems you are having with public agencies, ask questions about legislation and learn about state and local services. Issues that staff can assist with include renters and homeowners assistance programs, property tax issues, consumer complaints, unemployment and disability insurance. No need to make an appointment; just stop in.

Baby signs storytime

Second and fourth Mondays, 11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
Parents often wonder, “What is my baby thinking?” There is a way to find out: Teaching your baby some basic signs using American Sign Language will fill the gap. Communication is said to be the foundation of a solid relationship; learning to sign with your baby will build that bond early and provide you a bridge from infancy to childhood.

Friends of the Library meeting

Third Wednesday, 6 p.m.
Monthly meeting of the group.

Knit-a-Bit and Crochet Circle

Second and fourth Wednesdays, 12:30 – 2 p.m.
Bring your own knit or crochet project to work on while spending time with others who share your talent.

Library Book Club

Third Tuesday of the month, 6:30 – 8 p.m.
Monthly meeting to discuss the latest book selection. February: “The Risk Pool” by Richard Russo.

‘Picture This’

Wednesday, Feb. 14, 6 p.m.
Monthly film screening at the library. This month features “Rear Window.”

Preschool story time and craft

Thursdays, 10:30 – 11:30 a.m.
Preschoolers are invited to a story time followed by a fun craft.

Toddler story time

Fridays, 10:30 – 11:30 a.m.
Storytime designed for toddlers featuring songs, rhymes, and finger plays.

Veterans Resource Center

Wednesday March 2, 4:30 – 6 p.m.
Trained volunteers will help veterans find resources and connect them with benefits earned through service in one of the United States Armed Forces.

Yoga for adults and teens

Tuesdays, 6 – 7 p.m.
Are you looking for a workout program that’s easy to learn, requires little or no equipment and soothes your soul while toning your body? If strengthening your cardiovascular system, toning and stretching your muscles and improving your mental fitness are on your to-do list, then yoga is for you.

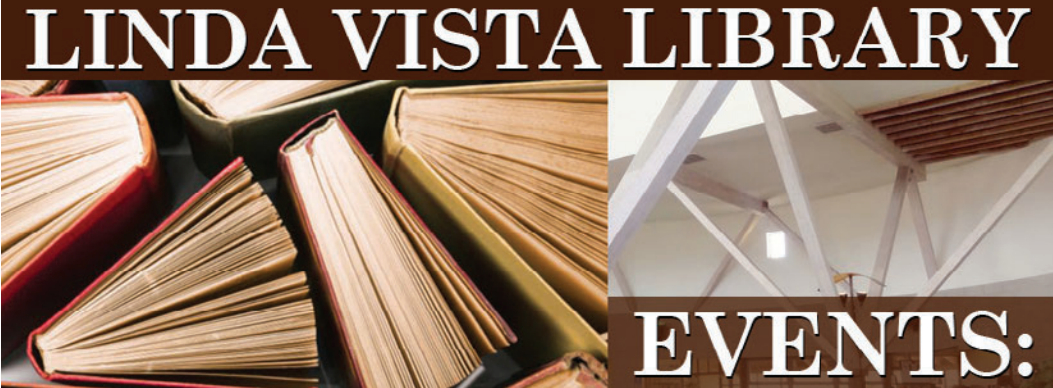
Zumba Basic

Mondays, 4 – 5 p.m. [Note: no class on Feb. 15]
Join the Zumba craze. Find out what makes this fun workout such a hit. A towel and bottled water are recommended for Zumba sessions.

Zumba Gold

Fridays, 1:30 – 2:30 p.m.
Zumba Gold is a lower impact version of our Zumba Basic class on Mondays, but just as fun. The moves have been carefully designed to be easy to follow by participants of any size or age.

Note: The library will be closed on Feb. 15 for President’s Day ■



Linda Vista Planning Group general meeting

Monday, Feb. 22, 5:30 p.m.
This is an open meeting of the Linda Vista Planning Group. The public is encouraged to attend. Visit lindavista.org/lvpg.

Crafts for kids

Mondays, 4 – 5 p.m. [Note: No craft on Feb. 15]
Stretch your imagination and create fabulous crafts. The craft is different every week.

Do your homework at the library

Mondays and Thursdays, 3 – 6 p.m.; Tuesdays and Wednesdays 3 – 7 p.m. [Note: No session on Feb. 15]
You’ve got homework? Linda Vista Branch Library has help. Students in grades kindergarten through eighth grade can receive free personalized assistance.

Friends of the Linda Vista Library meeting

First Saturday of the month, 11:15 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
Attendees will enjoy snacks, coffee, juice and lively discussion. Help the library by becoming a “friend.”

Hatha yoga for adults

First Thursday of the month, 11 a.m. – noon

Aryn Rannazzisi leads a gently paced class combining breath work and postures to promote strength, flexibility and balance. This all-levels class will include inversions, backbends and sun salutations. Please bring a mat or large towel and a hand towel or strap to class.

Hopscotch tiny tots

Tuesdays, 5:30 – 6:15 p.m.
Join Miss Kim for a fantastically fun program containing crafts, music and stories for babies and toddlers.

Lego Time

Fridays, 4 – 5 p.m.
Kids: build, build, build to your heart’s content! Skyscrapers, automobiles, airplanes, spaceships: create these and more! Learn basic building science while having loads of fun!

Morning storytime with Kathie

Mondays, 10:30 – 11 a.m. [Note: No storytime on Feb. 15]
Children and their families are invited to join us for stories, rhymes and songs.

Patio Pix

Wednesday, March 2, 6- 8 p.m.
Watch a family film outside on the library’s patio (weather permitting).

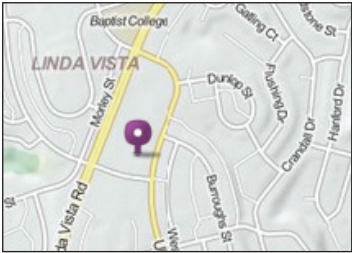
Story time with Mr. Luan

Fridays, 10:30 – 11:15 a.m.
Energetic story time that is fun, interactive and educational. The session will include singing and maybe a little dancing.

Tai Chi

Mondays and Thursdays, 10 – 11 a.m. [Note: No class on Feb. 15]
Improve your balance and mobility with slow, controlled movement!

Note: The library will be closed on Feb. 15 for President’s Day
Linda Vista Branch Library is located at 2160 Ulric St.
The library is open Monday 9:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.; Tuesday and Wednesday 11:30 a.m. to 8 p.m.; Thursday and Friday 9:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.; Saturday 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.; closed Sunday. For more information, visit lindavistalibrary.org or facebook.com/lvlibrary. ■



Community Calendar

FEB 12 - FEB 14 ‘The PULSE On Tour’
Friday, Feb. 12 – Sunday, Feb. 14

For the 11th year, hundreds of dancers will gather for this week-end-long event at Town & Country Resort & Convention Center (500 Hotel Circle North, Mission Valley). The Pulse On Tour “educates and inspires dancers” with access to world-class choreographers and training through classes, meet-and-greets and more. There will also be a workshop called “Camp PULSE” for dancers ages 7 – 13 featuring choreographers from hit Nickelodeon and Disney TV shows and movies. Visit thepulseontour.com and camppulseon-tour.com for more information.

FEB 13 BIA Cares model home furniture sale
Saturday, Feb. 13

This furniture sale by the Building Industry Association’s philanthropic sector – BIA Cares – will serve as a fundraiser for the program. The event is open to the public with hundreds of items from model homes for sale including furniture and accessories – all at a discounted price. A portion of the proceeds from the event will be donated to local charities including the YMCA of San Diego County’s Youth & Family Services program Turning Point and Home of Guiding Hands. The sale is from 8 a.m. – 2 p.m. at 7545 Metropolitan Ave. in Mission Valley. Visit biasandiego.org for more information.

FEB 16 ‘Death Café’
Tuesday, Feb. 16

This unique event offers a “agenda-free” opportunity to discuss life and death with a group. This is a safe and friendly group who discuss death, dying and end-of-life concerns. This is not a grief-therapy group. This meet up will be at the Mission Valley Public Library in the Community Room (2123 Fenton Parkway) from 1 – 3 p.m. There is no fee, but space may be limited. RSVP to deathcafesd@gmail.com or 858-635-

1224. Visit deathcafe.com for more information and see our story on the Death Café on page 1.

FEB 19 - FEB 20 ‘French Cheese Pop Up’
Friday, Feb. 19 and Saturday, Feb. 20

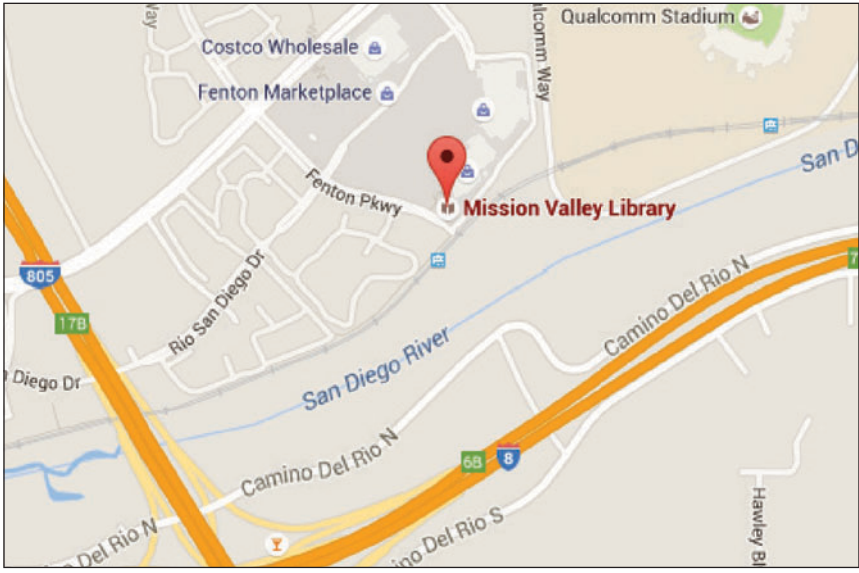
This event by the Cheese of Europe – a cheese board devoted to promoting French cheese in the U.S. – will make a stop at Fashion Valley Mall setting up in from of Macy’s (7007 Friars Road, Mission Valley). The free pop up will be from 11 a.m. – 6 p.m. both days with over 30 types of cheese for tasting. The event invites you to experience everything about the cheeses – aromas, textures and, of course, flavors. Samples will include Brie, Mimolette, Fromager d’Affinois and much more. Green Flash Brewing Company will be on hand to feature pairings with their Cellar 3 collection. Visit thecheesesofeurope.com for more information and descriptions of the various cheeses.

FEB 20 ‘Creating a fairy garden’ class
Saturday, Feb. 20

For this free gardening class, Armstrong Garden Centers will teach you how to make a “small fantasy world” using miniature plants and figurines. The Mission Valley/Grantville store is located at 10320 Friars Road; there are several other San Diego Armstrong locations. This session starts at 9 a.m. Visit ArmstrongGarden.com for more information.

FEB 20 San Diego Financial Literacy Center ‘Smart With Your Money Financial Opportunity’ clinic
Saturday, Feb. 20

This seminar will teach attendees about personal finances, retirement, investment, insurance, budgeting and saving. This free event will also give people the chance to meet one-on-one with volunteer certified financial planners. The event will take place at Westfield Mission Valley mall on the third floor of Macy’s (1702 Camino del Rio North) from 10:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m. (last appointment at 1:30 p.m.). RSVP at sdflc.org/oasis. ■



Homelessness numbers rise along San Diego River

Rob Hutsel

The San Diego River is an amazing resource. It is a cultural treasure and an ecological wonder with boundless potential to enhance the quality of life of people in Mission Valley and elsewhere along its 52-mile length.

To realize this potential, perhaps one issue more than any other needs to be addressed: homelessness.

Last month, the San Diego River Park Foundation hosted an important count of homeless people along the river in the cities of San Diego and Santee. Thirty volunteers joined with staff to walk trails and struggle through brush at the break of dawn. It is an important "snapshot" of the river and is part of the national Point In Time Count, known locally as "We ALL Count."

Our organization has led the river's count for several years now, and the results are troubling.

In this most recent assessment, 98 tents or other structures were documented along with an additional 42 individuals. This equates to an estimated 189 people living along the river. Of these, 15 were in the city of Santee and 174 in the city of San Diego. This is a 95 percent increase over the 2015 count — truly a stunning and troubling number.

It is a stunning number, especially considering that we believe



A makeshift campsite along the San Diego River was flooded out during a recent downpour. (Photo by Rob Hutsel)

that many homeless people have been displaced by earlier rain and floodwaters. But even if this isn't considered, 189 people are living in terrible conditions in our community. These people for whatever reason are living in harm's way, areas that are underwater when the river rises.

If we take a closer look, 115 people — or 62.5 percent of those documented along the river in the city of San Diego — were in the area of Mission Valley plus between San Diego Mission Road and Friars Road. As encampments move around, for planning purposes we combine these two areas.

We are greatly concerned about these people. We come from this challenging social and community issue from a different perspective. We are an organization that is dedicated to creating

a better future for our historic San Diego River. One of our key programs is to clean up the river. We have organized volunteers to remove more than 1.8 million pounds — or 900 tons — of trash from in and along the river.

Our October survey documented that 74 percent of the trash along the river was related to homelessness. Just recently, a survey of the river between the 805 and 15 freeways documented 74,620 pounds of trash just on the south side of the river. In this recent survey, 100 percent of the trash was related to encampments.

We cannot help but be heartbroken to see first-hand this human and ecological tragedy.

Our dedicated staff and volunteers will keep working. Partners like the Alpha Project and Urban Corps will keep working along-

side landowners, San Diego Police Department and their Homeless Outreach Team, city of San Diego Park and Recreation and Fire-Rescue Departments, and others. In Santee we will work with the city of Santee, San Diego County Sheriff and others.

It has become clear that a new strategy is needed and the community needs to weigh in. Imagine if you found a family member who was sleeping along the San Diego River. Imagine if you heard the river was rising. How would you feel?

We ask that everyone remember that each of these people has a mother, father, grandparent or other relatives. They may even have a son or daughter. Experts have told us that this is the hardest-to-reach population, people who often refuse services for whatever reason. Many have drug or alcohol dependence and/or mental illnesses.

We know that a solution can be found if we work together as a community to find it. While we won't end homelessness, we can develop systems and programs to keep people out of harm's way. Programs that are compassionate while also help heal the river so it can reach its potential.

If you care about this issue and Mission Valley, we ask that you let us know so we can keep you informed. If you want to speak up, we ask that you contact your elected officials so they know this is an important issue.

If you, your business or organization have ideas or time to work on this, let us know that, too. We welcome people who want to assist with our monitoring and assessment program. Each Tuesday, we have a volunteer team that walks along the river documenting areas which need attention.

With the count of 189 people living along the San Diego River, we estimate that throughout the year that number can grow to more than 250 people. Some have estimated the count can reach as high as 500. Based upon the recent survey, we also know that focused efforts can make a difference. An example is the Mission Valley Preserve, a city of San Diego-dedicated park, which has seen a dramatic decrease in large measure due to the dedicated efforts of Park Rangers and volunteers.

With improved coordination and collaboration, increased resources and the support of the community, we can build upon this and other successes. If we all work together, we are convinced that the next "We ALL Count" will show positive results. The San Diego River Park Foundation invites you to join us!

—Rob Hutsel is the executive director and co-founder of the nonprofit San Diego River Park Foundation. Reach him at rob@sandiegoriver.org or at 619-297-7380, ext. 108. ■

► Kings Inn, from page 1

inexpensive compared to others in Mission Valley," said operations manager David Parrent, who was hired in 2009 by current owners Andy Petersen and his wife, Stephanie. The Alpine couple purchased the three-section property in 1994 after it fell into receivership.

In earlier days, across Interstate 8 on the north side of Hotel Circle, a Hawaiian theme pervaded throughout The Hanalei (now the Crowne Plaza San Diego). Its neighbor, the Town and Country Resort & Convention Center, continued expanding from a humble motor lodge into a sprawling resort filled with gardens and varied architectural styles that included touches of Polynesia.

Those properties were also built by Atlas, shortly before other developers brought to the loop comfy budget motels constructed in common Mid-Century style.

The Kings Inn, however, offered visitors something different compared to all of the other lodging options dotting Hotel Circle. It transported guests to rural England with frilly room decor and a pub-like restaurant called the Kings Grille, which was fronted by a mini moat and faux draw bridge, and specialized in steaks and mock turtle soup enjoyed from green leather booths.

Aside from several tall palm trees standing guard over the outdoor pool, the hotel's overall ambiance didn't fully reflect the San Diego lifestyle.



Roberto Equihua has been a cook at Kings Inn since 1983. (Photo by Frank Sabatini Jr.)

The Petersens soon transformed the steakhouse into a colorful Mexican restaurant called the Amigo Spot, marked today by a wagon and spotted donkey at the entrance.

They also re-branded the property's second original restaurant, The Queen's Pantry, turning it into The Waffle Spot, which remains famous for its malted waffles and cartoonish mascot, Sir Waffletot.

"The property was rundown and needed care when the Petersens took over," Parrent said, speaking on the couple's behalf per their request. "They did a major cleaning of the hotel right away while reinventing the res-

taurants."

Longtime cook Roberto Equihua recalls the transition, saying that when he was hired in 1983, the hotel catered largely to Atlas members and couples, and not so much to kids.

"Atlas used to also book banquets and events here every day of the week, at a time when Hotel Circle was much busier and Downtown not so much," he said. "But they took a lot of that business to their other properties when they left."

Among the more memorable parties Equihua catered during the Atlas days was a Christmas party thrown by a clique of businessmen.

"When I walked into the banquet room to check on the food, I was very surprised to see they had hired a group of naked women to dance for them."

In later years, after the Petersens took over, the hotel began hosting meetings and fundraisers for groups such as the San Diego Tennis Federation, San Diego Hoops and Neutral Corner, a transgender support group.

The banquet business today, Equihua adds, has rebounded to about 20 events a month, many of them weddings.

Part of that resurgence can be attributed to the hotel's biggest makeover to date, which occurred recently under Parrent's direction.

"I said to the owners, 'Nobody comes to San Diego for English country charm,' and I suggested a more Southern California look in terms of colors and furniture."

Retaining some of the original architectural features, such a rock accent wall and grand staircase in the lobby, Parrent replaced the heavy, dark color scheme with aqua blues and sand tones, in addition to designing Mid-Century-style furniture for the space.

The Waffle Spot and all of the guest rooms were also brightened up with pastel hues, along with tastefully placed San Diego beach photography from the 1960s, inspired by his research at the San Diego Archives.

In the process, USB ports were built into the nightstands, compact refrigerators were installed, and five guest rooms were eliminated to make way for a meeting space and fitness room.

As for the towering crown-shaped signage out front, which appears like something from old Las Vegas, it was erected when the hotel was built and will stay firmly in place as an iconic beacon to the area's history.

"We're always looking at ways to make it better for our guests," Parrent said, citing the intensifying competition within the area: The Town and Country Resort & Convention Center is gearing up for an \$80 million redo; The Comfort Inn & Suites up the street has broken ground for redevelopment under Evolution Hospitality; and the nearby Travelodge — where Albie's Beef Inn and Adam's Steak & Eggs formerly resided — is receiving a refresh from its new owner.

In addition, the Mission Valley Resort Hotel along the same stretch of street could be razed for a controversial complex by Pentecostal evangelist Morris Cerullo, pending City Council approval.

Yet despite the sweeping developments occurring within Hotel Circle, which will continue raising property values, Parrent assures the owners have no intention of selling the Kings Inn, which currently employs 90 people — 15 percent of them have been on staff for 10 years or longer.

"We receive offers from developers every year, but the Petersens have not expressed any interest in them. They are happy with keeping this an independent hotel."

—Frank Sabatini Jr. can be reached at fsabatini@san.rr.com. ■



Hedera Helix English Ivy can grow as a ground cover or in a pot. (Photos courtesy of Armstrong Garden Centers)

Five easy ways to make your décor pop with houseplants

Gary Jones

Are you stuck in the mindset that houseplants are only desk or table plants? That their job is just to add a bit of life to a room? Expand your houseplant horizons. They can be so much more than a sorry fern in a pot.

It is time to give plants a starring role. Today's new tropicals deserve and demand attention. Bold, dramatic and colorful foliage is in and so is pottery in bright colors and patterned designs. Containers with interesting shapes and textures add fun to a houseplant's new look.

There are several ways that houseplants can become important and exciting elements of your home's décor. Try incorporating some or all of these into your design plan:

Enlarge the scale

Create some drama. Choose a bold plant like a fiddle-leaf fig and move in a large 6-foot version. Now you've got some visual excitement. Or flank your fireplace with two plants. Have the same fun with an oversized, 7-foot fishtail palm and let it take over that boring living room corner. The bigger and bolder, the better.

Use as color accents

Instead of utilizing throw pillows to add pops of color, why not use houseplants? The color can be the foliage itself or its bright, glazed pot. Instead of the plant being a receding green, let it be the object that energizes the room. It will be the thing your eye goes to first and the color that makes the rest of the room sing.

Put it on a pedestal

A potted plant on a pedestal suddenly becomes a statement, especially if the pedestal is architectural, stylish and bold. No pedestal on hand? Then choose a very tall, colorful, narrow pot. They're extremely popular right now. Plunk a houseplant on top and you've got instant action whether the plant shoots upward or trails down. Here's another trick — use a stack of books as a short plant pedestal, but be sure to use a saucer to catch any water.



(top to bottom) Chamaedorea Florida Hybrid and Aglaonema Key Largo make excellent houseplants.

Create some rhythm

If one houseplant is nice, why not place two or three exactly the same, right in a row? That will create rhythm. It is similar to two side chairs, a collection of vases on a table or a pair of lamps.

Design a skyline

Top interior designers make sure that rooms have an interesting skyline. This means there are interesting things happening at the higher levels of the room. It can be boring to have everything at seating height or at eye level. Houseplants are very useful for changing a room's skyline. Step back and assess your room(s). They might need a skyscraper houseplant or two.

—Gary Jones is Chief Horticulturist at Armstrong Garden Centers, which has locations on Friars Road and Morena Boulevard. Email your drought and gardening questions to growingdialogue@armstrong-garden.com.

► Café, from page 1

drove all the way down from Los Angeles to sit around a table and talk to strangers about death. "I thought myself as very spiritual and evolved and then I realized how unprepared and illiterate I am about the subject," Mermarza-deh said. A hippie aura surrounds this soft-spoken lady in her 50s.

Linda Fisher has never lost anyone close to her. She's in her 60s, but her parents are still alive. No friends or relatives have passed away. However, as a caregiver, she has seen many patients cross the line to never come back.

"I have always been comfortable talking about death and the anticipation of having people participate in that journey while they are alive and my parents just don't want to," Fisher said. She wants to become a Death Café host in North County.

When Catherine S. lost her son, she felt a deep call to keep his corpse around for a minute. Wash him, watch him, and honor the remains of her offspring before the funeral. She was told that was wrong, and gave up on her wishes.

"I did share one thing about my experience that [Mermarza-deh] validated. That was very meaningful for me, to know that I wasn't crazy like everybody told me I was," she said. Catherine, in her 70s, was the oldest in our little group.

And me ... I'm in my late-20s, and I have already lost one of the most important people in my life. My grandmother María, who helped raise me. I shared how after her funeral, I paraded the streets of the tiny village of Nijar, somewhere in the desert of southern Spain, following the hearse and yelling cries of grief.

The Death Café is a monthly meeting where people gather to discuss death regardless of their age, origin, gender and background. It's not therapy. It's not a grieving group. It's a friendly conversation about a topic that the guests are interested in.

Around 25 nervous-but-hopeful-looking people showed up Jan. 19 at the Kearny Mesa Library for the Death Café. Some were there for the first time, others had attended several meetings before. Of the latter, one has specific responsibility in the creation of the event. Karen Van Dyke is the founder of Death Café in San Diego.



(top to bottom) Participants in the Death Café in San Diego break down into smaller groups to discuss life, death, living and dying. (Photos by María José Durán)

Death Café

Tuesday, Feb. 16
1 to 3 p.m.

Mission Valley
Public Library
Community Room

2123 Fenton Parkway
deathcafe.com

"The challenge with our culture, especially in this country, is that we are death-phobic. Death is in the closet, but in Death Café, it's about getting that conversation started," Van Dyke said.

Van Dyke has always been interested in death. Her father died when she was 8 and she was diagnosed with breast cancer eight years ago. "I've lived [in San Diego] for a long time and San Diegans have been very good to me. This is my way of giving back to the community," she said.

The guests were divided into five groups. In the center of each table, a plastic cup held little pieces of paper with proposed topics

of discussion: Would you consider living close to a cemetery? Have you made any plans for your funeral? Where do you want to be when you die?

Our circle of five women in different stages of life who'd never met each other before had very different responses to those queries. The conversation flowed. Laughter arose out of every corner of the room. I didn't see anybody crying.

The Death Café doesn't align with a particular organization or agenda. "Everybody that wants to come to a Death Café is welcome, if you are an atheist, if you are Jewish, if you are Catholic, if you're pro-life or not, it doesn't matter," Van Dyke said.

This event has been happening in San Diego about once a month since 2013. The next meeting will be held in the Community Room at Mission Valley Public Library at 2123 Fenton Parkway, next Tuesday, Feb. 16 from 1 to 3 p.m.

—María José Durán is a freelance writer from San Diego. She can be reached at emyein@hotmail.com.



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**7189 Navajo Road #A,
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What kind of yoga best suits you?

Erica Moe

Ever seen a yogi twisted into a pretzel knot and wondered how that can improve your health? Are you convinced that there is no way you could ever hold a pose or balance on one leg? Well, let go of your preconceived notions, and give it a try.

Yoga can offer something we all need — balance of mind, body and spirit. And, there are enough styles of yoga to accommodate anyone interested in relieving stress and reaping the benefits in strength and flexibility offered by a combination of breathing, meditation and movement.

Pick the right class

If you are taking a class for the first time, try hatha yoga or gentle yoga. Want an athletic version that will make you sweat? Try a power yoga class. Want less movement and more meditation? Try restorative yoga. If you're looking for a class that can accommodate special needs like pregnancy, injury or mobility issues, try adaptive yoga. Yoga styles defined:

Hatha — Great for beginners and considered a gentle form of yoga. The term refers to the physical postures or poses, and these classes can provide a good environment to learn the basics.

Vinyasa — Classes focus on flow, or movement, without holding the poses as long as other types. Expect a faster

pace and continuous movement.

Kundalini — Combines physical and meditative techniques. Classes may include meditation, breathing and chanting.

Iyengar — Emphasis will be on detail, precision and alignment. Each posture will be held for a period of time.

Ashtanga — These classes follow a specific sequence of poses, with specific breathing techniques.

Getting started

Equipment for yoga is simple. Get a good-quality yoga mat for cushion and traction, available at any sporting goods store. Be prepared to take off your socks and shoes so that you can

connect with the ground. Wear loose, comfortable clothes. Some classes may require other tools like yoga blocks, yoga straps or blankets, however, most facilities will provide those, if needed.

Benefits of yoga

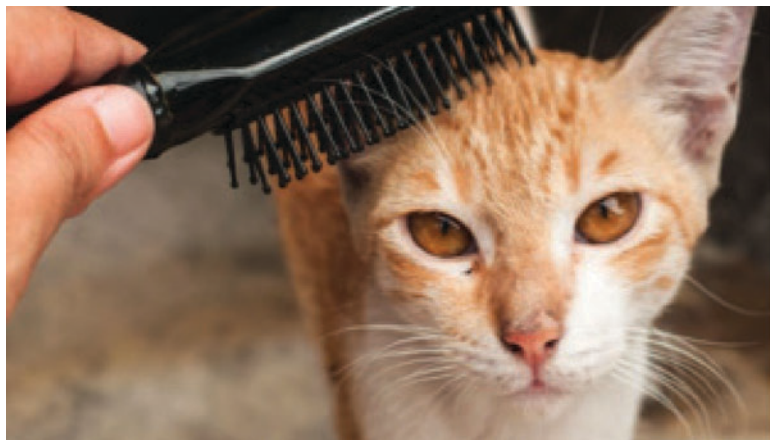
There is a great deal of research on the benefits of yoga. Numerous studies tout the positive effect it has on anxiety and depression. A study of pregnant women at UC Irvine found that yoga reduced stress, improved mood and even reduced postpartum-depression symptoms by lowering levels of the stress hormone, cortisol. A study in India of patients with chronic lower back pain found yoga to be more effective than physical therapy for reducing pain, anxiety and depression, while improving spinal mobility. An Australian study of war veterans with moderate to severe post-traumatic stress disorder showed that yoga lowered their depression to mild to moderate.

These results were still evident at a six-month follow-up.

Where can I take a class?

Yoga studios are bountiful in San Diego, and your general fitness facility may offer classes that as part of your membership. There are eight types of yoga and 33 classes offered weekly at Mission Valley YMCA, including Yoga for Kids and Yoga for Families. All classes are included with membership.

—Erica Moe is an ACSM certified exercise physiologist who writes on behalf of the Mission Valley YMCA, where she is a fitness director. ■



Six benefits of brushing your cat



Sari Reis

As a professional pet sitter, one of the questions I ask potential clients at the consultation appointment is, "Does your cat like to be brushed?" About 15 percent say "yes," another 20 percent say "no," and the other 65 percent have said, "Never tried to brush the kitty."

With so many feline pet parents not aware of the need to brush their cat, I decided to share the important benefits derived from performing regular brushing on your furry feline, short-haired as well as long-haired.

Benefit No. 1: We all know cats shed and since indoor cats shed year-round, they constantly have dead hair embedded in their coats. This dead hair needs to be removed as well as dust, dirt, fleas (if they have any), etc. According to WebMD, a metal comb should be used for short-haired cats from head to tail, working in the direction of the lie of the fur. If permitted, comb the chest and abdomen as well.

Benefit No. 2: Since most cats are meticulous groomers, they lick themselves frequently. If you do not remove the dead hair, dust and dirt by brushing them, this grime will be ingested every time they lick themselves. This can cause fur balls, which are not good for the cat or for those of us who have to clean them up off the carpets or floors.

Benefit No. 3: By brushing your feline regularly, you spread their natural oils throughout their fur while at the same time, increasing blood circulation. This keeps your kitty's skin healthy and also gives your pet a shiny coat.

Benefit No. 4: Long-haired cats need grooming every few days to prevent tangles and mats. Matting can cause all kinds of problems, including pain, infections and more. While brushing, look for bumps, tangles and fleas. If you find any fleas, treat the problem immediately. Bumps may need to be seen by a veterinarian. If your kitty develops large mats, they should be removed by a professional groomer.

Benefit No. 5: Many kitties really enjoy being brushed. It is relaxing for them, like getting a massage. It can be particularly helpful in reducing stress if the cat enjoys it.

Benefit No. 6: Brushing your kitty on an ongoing basis is a great way for you to bond. It creates a physical connection between you beyond simply petting your pet. For many older cats or cats with mobility issues, brushing is even more important as they may not be able to groom themselves properly.

Cats being cats, they are very suspicious of anything new, so if you have never brushed your feline before, take it slowly. Experiment with different brushes to find the one your cat likes best. Begin slowly for short periods of time. Make sure your cat is relaxed when you start and stop as soon as your pet lets you know enough is enough. Give treats for being good and remember, this is supposed to be a positive experience for both of you.

—Sari Reis is a Certified Humane Education Specialist and the owner of Mission Valley Pet Sitting services. For more information you can contact her at 760-644-0289 or missionvalley-petsitting.com. ■

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Ask Kathy: a column about real estate issues

Kathy McSherry



(Editor's note: Mission Valley News introduces a question-and-answer column by Kathy McSherry titled "Ask Kathy," designed to answer reader questions about local real estate issues.)

Hi Kathy:
My husband and I have recently moved to Mission Valley from San Francisco. We chose this area because it is centrally located to my husband's work Downtown and my research work at a bio-medical company in Sorrento Valley. Our combined income is over \$100,000 and we have little debt. My husband also has a Veterans Affairs (VA) certificate. Our concern is that we've heard that it is a seller's market. What exactly does that mean and how does that affect us?
—Marianne G.

Hi Marianne:
What a great question. The definition of a seller's market for any economic situation is one in which goods or shares are scarce and sellers can keep prices high. In real estate, it simply means that there are more buyers than homes for sale, thereby making it a great time to sell your home; versus a buyer's market when more homes are available than

there are buyers; and with much to choose from, prices tend to be lower. However, there's a real estate riddle that I happen to love.

Question: When is the best time to buy real estate?

Answer: Yesterday.

Question: When is the second best time to purchase real estate?

Answer: Today

Real estate can be a great investment. In order to make money with it, you have to get into the game. Even when interest rates rise and it becomes more difficult to qualify, you still have to purchase to be able to see any benefits. Back in the 1980s, the Coronado Cays were selling for \$90,000 and interest rates were 16.9 percent. People today can't fathom such rates. Yet fast forward to present and some of those same properties are valued over \$1 million. That's a pretty big return on investment for one's initial purchase, even at those high rates.

Marianne, you have many things in your favor right now. As of Jan. 1, 2016, the new VA loan amount increased to \$580,750. This means that someone with a VA certificate, if qualified, can purchase a home up to the purchase price being \$580,750 with no money down.

In addition, there is no mortgage insurance on this type of loan, which is a huge savings



on your monthly payment. Most conventional loans will tag on mortgage insurance when you put anything less than 20 percent down. This is because you have less "skin in the game" with your own money and are viewed as more of a risk to the lender.

With interest rates at historic lows, you are in a perfect position to get into the game and own a home. Rents in the Civita master planned community, north of Friars Road, can range between \$1,800 to \$4,100 per month. Many people do not realize that they could be paying about the same per month, and yet own a home. Also, if the purchase price of the home is over the \$580,750, then a VA buyer only has to come up with 25 percent of the difference between the purchase price and the VA loan limit of \$580,750.

For example, let's say a new condominium costs \$650,000. The VA buyer takes the difference between the purchase price of \$650,000 and the VA loan amount of \$580,750. That would be \$69,250. The minimum requirement for a down payment would be 25 percent of this, or \$17,313. Compare that to an average buyer

that would have to qualify for a conventional loan with 20 percent down payment and they would need \$130,000, in order to get a loan with no mortgage insurance. This is a basic example as many criteria are considered when qualifying for a loan including, credit, income and debt.

I would recommend sitting

down with a loan officer at your bank or a credit union and give them all of your information so they can go over all of the payment options and costs that are associated with your type of loan. They will ask you for what we call 2-2-2's. Two years of W2's, two years of taxes, and two months of current bank statements.

The benefits that you get with home ownership include tax deductions, pride of ownership, privacy, long-term investment and a chance to build equity. Whether a seller's market or a buyer's market, you got to be in it to win! That phrase isn't just for lotto, but real estate as well.

—Kathy McSherry is a veteran Realtor in Mission Valley with Coldwell Banker West. Email questions to her at ask.kathy@outlook.com.■

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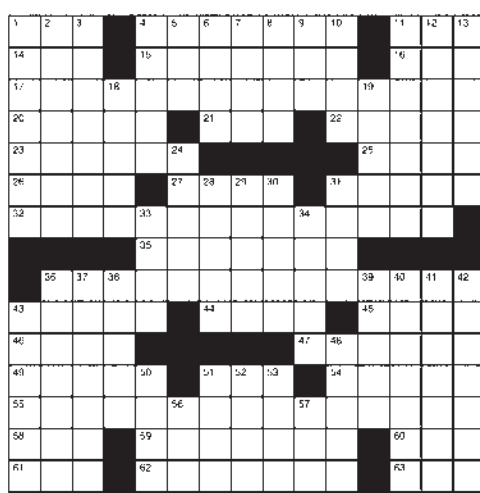
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MVN Puzzles

MISSION VALLEY NEWS

Crossword Solutions on page 11



ACROSS

- 1 Bon
- 4 Spots for struggling artists
- 11 Some of the IBM line
- 14 Eight bits
- 15 of Aquitaine
- 16 Modern music style
- 17 Weill/Brecht opus, with The
- 20 Ten or pen followers
- 21 Nourishment oversight grp.
- 22 Tasty
- 23 Certain Chopin works
- 25 Velocity
- 26 Deed: Sp.
- 27 His cookies are famous!
- 31 Fine fiddle
- 32 Concertist Red Nichols' story
- 35 Antofagasta announcement
- 36 Small-stakes school
- 43 Di Laurentis, and namesakes
- 44 we forget: ...
- 45 Laundry
- 46 Line from Lod
- 47 the ocean

DOWN

- 1 Roastee's place
- 2 Let go
- 3 Send a different way
- 4 Canadian flyers
- 5 Jungfrau or Eiger
- 6 Great Barrier, e.g.
- 7 Pretoria specie
- 8 Sicilian resort
- 9 FAO Schwartz product
- 10 Theater sign message, pl.
- 11 Get ready
- 12 Roman kindness
- 13 Dug
- 18 the the
- 19 Quebecois
- 24 London theater or cabbage
- 26 Musically, this can be heavy
- 29 Have a view
- 30 Shiles and Shakers
- 31 crackle pop!
- 33 London's of Court
- 34 Negatives from: Nikita: var.
- 36 Hold up to ridicule
- 37 Charms
- 38 Pitcher Ryan
- 39 Branch or oil
- 40 Shaba, once
- 41 Displays
- 42 Lessees
- 43 Considered
- 48 Von
- 50 Broccoli
- 51 Selling letters
- 52 Early college entrance exam.
- 53 Bathroom wall-covering, often
- 56 Chill
- 57 Sweet age, in old Roma?

Sudoku Solutions on page 11

Rules

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

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