

## ►► NEWS P. 10



Bark Boulevard opens in North Park

## ►► NEWS P. 11



Vons grand opening

## ►► DINING P. 13



Wang's: Big and beautiful

## ►► THEATRE P. 15



Old Globe opens up  
O'Neill romance

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Alison Flynn, owner of Villainous Lair Gaming, with some of the Magic: The Gathering cards she'll be selling when the Gaming center opens April 1. (Photo by Daniel Solomon)

## VILLAINOUS LAIR GAMING opening in Normal Heights

By Esther Rubio-Sheffrey  
SDUN Reporter

Villainous Lair Comics is one step closer to world domination through comics, mischief, mayhem and fun with the grand opening of their new gaming center.

Villainous Lair Gaming, which opens at its 3342 Adams Ave. location on April 1, is less than one block from Villainous Lair Comics, at 3371 Adams Ave. Having catered to the comic and gaming community for nine months, owner Alison Flynn credits their success to the customers, the neighborhood and her employees' genuine love for the industry.

Flynn began her love affair with comics when she was a teenager. Her grandparents lived near a comic book store managed by Chris Mitchell in Sherman Oaks, Calif. "He knew what I was interested in, what would appeal to me and helped me explore new horizons," Flynn said. "Chris became a friend outside of the shop, a part of my 'nerd herd' buddies."

When Flynn inherited the necessary capital to open her own store two years ago, she and Mitchell began discussing the idea that eventually blossomed into Villainous Lair Comics.

see Lair, page 3

## Dinosaur mural brightens North Park



The mural painted by Mark Paul Deren, also known as Madsteez, on the wall of Wang's North Park restaurant. (Photo by Margie M. Palmer)

By Margie M. Palmer  
SDUN Reporter

The North Park business district has a new neighbor. It is not a new storefront, nor is it a new resident. Painted alongside the west-facing wall of Wang's North Park restaurant is a 50-foot cartoon dinosaur.

Wang's North Park co-owner Tom Eads said

he and his partners were initially reluctant to have the mural painted on the side of their restaurant.

"The conversation first came about when Pacific Magazine approached us saying they were putting together their annual art issue," Eads said. "They told us they found an artist to do some street art, which would be featured on the cover, and asked if

we'd consider letting him use our wall."

The concern for the restaurant owners was not having any input on what would be painted, Eads said, and that at first they said no.

Their interest was piqued, however, when they learned street artist Mark Paul Deren was

see Mural, page 5

## Trash and graffiti removal services cease with elimination of Golden Hill Maintenance Assessment District

By Monica Garske  
SDUN Reporter

Golden Hill residents could see more trash and graffiti littering their neighborhood due to the elimination of the Golden Hill Maintenance Assessment District (MAD). In February, the Superior Court of the State of California, County of San Diego, issued a judgment to shut down the MAD by cancelling the tax that funds it. Cleaning services ended March 20.

The City created the Golden Hill MAD in 2007, which was funded by tax dollars collected from Golden Hill area property owners. The purpose of the MAD was to provide services in Golden Hill including litter removal; sidewalk sweeping and power washing; landscaping; graffiti removal; large item removal; canyon beautification; and overall improvements to the aesthetic appeal of property in the neighborhood.

Initially, some Golden Hill property owners opposed the taxation for the services, but the City kept the MAD intact. Now, after debates from both sides and the elimination of the MAD, those services have ceased.

see MAD, page 4



Trashcans provided by the Golden Hill Maintenance Assessment District (MAD) will no longer be emptied with the elimination of the MAD. Photo taken on March 26. (Photo by SDUN)

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Varied dice for varied games available by the scoop at Villainous Lair Gaming. (Photo by Daniel Solomon)

FROM PAGE 1  
**LAIR**

Flynn’s assistant manager at the Gaming center, Sara Swieca, also worked with Mitchell, and she too jumped on board. Mitchell and Swieca moved to San Diego the month before the opening of Villainous Lair Comics, which Mitchell currently manages.

“We are a group of awesome nerds, who love what we do and sell, and we’re the best at customer service,” Flynn said. “Helping people find out what else might interest them is our biggest thing.” Each employee has their own niche of expertise from comics to Role Playing Games (RPGs).

“Our shop is a fun spot to hang out in, we have great artwork, and we’re really excited about this opening,” Flynn said.

The opening of Villainous Lair Gaming will allow Flynn to stock a greater selection of gaming products and create a larger space for her customers to gather and play a variety of games, from traditional

RPGs to miniature war games and board games. Their Friday night Magic Tournaments already have a regular list of attendees, and Flynn said she hopes those numbers will grow now that they are able to include more indie and classic games.

It will also provide the necessary space for special events, such as the The Avacyn Restored pre-release event occurring April 28 – 29. “This is the release of the third and final set of the Innistrad block of Magic: The Gathering. It’s by far the largest and most anticipated, as The Gathering remains our biggest draw,” Flynn said. “There are rumors that Dungeons and Dragons will put out a fifth edition, which would also be a big event, but that is still only a rumor.”

The original store will continue its focus on comics, collectible toys and related merchandise. Flynn said the comic world is not without its own excitement. Marvel Comics recently released a series of comic books that feature The Avengers against the

X-Men. “Two favorites pinned against each other is always a big draw,” Flynn said.

“San Diego has a pretty big comic and gaming community,” Flynn added. “We have Comic Con, but even with that kind of event our market is not over saturated with comic and gaming shops. We are filling a void, especially in this area that represents every type of demographic that would love comics.”



She added if people miss the grand opening, the upcoming Adams Avenue Unplugged Festival April 21 – 22 will be a great time to stop by either shop to indulge your inner geek. ♦

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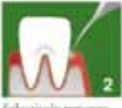
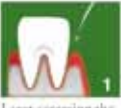
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FROM PAGE 1  
**MAD**

The Greater Golden Hill Community Development Corporation (GGHCDC) oversees the implementation of MAD services, uses the tax money to pay for the clean up and hire contractors to enact them.

Ben Verdugo, project manager with the GGHCDC, said he received a letter about the March 20 dissolution of the MAD from the courts the week before the services ended. By March 21, Verdugo said residents were calling the GGHCDC with concerns about the continuation of trash and graffiti removal services.

"I've had to tell them that we can't provide those services anymore. The City will have to take it from here; we don't really have many answers right now," Verdugo said.

Verdugo also said the halting of MAD services will have a noticeable effect on the Golden Hill community. Within the next few weeks, he said residents will begin to see more graffiti and litter polluting the area.

A standard single-family home was paying approximately \$76 per year in taxes for the services provided by the MAD, Verdugo said. He said he believes the dissolution of the maintenance organization will have instant negative effects on the aesthetic appeal of Golden Hill.

Verdugo said he hopes the City and the Golden Hill community will be able to re-establish some kind of new maintenance-centered project, but for now, he said there's no quick fix in sight and it will be up to local property owners to remove excess trash and keep the neighborhood tidy.

Mark Catrambone, a contractor and supervisor for Harvest Landscape, a company contracted by the GGHCDC to provide trash and graffiti removal services for the area, said he has already seen a difference.

Catrambone said he has been overseeing the clean-up services in Golden Hill for the past two years, but the contract with Harvest Landscape was terminated on March 16 as a result of the MAD elimination.

"You can already see the difference without the removal services. Graffiti was always a big issue for us and now it'll only get worse. It's really sad because after two years of work, the neighborhood was looking really good. I think [the elimination of the MAD] will be a detriment to this community. We worked hard to improve things around here," Catrambone said.

In a typical week, Catrambone said Harvest Landscape would send a crew of five workers into Golden Hill for eight hours a day, five days a week, to remove trash and graffiti.

On average, he said his crew removed 109 large items such as old couches, mattresses, chairs, toilets and clothing from alleys and streets each week.

"We also removed about 300 bags of trash... and cleaned up 1,100-square-feet of graffiti each

week. Graffiti is a major problem in the area. We spent about 10 to 15 hours each week pressure-washing walls and removed thousands of graffiti tags each month," Catrambone said.

He also said a common area for graffiti removal was the end of F Street by the Interstate 5 North freeway ramp, an area his crew would sometimes clean twice a day.

Although many Golden Hill property owners opposed the MAD, Catrambone said his clean-up crew received only positive feedback from residents for their services.

"The vast majority of residents and business owners were very appreciative of what we did and thanked us every week. I think those who opposed the MAD will feel differently in about a month, when the look of the neighborhood changes. It really is sad; we enjoyed our work there and thought it was a great community," Catrambone said.

District Three Councilmember Todd Gloria said, "At this point, there remain many unanswered questions about what the Court's decision means for Golden Hill. While we need clarity on those issues from the Mayor and the City Attorney, we also need to focus on ensuring the community receives the services it needs." ♦



Graffiti was present less than a week after MAD services stopped. Photo taken on March 26. (Photo by SDUN)

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FROM PAGE 1  
MURAL

involved. Deren, also known as Madsteez, has painted murals for Nike, including the Nike-commissioned FIFA World Cup mural in Hollywood, Calif, among others.

“We went to his website and thought his work was really great,” Eads said.

Once they altered their perspective, he said, their minds began to change.

“We realized we’re in an art district where there already is a lot of street art,” Eads said. “It then became clear that this shouldn’t be about Wang’s, but about the type of positive impact the art could have on the neighborhood. That’s when we changed our mind[s].”

The artist said the project moved quickly once he got the green light.

“I think Pacific Magazine connected me with the owners on March eighth or ninth and I began painting on the 12th,” Deren said. “I didn’t even meet the guys until the 13th. There was no real dialogue about the project beforehand, which was cool for me.”

Eads said, however, Pacific Magazine’s editor faxed a rendering of what the mural would look like before the painting started.

“I was thrilled; absolutely blown away,” he said.

Deren said the mural took five days and 10 gallons of paint to complete.

“It was completely self-financed,” he said, adding that half the fun of the project came in knowing that the bright pink dinosaur “would brighten people’s

day. They just gave me the wall.”

District Three Councilmember Todd Gloria, whose district includes North Park, said that community art adds life to a neighborhood.

“Public art greatly influences community character and adds life to District Three’s neighborhoods,” Gloria said. “Beauty is in the eye of the beholder so not every piece of art will be uniformly loved and appreciated, but each brings an opportunity for discussion and draws attention to the district.”

Eads said the feedback thus far has been positive.

“We’ve had a lot of people, young and old, tell us how much they like it... We think this is the coolest and most amazing piece of artwork,” he said. “It’s just really impressive. We hope that this is one of those things that will draw people to North Park so they can see what an amazing neighborhood it is.” ♦

“We realized we’re in an art district where there already is a lot of street art”

—Tom Eads  
(Wang’s North Park co-owner)



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The evil masterminds behind Villainous Lair Comics are proud to announce the grand opening of our second sinister storefront! Villainous Lair Gaming opens its doors at 12:00 Noon on Sunday, April 1, 2012! (This is no April Fool’s gag; we’re villains, not liars.)

At Villainous Lair Gaming, our goal is to provide the customer with the perfect game to fit whatever style of play they are looking for. If you have a taste for epic adventures, our roleplaying game section contains rules for almost any genre you can name, including classics like Dungeons & Dragons and the World of Darkness. If you prefer to outthink your friends in contests of strategy and resource management, check out our selection of board and card games. Or maybe you prefer staging elaborate battle scenarios with detailed miniatures? At Villainous Lair Games, we have you covered there as well, with a wide selection of Warhammer, Warhammer 40,000 and other miniatures wargames, along with the supplies you’ll need to get your army assembled, painted and ready to wage war. And of course, our supply of collectible card games is making the move from Villainous Lair Comics to Villainous Lair Gaming... and picking up a few new titles along the way.

Our customers will have a place to play all these games as well, with nearly twice the table space of Villainous Lair Comics. And more tables means more villainous events. In addition to our continuing Magic: the Gathering tournaments and open house play nights, we will be running events for both the Pokemon and Yu-Gi-Oh! collectible card games. Villainous Lair Gaming will also host regular D&D Encounters and Pathfinder Society adventures. We might even run a Warhammer tournament or campaign now and then.

So if you’re a gamer, or you know a gamer, or you’re interested in becoming a gamer, or you just want us to stop saying “gamer”, come check out Villainous Lair Gaming at 3342 Adams Avenue.

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## Letter to the Editor

### Responses to Normal Heights joint-use park space

All one would have to do to find out why some people might want to prevent the opening of the Normal Heights Elementary School joint-use park is take a walk through the school campus. It is a gem and it is beautifully landscaped with walks, gardens and recreational spaces. It was built six years ago with taxpayer's funds, and a joint-use agreement was signed to authorize the school to control the property for educational purposes during the school day and to open up the property to members of the community when school was not in session. But some people want to use a publicly funded property for their own private park. That view prevailed for six years, but will no longer be tolerated in the future.

Anyone familiar with the history of the new school should know that community activists associated with the Normal Heights Planning Committee strongly supported creating a new school to serve the children of the neighborhood even though it required condemnation of some housing in the area in order to have a site on which to build. There is no reason to think that community activists are any less committed to the education of the children of Normal Heights and the city of San Diego today. The parents of children at the school would best work with the community rather than raising a wall between themselves and the community.

*Bob Keiser, Normal Heights resident*

How disappointing to read about the closed-mindedness of the parents that have children in the 6-6 program at Normal Heights Elementary protesting equal access for all to the campus after hours. I guess they think it would be best that the other children in the neighborhood should either stay inside or play in the allies, streets or in their apartment courtyards. Schools should be community resources, available for all the neighborhood children not just the few in the 6-6 program and I applaud the opening of the campuses for joint usage in Normal Heights and in North Park at Jefferson Elementary. I personally think every school playground in the San Diego District should be open to the public after hours. Of course access to the school joint-use space comes with responsibility and the school staff and the community are going to have to work together to supervise the area. The key word is "together". But to simply assume the worst and argue that the only people that will come to use the space will be vandals is short sighted and insult to the many responsible families in the neighborhood. Teach your kids a bigger lesson about cooperation, volunteerism and community, open your minds and support opening the playgrounds rather than keeping them under lock and key.

*Jeff Ott, North Park resident*

Let me get this straight. According to adopted City plans Normal Heights is way deficient in park space... and now a group of school parents wants a public joint use park closed to the public... and the reason is... fear?

This is public land, it's a public school adjacent to a public park that operates an after school program that requires adult supervision. What exactly are we afraid of? I'm the public, I've lived here a long time, and I plan to visit the park that I helped design with my grandchild. I'm not afraid.

Eighty years ago Franklin Roosevelt said that "the only thing we have to fear is...fear itself". I agree. We are your neighbors, we live here, and we plan to use our park, all of it.

*Gary Weber, Normal Heights resident*

#### Dear Uptown News Editor:

The North Park Historical Society opposes the Plaza de Panama bridge/underground parking structure and the environmental process that is being conducted for this project by the City of San Diego. Based on our review of the environmental impact report (EIR), we found that the document is not sufficient for decision makers and the public as required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). We also determined that the City has not conducted its duties as Lead Agency in accordance with the spirit and the letter of environmental law. Our detailed letter of comment is on our website at NorthParkHistory.org. This letter has been received by the City and is now part of the public record. It was written to help everyone understand the following important points.

Multiple specific requirements of CEQA have been violated by the City's approval of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the project proponent.

By approving the MOU, the City has illegally delegated its responsibilities as Lead Agency to the project proponent.

The EIR is completely missing a specific recreation section that addresses impacts to special events such as December Nights and Earth Fair during the two years of project construction, and impacts on Morley Field recreational facilities due to disposal of 142,000 cubic yards of soil excavated for construction of the underground parking structure.

The EIR's own analysis shows that an employee parking management plan would be more effective (and much less expensive!) than the proposed underground parking structure in enhancing visitor parking, but a plan is not proposed.

The proposed underground parking structure will not be self-sustaining with the assumed \$5 parking rate, and excess operational costs will have to be paid from the General Fund.

Potential noise impacts due to the transport and disposal of soil in the Morley Field area are not analyzed, even though the extended haul route is within 200 feet of homes along 28th Street at the intersection of Pershing Drive and Redwood Street, and closer than 1,000 feet to homes along 28th and Upas streets at Jacaranda Place.

There is no discussion of impacts from construction damage to local roadways, including truck hauling along the route between the Central Mesa and East Mesa. Most of the roadways identified as the haul route have been repaved recently, including Zoo Place, Florida Drive and Pershing Drive.

The selection of the Half-Plaza Alternative in the EIR as the environmentally superior alternative is not accurate. Four other feasible alternatives analyzed in the EIR would do a better job at preventing environmental damage caused by the project as proposed; all four alternatives eliminate the underground parking structure and two would eliminate vehicles from the entire length of Cabrillo Bridge.

It is unimaginable that any perceived benefits of the proposed Centennial Bridge and Central Mesa underground parking structure components of the Plaza de Panama project could outweigh their unavoidable environmental damage to the Balboa Park National Historic Landmark District, which is the City's historic site #1 and our crown jewel of parks.

*Katherine Hon  
Secretary, North Park Historical Society*

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San Diego Downtown News encourages letters to the editor and guest editorials. Please e-mail both to editor@sdenn.com. Include phone number and address for verification. We reserve the right to edit letters for brevity and accuracy. Letters and guest editorials do not necessarily reflect the views of the publisher or staff.

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# UptownBriefs

## BANKERS HILL NEIGHBORHOOD PARKING COMMITTEE SEEKING FEEDBACK

Douglas Scott, chair of the Bankers Hill Neighborhood Parking Committee, is seeking community input regarding making Bankers Hill more bicycle- and pedestrian-friendly. "Our committee is charged with developing ideas to maximize the availability and maximize the use of the parking available to us in Bankers Hill," Scott said, referencing bicycle parking. At a March 9 meeting, community members gathered to submit ideas. Those wanting to submit ideas can do so via email at EasyToParkBankersHill@gmail.com.

## WATER USE FILM CONTEST DEADLINE APPROACHING

The City of San Diego issued a statement reminding young filmmakers that the deadline for the annual water conservation film contest deadline is April 6. The contest is designed to engage students in 11th and 12th grade in wise water use, including conservation and various ways to reuse water, such as recycling and water purification. The films should include one of these messages: create a sustainable world by "wasting no water," plant native or California-friendly plants, or show how water conservation is important to San Diego's economy. There are no entry fees required to enter.

## BRAZEN BBQ WINS FIRST PLACE IN BARBECUE CHAMPIONSHIP

On March 10, Hillcrest's Brazen BBQ took the title of the "Best in Pork" category at The Annual Santa Anita Park Winners' Circle BBQ Championship. The Kansas City Barbecue Society sponsored this year's Santa Anita Park Winners' Circle BBQ Championship and hosted over 35 teams competing in four major categories. Brazen BBQ winning this award comes in addition to winning California BBQ Association's 2009 Top 10 Team of the Year placing in the nation's top 100, and the first place Rookie of the Year award. Brazen is located at 441 Washington St.

## DINNERDATE WEBSITE LAUNCHES IN UPTOWN

DinnerDate.com, a small group dating service that introduces like-minded singles off-line at hosted events, has launched in Uptown. DinnerDate organizes group events for six to 12 like-minded singles at San Diego restaurants. DinnerDate invites members to attend based on their individual event preferences and shared interests. For example, a DinnerDate might feature a tequila tasting or a mountain bike lover's dinner. At every event, one participant volunteers as host. It's free to join, and there's no monthly fee. When booking an event, participants pre-pay the cost of their own meal plus a \$5 fee. The company has restaurants signed up to participate including R-Gang Eatery, Mosaic Wine Bar, Cueva Bar, Sabuku Sushi, Barrio Star, Ave5 and Adams Avenue Grill. For more information, visit DinnerDate.com.

## PANDAS AT SAN DIEGO ZOO UP FOR ENDANGERED SPECIES CONSERVATION

An attempted coupling by two giant pandas at the San Diego

Zoo has not led to a pregnancy, and the adult pandas are now up for endangered species conservation. Over the weekend of March 17-18, female giant panda Bai Yun began to exhibit signs of readiness to mate and was paired with male Gao Gao on March 18 and March 19. In 2003, 2005, 2007 and 2009, the results of this match led each time to the birth of a single cub. Bai Yun has delivered five cubs at the San Diego Zoo. In 1999, her first cub, Hua Mei, became the first giant panda conceived by artificial insemination in the Western Hemisphere and the first in the United States to survive to adulthood.

## UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS, HILLCREST, NORTH PARK DUI CHECKPOINTS YIELD MULTIPLE ARRESTS

On Feb. 25, the San Diego Police Department conducted a DUI checkpoint in the 2100 block of El Cajon Boulevard in University Heights. The checkpoint was operational from 9:50 p.m. until 12:22 a.m. In that time, 519 vehicles passed through the checkpoint, of them, 492 were screened by officers. Fourteen of those drivers were detained for an evaluation of their sobriety. Three arrests were made for driving under the influence (DUI), and six vehicle impounds were conducted. Officers later conducted DUI saturation patrols in Hillcrest and North Park. Five additional arrests were made for DUI, and one driver was arrested for an outstanding felony warrant.

## COUNCILMEMBER GLORIA UNOPPOSED IN DISTRICT THREE RACE

Current District Three Councilmember Todd Gloria will run unopposed in the June 5 election

for the District's Council seat. Due to a lack of valid signatures, District Three potential candidate Dempsey McGibbony's campaign to run against Gloria was halted on March 19. McGibbony met the March 8 filing deadline; however, of the 173 signatures submitted, only 62 were considered valid. As stated in his candidate statement, McGibbony, who was born and raised in Arkansas, said his "drive, determination and relentless efforts to bring about change for the better" would help him serve the citizens of District Three. McGibbony has not ruled out a write-in ballot effort.

## STONEWALL CITIZEN'S PATROL SEEKING NORTH PARK VOLUNTEERS

The Stonewall Citizens Patrol, the volunteer-run community watch, which already has an active patrol in Hillcrest, is looking for volunteers for their North Park division. The members are trained by San Diego Police Department, and act as the eyes and ears for the police. At a March 13 North Park Community Association meeting, Stonewall spokesperson Edwin Lohr said, "We're not the police. We don't carry weapons and we don't pull anybody over, but we're helping make a difference in the community by being its eyes and ears." ♦

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# North Park Planning Committee elects new board of directors

By Ashley Mackin  
SDUN Editor

On March 20, the North Park Planning Committee (NPPC) elected a new board of directors. Elected to the board were Robert Barry, Cheryl Dye, Brandon Hilpert, Lucky Morrison, Omar Passons, Rene Vidales, Vicki Granowitz and Steven Williamson.

The NPPC deals with land use and development issues and is an advisory body to the Planning Commission and San Diego City Council on issues of urban design, public facilities and transportation.

Many of the board members said they hope this term will be an opportunity to complete the North Park Community Plan Update, get the community more involved in North Park development issues and promote their community outreach through social media.

Vice Chair Vidales said he was glad to be reelected to another term. "I am very proud of North Park and the many accomplishments of the last few years that have turned around a once blighted commercial corridor into what is now attracting lots of people to live, work and entertain."

Vidales has been on the North Park Planning Committee for the past six years and this will be his last two-year term. In that time, he said, "I would like to see the North Park Community Plan Update to its conclusion, where once adopted, the document will become the blueprint to shape the community in years to come."

Passons, an attorney with a land use and real estate background, also said his hope for this term is the completion of the Community Plan Update, "... so that businesses and residents have a consistent, reliable understanding of development priorities [and] guidelines for [a] greater North Park."

Passons also said he wants to develop policies to enhance the historic elements of North Park west of University Avenue and El Cajon Boulevard.

Dye, of Dye and Associates, an economic and community development consulting firm, is on the North Park Community Plan Update Advisory Committee. "I am committed to helping ensure a balanced community with a vibrant business and arts sector, and safe, attractive and historically protected neighborhoods," she said. "I am looking forward



North Park Planning Committee member Omar Passons.  
(Courtesy of Omar Passons)

to continuing to work with the Advisory Committee, the public, [Councilmember] Gloria's office and the City to bring the much-needed North Park Community Plan Update to completion."



North Park Planning Committee Vice Chair Rene Vidales.  
(Courtesy of Rene Vidales)

Vidales also said increasing community involvement will be a focus during his term, and invites the community to participate in sub-committee meetings, where much decision-making is made.

"Then from the sub-committee the work gets forwarded to the full board where the ultimate advisory recommendations are made."

Hilpert said he was excited to be reelected to the Committee and reiterated Vidales's statement, saying, "One of my goals is to work on getting greater community involvement from North Park residents into what happens in regards to the development and growth of North Park. I've found that many people do not even realize that our group exists as a resource for the people of North Park."

Hilpert discussed the group's community outreach efforts through Facebook and Twitter, and said he thought the NPPC is the only community planning group utilizing the social media.

Granowitz, the reelected NPPC Chair, said with the launch of their Facebook and Twitter accounts, this coming term will be a productive one. "I continue to be very excited by the work [Hilpert] has been doing to give us a presence on social media [and] he will also be managing our website this year."

Vidales said, "Now that the North Park Redevelopment Project Area Committee is no longer in existence, the North Park Planning Committee is more likely to take a bigger role than ever before in the future of North Park." ♦



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# North Park Community Association seeking funding for new music initiative

By Dave Fidlin  
SDUN Reporter

The North Park Community Association (NPCA) is spearheading a project called North Park Kids and Music with the hope of bridging the gap caused by cuts in music programs across the San Diego Unified School District (SDUSD). North Park Kids and Music carries a two-pronged goal: promoting music and actively engaging alternative education students in the process.

As proposed, NPCA would host a series of outdoor music workshops at North Park Community Park and will focus

on students in seventh to 12th grade attending a second-chance program through one of the 27 Community Day Schools across San Diego, a program designed for students who have been involuntarily transferred from their school or expelled. SDUSD budget cuts have impacted the Community Day Schools as well as public schools.

The end goal is to hold a series of community concerts that put the spotlight on participating students, while adding an attraction to local parks.

Omar Passons, a NPCA board member, said the organization is actively seeking funding to bring the program to fruition and

details on the implementation of North Park Kids and Music are not set in stone.

Grant funding, one sought source, would primarily go toward purchasing instruments, the costliest expenditure in the proposal.

Passons said NPCA is also planning to work with the San Diego Music Foundation to find funds.

"We think this is something important," Passons said. "It's an opportunity to create better neighborhoods and get people more involved."

NPCA has also sought funding through GOOD, a Los Angeles-based organization that

works to bolster nonprofits.

GOOD recently presented a music-themed challenge that gave organizations an opportunity to submit a proposal and collect votes online. A total of 121 ideas were submitted, including NPCA's North Park Kids and Music proposal. Voting ended Thursday, March 29, and GOOD is expected to announce the winner shortly. GOOD is offering a \$2,500 prize for the winning idea.

"This came across my Twitter feed, and I thought it would be a great opportunity," Passons said. "We looked into it further and presented our idea."

If North Park Kids and Music is selected through GOOD's on-

line voting, Passons said North Park Kids and Music would be up and running by the end of the current school year. The goal, he said, would be to hold outdoor concerts at up to five area parks later in the summer. NPCA plans to run the program annually.

If the GOOD funding does not work out, Passons said North Park Kids and Music is not a dead proposal.

"We are constantly looking at ways to fund a program like this, so our efforts are ongoing," Passons said. "Funding is the biggest challenge, but we have a clear path and an idea of what we want to do. It's just a matter of looking at all of our options." ♦

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# BARK BOULEVARD

## OPENS IN NORTH PARK

Despite the name, excessive barking not okay at new doggie day care



(left) Coral VanLandingham, owner of Bark Boulevard, her son Bill VanLandingham and their Chocolate Lab, Charlie Brown on the facility's grounds. (Photo by Daniel Solomon)

By Ashley Mackin  
SDUN Editor

Bark Boulevard, a doggie day care center, opened in North Park on March 21.

"It is important to us that every canine and canine owner have the option of a safe, reliable, loving and reasonably priced home away from home when needed," owner Coral VanLandingham said.

Some of the services offered at Bark Boulevard include washing and drying; curbside drop-off; access to outdoor play areas and an indoor "romp room;" a retail shop for dog clothes and toys; and special event planning for dogs and their owners.

Bark Boulevard offers hourly and overnight kennel-free care for dogs of all sizes. Keeping the dogs in individual "suites," the dogs are kept in separate spaces unless an owner of multiple dogs prefers they stay together.

Bark Boulevard came after 20 years of brainstorming and VanLandingham said she initially wanted to develop a private dog park, but didn't have the finances due to the high costs.

After developing a solid concept and receiving a small business loan, VanLandingham moved on-site into the building that houses Bark Boulevard, located at 2311 El Cajon Blvd., with her son, Bill, and their four-year-old Chocolate Lab, Charlie Brown.

A former medical facility, built in 1963, is 5,000 square feet and required some electrical and plumbing repairs. Living on-site, VanLandingham said the home away from home feeling is important to her and her son.

VanLandingham said she

always had pets growing up, including dogs, cats, ducks, rabbits, hamsters, birds and a horse. "The care for those animals was a family responsibility and taken very seriously. Each pet was always well cared for and treated as a member of the family, much loved and often spoiled rotten," she said. "This is also how I have raised my son. We both care deeply for animals."

Bark Boulevard requires all dogs to have current California licensing and up-to-date vaccinations and prefers dogs receive regular flea treatments.

A majority of the routines and socialization is determined by owner's preferences.

When it comes to bathroom breaks, owners are asked about the dog's normal schedule. Dogs are walked and taken outside often and the turf bathroom area is cleaned daily. If an owner prefers their dog be kept alone, there are upstairs suites and the animals would not engage in group play.

There are, however, rules at the facility, including specific off-leash and on-leash areas, and dogs must adhere to them.

"That's just for the safety of the dogs.... We don't want our dogs to get out," VanLandingham said. She said she has lots of experience with dogs getting out and how to prevent it. Other rules include no aggressive behavior and no excessive barking.

"We really we want to serve our immediate community [in] North Park, University Heights, Hillcrest, Kensington [and] Talmadge," she said. "Obviously we're not large enough to handle a whole lot of dogs and people, so we just really want to concentrate on our community here." ♦

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Listed below are several helpful tips on home safety:

- 1.) Homes with pools, if you have a pool it is a must to have it completely fenced with a self-latching gate.
- 2.) Remove mats, rugs and floor runners. The most common injuries in homes are caused by tripping on them. If you choose to keep rugs in your home, secure them by taping, stapling or nailing them to the floor. For bathmats, make sure you have the non-skid bottoms on the mats.
- 3.) Install handrails on all stairways. Even if you have few steps leading to your front door, or several flights of stairs in your house, it is recommended to have them on both sides of the stairs to maximize safety.
- 4.) Install smoke and carbon monoxide detectors. Smoke detectors should be installed on the ceilings or high on the walls and carbon monoxide detectors should be installed low on a wall. Please read instructions for proper use and installation.
- 5.) Never leave candles or other open flames burning unattended.
- 6.) Keep your hot water heater at 120 degrees or lower to prevent scalds.
- 7.) Keep Medications, cleaners and poisonous materials locked away. This will prevent children having access to them.
- 8.) Do not leave small objects lying around the house. Small items the size of marble or coins are items that children and pets can easily choke on.
- 9.) Cover your electric outlets that you are not using with outlet caps.
- 10.) Keep a disaster preparedness kit in your home and office. The most important items for the kit are drinking water, a flash light, a battery operated radio, batteries, basic first aid kit, individually wrapped granola or breakfast bars and some cash.

For more information on disaster preparedness, Google "disaster preparedness."

Remember if there is ever a life threatening situation in your home or if there is any kind of emergency, always call 911 immediately.

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# Mission Hills Vons opens

## 58,000 square foot store hosts Mama's Kitchen fundraiser

By Ashley Mackin  
SDUN Editor

The Mission Hill Vons, located at 515 W. Washington St., opened Friday, March 30, after nearly nine months of construction. On Wednesday, March 28, Vons hosted a fundraiser for Mama's Kitchen and donated all the proceeds to the meal delivery service.

The previous structure, which was demolished in April 2011, also housed a Vons store, but the new building is over four times the size of the previous one at 58,000 square feet.

Features of the new store not present at the previous one include full service floral department; expanded produce department with organic items; expanded check-stand area with self checkouts; full service meat and seafood; new pharmacy with enclosed waiting area; new full service bakery department; new full service Starbucks with inside seating; new outside seating area for customers; and garage parking with multiple access points, elevators, escalators and cart movers.

John Piva, Vons vice president of operations for San Diego, said he was most excited about the expanded organic produce section and the gluten-free departments. "I think its just reflective of what the community wanted here," Piva said.

Brian Braaten, vice president

of real estate for Vons Corporation, said the physical structure reflected the needs of the community with its "podium" style, being built up instead of out. "What we did was [we] took advantage of local topography so we didn't have to change the landscape too much.... By doing that, we were able to get some very convenient parking, which this area is in need of, so that was an added bonus, creating a store like this without creating too much mass," Braaten said.

Additionally, the decoration of the store includes art, plants, water features and mosaic tiles.

At the March 28 fundraiser, representatives from Safeway, Vons's parent company, and Councilmembers Kevin Faulconer and Todd Gloria spoke about the new building.

"I'd like to say, first and foremost, to the Mission Hills and Hillcrest community, congratulations; congratulations to everybody's hard work," Faulconer said. "This store is phenomenal, and it's a credit to Vons for investing and believing in this community about what we needed and what was possible."

Faulconer said, in its planning stages, the most important elements were that the new structure was large enough, had enough parking and that it was architecturally suited for the community. He said Vons succeeded on all counts.

Gloria said the Vons Corpora-

tion showed respect to the community by meeting with community associations and community planning groups in the design process, and investing in the community.

"I recognize you could have made an investment at any of those 277-something stores you have, but you did it here in Mis-

sion Hills and Hillcrest, [and] that's bringing new jobs to our community when we need them most," he said.

Gilbert Gonzalez, Vons director of public affairs, said the store will employ 120 people, 50 of which are returning employees that worked in the old store.

Piva emphasized Vons's partnership with local nonprofits, including the San Diego Food Bank, to which Vons donated 2.5 million pounds of food last year. "We really do celebrate being in the local community," Piva said, adding they were celebrating the eve-

ning as a fundraiser for Mama's Kitchen, a nonprofit organization that provides nutritious, home-delivered meals to those afflicted with HIV, AIDS or cancer.

Mama's Kitchen executive director Alberto Cortez thanked those who donated and the Vons Corporation for having the event. "The services that we provide make economic sense, they make nutritional sense and they make human sense," he said. "I'm grateful for the community of San Diego and to Vons for the support you provide to Mama's Kitchen." ♦



The 58,000 square foot Vons hosted a fundraiser for Mama's Kitchen on March 28. (Photo by Daniel Solomon)



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# Calendar of Events

**see Calendar, page 17**

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FRANK SABATINI JR. / RESTAURANT REVIEW

# BIG AND BEAUTIFUL

## Wang's North Park

3029 University Ave. (North Park)

**619-291-7500**Prices: Soups, salads & appetizers,  
\$4 to \$9; entrees, \$8 to \$17

How do you convert 15,000 square feet of dead space that formerly housed various department stores into a warm and alluring neighborhood restaurant?

Easy. Gather up some adventurous investors; weather through the road bumps involved for securing permits and building codes; decorate tastefully, and voilà.

To the delight of Uptown residents on the prowl for classic Pan-Asian cuisine, Wang's North Park has supplanted what was once a J.C. Penney (before the Fashion Valley Mall was built), then REI and most recently, Big Lots. The two-level structure was built in the early 1950s and sat vacant for the past four years. Now, it fills a strategic commercial gap on University Avenue by ranking as the largest restaurant North Park has ever seen.

Wang's greets with towering ceilings that loom over a sedating palette of earthy textures and colors. Between the bar lounge and general seating area is a metal bonsai tree with convincing, leafy branches. Soft, recessed lighting flows throughout the colossal room along with a couple of giant pendant lights floating above the bar. In May, the restaurant's spacious mezzanine section will be utilized for customer spillovers, affording visitors overhead views of the élan.

My dining companion knew exactly how to navigate the menu, having eaten here a couple of times since Wang's opened in November. As she quickly pointed out in conjunction with our astute waiter, the main entrees are conveniently divided into "sweet," "spicy" and "savory" categories. The goal is to tempt you into ordering a variety of diverse dishes, some of which we tend to overlook in long, runoff menus.

It worked for me. By the time we wolfed down our starters – a dozen salt and pepper shrimp; a ramekin of nourishing edamame hummus served with lightly fried wonton chips; and a colorful peanut-lime chicken salad – I was ready to break my hopeless routine of Kung Pao chicken. The Hunan pork, listed underneath, proved equally stimulating thanks to its chili-specked oyster sauce cloaking thin, tender ribbons of the pork. Crunchy water chestnuts and baby corn added the right crunch.

I generally have lousy luck with beef dishes in Asian restaurants because the meat is always tough. But the "asparagus & mushroom beef" entrée from the "savory" category left us wondering if the kitchen is using filet. Served also in oyster sauce, sans the peppers and a little salty, every medallion was smooth to the bite.

Our waiter steered us to the "sweet" dish of the meal, a big filet of flaky, mild perch coated in

panko crumbs and topped with pineapple chunks. The fish takes on its primary sugar jolt from Thai-style peanut sauce that tasted more like a glaze. It worked just as well on the fish as it would a cupcake. Even better, the panko crust on the filet behaved flawlessly in the to-go box, retaining its crunchiness hours later.

Also from the "sweet" category is walnut shrimp constructed with honey-mustard aioli, which my companion raved about from her past visits along with the curry chicken (spicy) and "really good" barbecue salmon (savory).

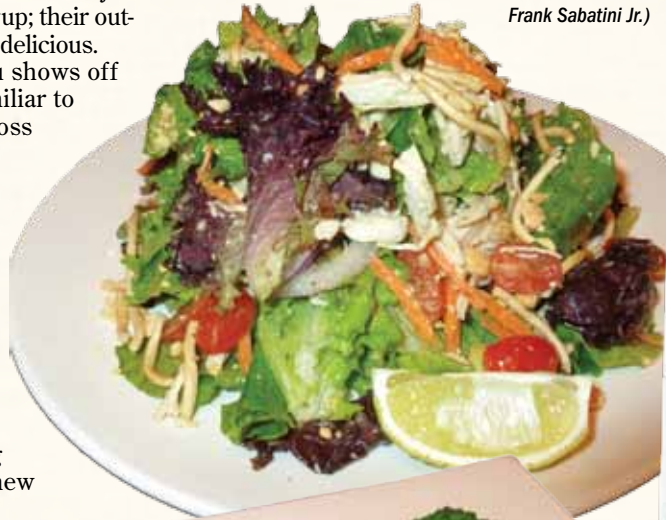
"Finally," she added, "we have a Chinese restaurant in San Diego that serves great food and where it doesn't feel like you're being rushed."

Wang's North Park is the younger, but plumper sister to Wang's in the Desert in Palm Springs. The cocktail list here, we're told, is more developed. We lucked out with two martinis boasting perfection: the Green Skyy made with citrus vodka, wasabi, cucumber and lime juice; and the Long Duck Dong, which

combines ginger vodka with lemon grass, cucumber and lemon juice. Each is sweetened with just a tinge of simple syrup; their outcomes dangerously delicious.

While the menu shows off dishes that are familiar to Asian kitchens across America, the striking atmosphere and subtle recipe twists add panache to the meals. Provided you can resist your customary choices, Wang's guides you through the process of creating fresh habits from new flavors. ♦

Fresh organics and pulled chicken strike a zesty match in Wang's peanut-lime salad. (Photo by Frank Sabatini Jr.)



Filet of perch is coated in panko and sweetened with peanut glaze and pineapple. (Photo by Frank Sabatini Jr.)



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# High fives at Lotus Thai

## Come On Get Happy! Dr. Ink

Think in multiples of five when entering the tranquil confines of Lotus Thai Cuisine in Hillcrest for happy hour. The long-established restaurant, famous for its corn fritters and precise execution of colored curries, has rolled out a menu of appetizers and drinks priced without complication.

For \$5 apiece, you can swim in a 21-ounce beer from Thailand or Japan while noshing on various appetizers such as lemongrass pork, chicken satay, shrimp tempura and more at the same cost. The five-spot specials apply also to soju cocktails and wines by the glass, all served within eyeshot of a trickling water feature and a linear seating arrangement that would easily pass muster by a feng shui expert.

Rarely, if ever, will you encounter at Lotus the raucous, booze-guzzling crowds of other happy-hour scenes, where admittedly I've been known to blow my budget on high-powered cocktails and loud jukeboxes. Here, you decompress through quiet con-

versation with friends, unloading your day's highs and lows while sharing the dining room with customers eating full meals from the regular menu.

Visiting with a friend who prefers civility over frivolity, we each nursed from jumbo bottles of Singha beer, which is brewed in Bangkok and known for its sweet, malty notes. Though not so difficult to find, we reveled over its \$5 price tag opposed to about \$8 that you'd pay per bottle on the retail market. If our eyes served us correctly after polishing most of it off, the label's fine print showed the beer ranks at a sturdy 6 percent alcohol. Bring on the appetizers!

The chicken satay featured four skewers of breast meat conforming to the length of each stick. They're served with cucumber relish and peanut sauce sporting a sweet, silky sheen. Good pickings, but not enough to anchor our feet to the ground afterwards. So we proceeded to tofu fries, adding a dose of chili paste to them along with way, and then ultimately filling up on an order of tasty Thai corn fritters, which incorporate corn and green beans. In the end, we came away with stomachs full of fizzy Thai lager and mildly spiced eats for a painless \$12.50 a piece. ♦

### RATINGS:

#### Drinks: ★★★★★

Hard alcohol goes missing from the drink list, although the Asian beers, assorted soju cocktails and several wines by the glass leave you with plenty of choices.

#### Food: ★★★★★

Choose from nearly a dozen appetizers ranging from green papaya salad and shrimp tempura to classic chicken satay and the restaurant's signature corn fritters.

#### Value: ★★★★★

Everything is \$5 during happy hour. Food and drink portions vary, however. The beers are served in large, 21-ounce bottles; wines by the glass appear generously poured; and tofu French fries and corn fritters are adequately filling.

#### Service: ★★★★★

Service is swift, thanks to a well-staffed dining room.

#### Duration: ★★★★★

Get your Thai food and drink fix any day of the week, as happy hour extends through weekends.



(left) Chicken satay is among a dozen appetizers that sell for \$5 apiece during happy hour at Lotus Thai Cuisine. (right) A single 21-ounce bottle of Singha Thai Lager feels like three after consuming it. (Photos by Dr. Ink)



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## Old Globe opens O'Neill romance

By Charlene Baldridge  
SDUN Theater Critic

The Old Globe opened Eugene O'Neill's Pulitzer Prize-winning "Anna Christie," March 15 in the White Theatre at the Conrad Prebys Theatre Center in Balboa Park. Directed by Daniel Goldstein, the play is part of the Globe's "Classics Up Close" series, intended to reexamine American classics.

Premiering in 1921, the piece is set in a lowlife waterfront bar in New York City and on a coal barge plying local waterways and coastal ports, circa 1910. Major characters are Anna Christopherson, who refers to herself as Anna Christie; her errant yet loving father, Chris; Chris's mistress, Marthy; and an Irish seaman saved from "That Old Devil Sea," which looms large in Chris's mind as bringer of bad things. In the past, with the death of Chris's brothers and now, the Irish sailor. Chris would not want his daughter marrying a seaman.

In the play's initial scene, the drunken Chris and Marthy hoist a few. He has received a letter from Anna saying she taking the train to live with him. Marthy is persuaded to move out, no hard feelings. Chris leaves and Anna arrives, neither Marthy nor Anna knowing initially who the other is. The scene between the frail yet strong Anna (Jessica Love) and the earthy, good-hearted Marthy (Kristine Nielsen) reveals everything onlookers need to know going forward. Anna's come from Minnesota, where she's been living with her late mother's relatives since she was five years old. She does not remember her father, who takes her to the homey house on the barge and swears he will care for her the rest of her life.

Anna falls in love with the sea, even more so when it delivers up a half-drowned Irish seaman named Mat Burke (Austin Durant), a wild, brawling, beefy man who wants to settle down for love of a good woman. As played by Durant, Mat poses the same edgy combination of lout and lover as Tennessee Williams' later Stanley Kowalski.

Chris (Bill Buell) is against the match for many reasons. Anna is reluctant to marry Mat, and when it becomes apparent that each of the two men wants to run her life, she sits them down and reveals her tawdry past, sending both off on a tear. The denouement is unexpected, even funny, although the Old Devil Sea seems to bode dark events.

Jessica Love is a less jaded Anna than remembered from the Greta Garbo film (her first talkie, in 1930). This Anna is appealing naïve despite her hard life. As Chris, Bill Buell's Swedish accent is at first a challenge to understand. Later in the play it seems inconsistent, fading in and out. Though he initially plays with a tad too much volume and bluster, some of his later scenes with Anna are most affecting. The most fascinating, well-performed and perhaps best-written character of

all is Nielsen's Marthy, who slips away at the end of Act I and never returns, at least in the play.

Goldstein's production is tight and tense, an engrossing two and a half hours, with frightening fight scenes directed by George Yé. Scenes are played upon Wilson Chin's imaginative set, lighted atmospherically by Austin R. Smith. Denitsa Bliznakova's distressed costumes could not be better. One could almost smell the sea and sweat. I have a huge quibble with composer Chris Miller's original music, a piano score that becomes intrusively loud and annoying in Paul Peterson's sound design. ♦



(left) Bill Buell as Chris Christopherson and Jessica Love as Anna Christopherson in The Old Globe's "Anna Christie." (Photo by Henry DiRocco)

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(left) Jessica Love as Anna Christopherson and Austin Durant as Mat Burke in The Old Globe's "Anna Christie." (Photo by Henry DiRocco)

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# DIY PROJECT:

*Make your own custom jewelry at Whaley Studios in Hillcrest*



Pieces by Jay Whaley made for his girlfriend, using a eucalyptus leaf design. (Photo courtesy of Jay Whaley/Whaley Studios)



Some of the machinery at the Whaley Studio in Hillcrest. (Photo by Monica Garske)



Rika Malone and her mother making custom jewelry. (Photo courtesy of Jay Whaley/Whaley Studios)

By Monica Garske  
SDUN Reporter

Hillcrest's Whaley Studios is not a standard jewelry store; it's far more unique. Instead of housing display cases filled with pre-made merchandise, Whaley Studios offers clients the opportunity to make their own jewelry in a state-of-art workshop dedicated to

pure creativity.

Lifelong jewelry aficionado Jay Whaley, who's been running his business in Hillcrest for the past eight years, operates this hidden gem, located at 3848 Fifth Ave., on the second floor.

Whaley, who has specialized in the art of lost-wax castings since the late 1960s and taught jewelry-making classes at UCSD for 24 years, hosts weekly classes at his studio where clients learn the basics of metalsmithing and make

original jewelry completely from scratch.

"Students come in with sketches or ideas of whatever they want to make and I teach them to make that piece, step by step. Whether it's rolling metal, carving a lost-wax model or using a torch, they do everything themselves, from the ground up," Whaley said.

Whaley also explained how a lost-wax model works, "The exact image of the jewelry piece you

want to make gets cast into a mold and is surrounded by plaster. After firing it up, the wax melts away [and is] 'lost' in the process, leaving a hollow cavity that you can then pour your molten metal into to make the piece of jewelry."

Whaley said he offers two different types of classes at his studio, group classes and private classes. The group classes are part of a nine-week session and students have the option to take them on Mondays, Tuesdays or Wednesdays. Each class lasts two-and-a-half hours and accommodates up to 10 students.

The private-style classes also take place once a week, but are four hours long and have a maximum of four students per class.

In a typical year, Whaley said he teaches five of these nine-week group and private sessions. He also hosts several specialty workshops featuring jewelry-making experts from around the country.

For each session, Whaley lets students make whatever they want. He said he believes not having a predetermined project allows for more creative freedom in his workshop and considers this flexibility part of his signature teaching style.

"I don't want all of my students to make the same thing because I figure everybody has their own ideas. I'm pushing my students to really be creative and

do their own thing. They like it that way. My students are at different skill levels and bounce ideas off each other so it makes for a very creative environment," Whaley said.

During classes, Whaley said his main job is to observe and answer any questions students have.

One longtime student who said she appreciates Whaley's teaching style is Rika Malone. She's been taking classes at Whaley Studios for the past six years.

Over time, Malone said she's made more than 10 custom pieces of jewelry including bracelets, earrings, rings and necklaces.

Most recently, she made a ring at Whaley Studios with her mother who was visiting from Japan. Malone has also made multiple custom pendant necklaces for her husband – who co-owns the Empire House restaurant on University Avenue – and his staff.

"[Whaley's] classes are so relaxed, they almost feel therapeutic. We all get to share our ideas while working and socializing. One of my favorite things I've made is a chunky ring out of a piece of glass I brought back from a trip to Ireland," Malone said.

In addition to teaching classes, Whaley also offers a Wedding Ring Workshop where couples can make their own custom wedding rings. He also personally makes original jewelry at the request of clients who prefer ordering unique pieces rather than making the jewelry themselves.

Currently, Whaley said he's working on diversifying his business by developing functional tools to make his craft easier. He's in the process of patenting several new jewelry-making tools that he hopes to debut in May at the annual Society of North American Goldsmiths conference.

He also said he's working to offer more mass-production options to his clients so they can make larger quantities of their own custom creations. Whaley said several of his clients have turned their jewelry-making hobby into small businesses, selling the items they make at his studio.

For more information on classes and workshops, visit [WhaleyStudios.com](http://WhaleyStudios.com).

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FROM PAGE 12  
CALENDAR

Way, tickets start at \$39

**National Coffee Cake Day:** 5:30 a.m., Kona Coffee Company will offer free slices of coffee cakes to the first 50 patrons who mention National Coffee Cake Day, 3995 Fifth Ave., free

**The Pride:** 8 p.m., Alexi Kaye Campbell's "time-shifting exploration of identity and passion," Diversionary Theater, 4545 Park Blvd., \$31

**APRIL 8**

**Hillcrest Farmer's Market:** 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. every Sunday, Hillcrest DMV, 3960 Normal St., free.

**La Fierce:** 8:30 p.m., 20-dancer cast performance, 21 and older event, Numbers Night Club, 3811 Park Blvd., \$5

**Unusual Suspects:** 10 a.m., Exhibition of paintings and photographs by Holly Roberts, Museum of Photographic Arts, 1649 El Prado, free - \$6

**APRIL 9**

**Drop-in Knitting Club:** 5 p.m., North Park Library 3795 31st St., reservations not required and supplies not provided, free.

**APRIL 10**

**Residents Free Tuesdays in Balboa Park:** hours vary by museum, participating museums include Museum of Photographic Arts, San Diego History Center, Veterans' Museum and Memorial Center. Free for San Diego Residents with ID, active military and dependents

**Pajama Storytime:** 6:30 p.m., children are invited to an evening storytime with books and possibly singing and puppets. Feel free to come dressed in your pajamas. Mission Hills Branch Library, 925 West Washington St., free

**I.C.S.C. (Irish Congress of Southern California) board meetings:** 6 p.m., Imperial House, 505 Kamla Ave, free

**APRIL 11**

**Old Town Community Planning Group meeting:** 3:30 p.m., open participation from community members, Whaley House 2476 San Diego Ave, free

**Mission Hills Farmer's Market:** 3 to 7 p.m. every Wednesday, 4050 Falcon St., free

**Lego Playtime at the Library:** 5 p.m., North Park Branch Library 3795 31st St., free

**Homework Helpers:** 6– 7:30 p.m. North Park Branch Library, 3795 31st St., tutoring for children of grades, all subjects, free

**Lego Playtime:** 5 – 6 p.m., Mission Hills Library, 925 West Washington St., free.

**APRIL 12**

**North Park Farmer's Market:** 3 to 7 p.m. every Thursday, parking lot behind CVS at 32nd St. and University Ave., free

**University Heights Community Forum Series:** 6 p.m., "Tools for Preserving Community Character: Conservation Areas," Grace Lutheran Church, 3993 Park Blvd, free

**Cookie and Wine Pairing:** 7 p.m., specializing "in unique truffle stuffed cookies and other delectable stuffed cookies," Jake's on Sixth, 3755 Sixth Ave., \$18

**The Pride:** 8 p.m., opening day, Alexi Kaye Campbell's "time-shifting exploration of identity and passion," Diversionary Theater, 4545 Park Blvd., \$45 ♦



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

**Sunday Sudoku Puzzle**

Enter digits from 1 to 9 into the blank spaces. Every row must contain one of each digit. So must every column, as must every 3x3 square.

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Sudoku Answer key, page 19

**Uptown Crossword**

**Remembering Jane Austen**

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8	9		10	11	12	13
14					15						16			
17					18						19			
20				21					22					
		23	24				25	26						
27	28					29					30	31	32	33
34						35						36		
37					38						39			
40					41					42				
43			44		45					46				
			47	48					49					
50	51	52						53				54	55	56
57						58	59				60			
61					62						63			
64					65						66			

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**ACROSS**

1 Surfeit  
5 Well-rounded  
10 Nimbus  
14 Bert, of Hollywood fame  
15 Mountains of Utah  
16 Mesabi Range product  
17 Greek war god  
18 Heroine of Persuasion  
20 Network  
21 Sandwich bread  
22 Believers in God  
23 Jacob's brother  
25 American astrophysicist  
27 Mansfield Park resident  
30 Midge  
34 Golfing nickname  
35 Arched molding  
36 Pindaric work  
37 Albert Gore, for one  
38 Negative stipulations  
39 Gardner  
40 Prov. of Ottawa  
41 Word of acceptance  
42 Like some sleeves

43 Reckless  
45 Sense and Sensibility philanderer  
47 Anglo-Saxon serfs  
49 Passport stamp  
50 Peaceful  
53 Rent  
54 Sgt.  
57 Emma's friend and mentor  
60 Countless years  
61 Countertenor  
62 Calyx part  
63 Market  
64 Average  
65 1989 Oscar winner  
66 Singer Guthrie

**DOWN**

1 Vegetable salad  
2 Swiss river  
3 Pride and Prejudice family  
4 Hesitant sounds  
5 Highlight  
6 Bowling alley  
7 Mil. seafarers  
8 West or Murray  
9 Recipients of promises

10 Under par  
11 Author of Exodus  
12 Foundation  
13 Household pests  
19 Grassland  
21 Comedienne Martha  
24 Use scissors  
25 Bridge stratagems  
26 Acid derivative  
27 Party gift  
28 Sports center  
29 Novice  
31 Henry Tilney's abbey  
32 Extemporize  
33 Very small  
38 Despondent  
39 Hosp. tests  
42 Be acceptable  
44 Kermit's creator  
46 Too  
48 Be in session  
50 Muslim religious leader  
51 Anger  
52 That: Sp.  
53 Burden  
55 Organic unit  
56 Scandinavian capital  
58 Affirmative vote  
59 TLC dispenser  
60 Botanist Gray

Remebering Jane Austen Answer key, page 19

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Remembering Jane Austin  
Crossword from page 17

Sudoku  
Puzzle from page 17

S	A	T	E		P	L	U	M	P		A	U	R	A
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1	9	3	5	7	4	6	8	2
4	7	6	3	2	8	1	9	5
2	8	5	6	9	1	4	7	3



A simple mix of shape, texture and color. (Photo courtesy of Raymond Shaw)



Porch and landscape design for a Craftsman-style remodel in Escondido. (Photo courtesy of Raymond Shaw)

# Like father, not quite like son

Landscape designer Raymond Shaw fell some distance from the Family Tree

## HouseCalls Michael Good

Raymond Shaw came to his profession—he's been a landscape designer for the last decade—the usual way: by complete accident. It's only in retrospect that everything seems inevitable, that graphic artist to junior high school teacher to landscape designer seems a logical progression.

In a video on Shaw's website (produced by his son, Dana) he credits his father with his interest in design, although there's more to the story than that. His father was a consummate craftsman (or as Shaw puts it, "He was anal about everything"). Stained glass, metal fabrication, carpentry—his father was good with his hands, a guy who was always in his workshop tinkering.

"He built furniture. He did a lot of casting. He had a centrifuge and kiln." Shaw's strongest memories of his father are of him in his workshop, and Shaw learning the hard way, by holding something—and trying not to get in the way. "He used to say, 'The reason I had kids was to have an extra clamp.' Once my mother was holding something very important for him, and as he took a backswing, he popped her in the forehead with his mallet. Of course he was more concerned about her losing her grip than he was about what he had done to her."

While Shaw might have learned something about craft, attention to detail and dodging mallets from his father, the one thing he didn't learn was design. "He was a lousy designer. He was an excellent fabricator, but not a good designer." In a sense, Shaw learned about design by critiquing his father's work. "He relied on pattern books for his designs, he copied junky stuff." During the day, his father was in charge of a dental lab. "He fabricated things that went into peoples' mouths, like bridges and crowns."

When Shaw went to college at San Diego State University, he minored in crafts, with a glass arts focus—stained glass, enamel and blown glass. He considered majoring in sculpture, but his practical side won out. "I gravitated to advertising. I thought of myself as an illustrator, but there was so much competition," he said. Art director seemed like a more reasonable goal. He eventually found himself designing signage for corporate clients, such as Disneyland. In a sense, he was doing illustrations—presentation drawings from a downward perspective. After 15 years, however, he was burned out. There's a reason why they call advertising guys "mad men."

Shaw returned to San Diego State, this time for a teaching credential, where he met his future wife, Barbara. Together they graduated, got jobs, and began new careers—Shaw as an art teacher in a performing arts school, Barbara as a high school English teacher. After eight years, education had become almost as crazy as advertising. The back-to-basics movement closed the performing arts schools—as well as the shop, drama, dance and art classes. At the same time (it was the late 90s) the Shaws bought a bungalow in South Park. While others might have just talked about redoing the garden and house, Shaw put his thoughts down on paper, in color.

"I knew how to go about things. Working with scale. Down views and elevations. I could really see things that way. I just started drawing and drawing," he said. Like gardening and banging on stuff with a mallet, it was a sort of therapy for Shaw. "I was so upset with education. In the end, I was saying, 'I can't go forward with this stress.'" He sat down with Barbara. You can imagine her looking at her stressed-out husband, the drawings everywhere and a light going on. "Why not landscape design," she asked.

As before, Shaw returned to school, this time to Cuyamaca College. "I interviewed the head of the department, showed him my portfolio. I asked, 'Do you think this is something I could get into?' He said, 'Hell, yes.'" Not only did he encourage Shaw to enroll, "but he brought me in for

a project—for a sign plan for the garden where they sell plants." Some of the classes were too basic for his skill set—such as a beginning design class—"They're talking about the elements of design, focal points, color." Others, such as a computer-assisted design class, didn't fit in with his personal approach. "I have to do everything hand-drawn," he said. In the end, he designed his own curriculum and after a year left for the real world.

Most landscape designers use the computer, but Shaw stuck with his hand-drawn plans. The approach ended up being an asset. "Most clients like to see things that are hand-drawn." He said they appreciate the craftsmanship, the artistry and the personal touch. Do they want to keep the drawings, frame them even, like art? Shaw laughs. "It's funny," he says. "Yeah, they do. It's almost embarrassing." Almost, but not quite.

Where most designers check out after their drawings have been approved and passed on to the contractor, Shaw sticks around. "I try to be involved with the project from start to finish. I go to the meetings. I involve myself. You can't just rely on the architect's drawings. They'll be out of scale. The measurements can be off. I go out to the job and measure myself." He lays out the paths on site, and usually places the plants himself.

As far as working with the clients, he's not above a little handholding. The teacher in him comes out. "People don't want to be told what they want. They know what they want, but they don't know plant material. They aren't thinking about focal points, aspects, north-south orientation, the shadows from the arbor, where their pizza oven is going to be facing. That's what so great about it. You come in, and it's a brand new deal every time. I try not to repeat myself. I'm always looking at new stuff. But it's selfish in a sense. I see something [a tree or a gate for example] and I think, 'I'd like to put this in my garden. After I was done with my house, I felt a big void. I live vicariously through my clients, through my projects.'"

That's not to say he's "done" with his own landscape.

"Clients come to the house and I walk them through and we talk about plant material. People have a hard time visualizing. But it's a small garden," he said. "I treat it like a lab. I spend eight hours in that garden a week. I keep putting in more. Barbara says to me, where are you going to put that plant? And I tell her, 'I'll find a place for it. I'll find a place.'"

For more information about Raymond Shaw, call 619-696-9179, or visit [rayshawlandscapedesign.com](http://rayshawlandscapedesign.com).

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# The state of Uptown real estate

In December 2011, San Diego Uptown News asked several local realtors about their projections for the New Year. Three months later, many of them agree the market continues to climb. Several have weighed in on who can benefit from this increase, and the state of Uptown Real Estate.

Tugg Snowbarger of Grand Pacific Properties Group:

“Uptown real estate is looking up! Non-short sales that are priced well tend to sell right away. Short sales are lingering on the market, but the best ones are going under contract in reasonable time. We have shifted to a neutral buyer/seller market with a slight favoritism to the seller due to inventory constraints. The high-end market is also seeing renewed activity with more higher dollar transactions. In reviewing the last three years, it is clear we have bounced off the bottom of the market in a positive direction.”

Ron Oster of Ascent Real Estate:

“The single family and multi-family market is moving up price-wise and inventories are coming down; in February, sales of single-family homes [were] up 10 percent over February 2011. Prices were up three percent over last year - that shows the market is improving. The biggest improvement is in the \$300,000 to \$500,000 range as we are seeing a lot of first-time buyers coming in to the market.

“Hint to buyers: get out there and start looking, it may take some time to find the home you are looking for. Also in the spring, the market is much more active so you might be in competition with other buyers. Hint to sellers: talk to a realtor who knows the area, prepare your home for agents who know the area that will be able to sell your home in a reasonable amount of time and net you the most dollars on the sale.”

Mary McTernan of Mary McT Real Estate:

“Homeowners with property in the North Park neighborhood are discovering the benefits of selling property in this popular area. Not only can one find an affordable selection of North Park homes for sale, but many of these homes are being offered at extremely competitive prices. While this area of San Diego may be gaining interest every day, there are still many great equity sales in North Park that the savvy investor or potential homebuyer can use to their advantage.

“Whenever there is an area with high demand and available properties at an affordable price, it will pique the interest of those who buy and sell real estate, or even those who want to find great rental property to add to their portfolio. In fact, many investment buyers choose to purchase property like this as one of their first rental properties. It is always helpful to start off with an affordable project that has high demand and an excellent chance of profitability. Of course, proper re-

search of the market conditions is certainly in order, but North Park offers many investors an excellent opportunity for some wonderful real estate.

“While many people have chosen to downsize and move to smaller and more affordable homes, this trend has still left many people looking for the advantages of owning a home in the beautiful North Park neighborhood.

“One reason why homes are in such high demand these days is simply a natural result of the great low interest rates currently available for most people. When interest rates are down and properties become available in a desired neighborhood, the effect is often very positive for all parties involved.”

Afton Miller of Afton Group, Inc.:

“The real estate market has improved substantially. The homes that are selling today would have sold for less in August or September of 2011. The houses that are selling for the highest prices, and in many cases are getting multiple bids, are remodeled

houses that are congruent and don't have any major deficiencies such as a busy street, odd floor plan, over-developed for the location... If the quality of the remodel is good, and the location and the floor plan are good, the sales prices have definitely improved. This is not only great for the sellers, but it is also great for buyers because the interest rates are so low that they can buy so much more house now than they could have several years ago.”

Anton Fox of Anton Fox Homes:

“San Diego Uptown communities continue to attract homebuyers to the area due to the location, lifestyle and beautiful historic homes... The Uptown business districts provide amenities that buyers seek out when deciding on a home purchase. Availability of great local restaurants, shops and nightlife within walking distance from many homes is a big attraction. Scenic and walk-able areas can be found throughout all of the Uptown neighborhoods.

see RealEstate, page 23

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FROM PAGE 21

## REALESTATE

“Real estate sales remain steady and the appeal of owning a classic Craftsman, Prairie or Spanish-Style home will endure. Homeowners and investors are still improving upon Uptown neighborhoods by taking properties in need of restoration or renovation and preserving them for future generations. Many well cared for “turn-key” properties are available for homebuyers searching for move-in ready homes. The wide variety of attractive home styles available will continue to be a positive draw to the area as well as keeping home values strong.”

Melissa Hernholm of  
Hernholm Group:

“There are presently fifty-five homes for sale in 92103, thirteen of which 24 percent of market share made their MLS debut [the week of March 19]. Inventory levels have increased along with both list and sale prices. This year there have already been twenty-four homes sales in 92103, averaging \$925,000 (\$450 per square foot) which is a definite in-

crease from the median price of \$840,000 (\$415 per square foot) just six months ago. As for the higher end sales, thirteen homes have sold in 92103 for over [one million dollars] in the last six months averaging \$446 per square foot.

“Ultimately the market will decide. As evidenced by the sale of our listing at 4165 Miller St. for \$1,185,000, which received multiple offers and will close within one percent of its list price, sellers who remain in line with the neighborhood comps will continue to have success given buyers remain wary of paying a premium in a recovering market.”

Mike Tristani of  
Tristani Real Estate Group:

“In Kensington, the number of homes available is increasing slightly but we are also seeing properties go into escrow fairly quickly depending, of course, on location and condition. The lower and middle market (up to \$750,000) continues to do well while the upper end, with a few exceptions, is a bit slower. Overall the appearance is of some ‘revival’ in the marketplace with the most noticeable difference in the amount of

showings that are occurring as well as traffic at open houses. As long as interest rates remain constant we could be in for a pretty good 2012!”

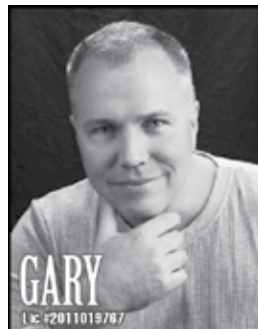
Tony Azar of  
The Metropolitan Group:

“It continues to be a very active buyer’s market in Hillcrest [and] Uptown neighborhood with mortgage interest rates being historically low and housing prices down from four to five years ago.

“Here are some MLS activity numbers from March 23 for Hillcrest, 92103: Condos/Townhomes- 38 active, price ranging from \$145,000 to \$1,450,000, and 26 pending with 31 days average on the market. Detached/houses- six active, price ranging from \$379,000 to \$1,377,000, and six pending with 40 days average on the market.

“It is common to have multiple offers on listings particularly when they are priced properly, like a recent listing in the Uptown District complex.

“Also, listings do not last long when priced right, like a recent listings at the Atlas complex where I had a listing on the market only three days before getting it into escrow.” ♦



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- Interior fire sprinklers with local bell
- Carbon monoxide detectors
- Dual-power source smoke detectors in all bedrooms

**Master Suites:**

- Spacious walk-in closets
- Separate soaking tub and shower



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