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Page 11

►► PROFILE P. 3



Giving back to the community

►► COMMUNITY P. 4



Hiring a preservation architect

►► THEATER P. 7



Repertory duo is stellar

►► DINING P. 8



Barbecue icon is back

Index

Opinion .....	6
Classifieds .....	12
Puzzles .....	12
Business & Services .....	13
Calendar .....	14

Contact us

Editorial/Letters  
619-961-1952  
ken@sdcnn.com

Advertising  
619-961-1958  
mike@sdcnn.com

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San Diego Community News Network

# San Diego Uptown News



Four women are locked into a puzzle room in Hillcrest, and challenged to escape within 60 minutes. Most people fail. (Courtesy of Escapism)

## Puzzle room is one of Hillcrest's best-kept secrets

By Margie M. Palmer

An accountant, a college student and two journalists walk into an art gallery. Within moments, the door locks behind them. The group has been given a mission — find and locate an item that has been intricately

hidden within its walls. They have 60 minutes to complete the mission and escape.

This isn't the plot to a suspense film; it's just another day at Escapism, a puzzle room in Hillcrest.

Owner Tangerine Skantz said she fell in love with puzzle

rooms after playing several in Los Angeles.

"My friend had played a few games and they convinced me to try it. He said, 'This is so you,' so I said sure. I had no idea how right he was," she

see Escape, pg 15

## Inspired by nature and animals

By Lucia Viti

Monica Hui Hekman is an artist who successfully "dabbles" in a myriad of mediums. The painter, sculptor, seamstress, computer graphic artist, silver/metal-smith and poet manipulates everything art for the "challenge of learning what I'm good at."

Touting a coffee-table book titled "Animals on Land: Portraits & Poetry," Hui Hekman is on a mission to emulate joy through her artistic endeavors.

"I find great joy in creating with my hands and connecting people through my art," the 33-year-old City Heights resident said. "I love working with different mediums and I've dabbled in everything. Whether it's paper, paint, fabric, clay, wood, metal or computer graphics, I'm constantly challenging myself to think out of the box to expand my skill set. I'm always discovering what I'm good at."

Hui Hekman considers herself a junior scientist, believing

see Artist, pg 13



Monica Hui Hekman wears one of her earrings, part of a collection of animal-inspired jewelry, artwork and fabric collages. (Courtesy of Monica Hui Hekman)

## Planners advance 2 projects

Ken Williams | Editor

A family compound that will be built on challenging, uneven terrain in Mission Hills has garnered the blessing of the Uptown Planners.

The citizen-elected volunteer board also voted to approve the conversion into condominiums of a designated historic residence in the Bankers Hill/Park West neighborhood.

The two votes took place at the Feb. 7 meeting, coming right after the Uptown Planners discussed the seven-story, 111-unit Hillcrest 111 project planned for 1 acre on the southwest corner of Seventh and Robinson avenues. To read our coverage on that project, visit [bit.ly/2kPyFMg](http://bit.ly/2kPyFMg).

### 549 Torrance St.

Soheil Nakhshab, CEO of Nakhshab Development Design in East Village, is proposing to build what he called a "family compound" at 549 Torrance St. in Mission Hills.

Nakhshab Development Design is known for building projects that are environmentally friendly and fit naturally into a neighborhood.

As a member of the Uptown Planners, Nakhshab recused himself so he could make his presentation to the board. He said he would be consolidating 10 lots and a vacated alley into three larger lots in order to construct three new homes designated for his parents, his brother's family, and his own family. Nakhshab's wife attended the meeting with their two small children, and she spoke about how the Nakhshab clan is thrilled to be able to patch together enough land so that three generations of their family will be able live together.

The vacant land lies behind a number of houses along Dove Court and Curlew Street, and several property owners who would be affected by construction attended the meeting to express their concerns and thoughts.

see Planners, pg 7

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# Beauty and altruism

Ken Williams | Editor

Beauty by Dolly celebrated its first decade in Hillcrest in 2015, and over the course of that time, the family-owned business founded by two Iranian-American sisters has gratefully given back to the local community.

For example, Beauty by Dolly on Feb. 15 teamed up with Big Sister League of San Diego and Blo Blow Dry Bar Gaslamp to participate in a Random Acts of Kindness Week event.

Dolly Bakshai and Kashmira Torki, the founders, work with their daughters and nieces and a staff mostly comprised of immigrants to offer many beauty services at their salons in Hillcrest and Mira Mesa.

Here are five questions with Natashah Torki, chief operating officer and managing director:

## 1. What is the story behind Beauty by Dolly?

“Beauty by Dolly was founded in 2005 by sisters Dolly and Kashmira. We are estheticians trained extensively in skincare and hair removal in the United States, India and Iran for over 30 years. Our areas of expertise are threading and sugar waxing.

“The naked truth about Beauty by Dolly is all about

natural beautification. Our highly skilled professionals bring out the natural beauty in everyone using time-honored techniques, sugaring and threading, and completely organic products made by Dolly.

“Beauty by Dolly is San Diego’s first studio to market the threading and sugar wax concept and provides the most exclusive experience in natural hair removal treatments. Our office is located at 3650 Fifth Ave. No. 101 in Hillcrest.”

## 2. Why get involved in Random Acts of Kindness Week?

“Beauty by Dolly partnered with Big Sister League of San Diego — a nonprofit dedicated to providing transitional housing and support services for women affected by

mental illness, homelessness and abuse — to provide free beauty makeovers during Random Acts of Kindness Week on Feb. 15.

“Blo Blow Dry Bar Gaslamp, a blow dry and beauty bar, provided hair and makeup services to give the makeover recipients the latest looks and hairstyles. The makeover recipients are women in the Big Sister League of San Diego’s transitional housing programs

that are currently receiving housing assistance and support for mental illness, homelessness and abuse.

“In celebration of Random Acts of Kindness Week, we were humbled to team up with Blo Gaslamp to pay it forward and provide a day of pampering for women who have endured tremendous hardship. We hope our efforts will help them feel beautiful and regain their self-confidence.”

## 3. As a daughter of refugees, and with your company’s history of helping immigrants with training and employment, how does the current political climate impact your business?

“As a daughter of a refugee, the current political climate has brought our team closer than ever. The current state of affairs has affected everyone in different ways, but we feel it’s important to remain united. At Beauty by Dolly, we’ve been welcoming refugees with enthusiasm for over 10 years, and pride ourselves in making our workplace a second home.”

## 4. What are the latest trends in beauty, and how does your business and employees keep up with the times?

“The latest trend in brows is microblading, a newly emerging, free-hand semi-permanent makeup application, also popularly known as 3D brows or eyebrow embroidery that creates a hair-like brow shape.



Natashah Torki

see Profile, pg 5

# How to Drive Up the Price of your San Diego Home Before You Sell

San Diego - Because your home may well be your largest asset, selling it is probably one of the most important decisions you will make in your life. And once you have made that decision, you’ll want to sell your home for the highest price in the shortest time possible without compromising your sanity. Before you place your home on the market, here’s a way to help you to be as prepared as possible.

To assist home sellers, a new industry report has just been released called “27 Valuable Tips That You Should Know to Get Your Home Sold Fast and for Top Dollar.” It tackles the important issues you need to know to make your home competitive in today’s tough, aggressive marketplace.

Through these 27 tips you will discover how to protect and capitalize on your most important investment, reduce stress, be in control of your situation, and make the best profit possible.

In this report you’ll discover how to avoid financial disappointment or worse, a financial disaster when selling your home. Using a common-sense approach, you will get the straight facts about what can make or break the sale of your home.

You owe it to yourself to learn how these important tips will give you the competitive edge to get your home sold fast and for the most amount of money.

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## Preservation — by design

Think you need to destroy your old house to save it? Put down that sledgehammer. Maybe you need a preservation architect.

### HouseCalls Michael Good

Open your eyes. Look around. Everything you see — the newspaper in your hand, the chair you're sitting in, the room you occupy — has been designed.

Even the “natural” world outside — landscape, walkways, streets, buildings, the plants — have been designed by someone — or a committee, all educated, experienced, trained, mentored, licensed and insured. Years of study and a lifetime of experience go into making the most mundane of objects. When designers are successful, you don't even notice they've been there. Good design seems inevitable, invisible. No wonder we don't give it much thought.

Still it seems surprising that so many old house owners, when it comes to redesigning the costliest art object they own — their home — decide to wing it. They get their inspiration from Pinterest, from online real estate ads for houses in the neighborhood they couldn't afford, and they leave the execution to a guy with a high school diploma and a license to negotiate contracts with subcontractors — but no formal training in architecture or design.

For new buyers of old houses, the ink is hardly dry on the escrow papers before a dumpster is parked in the driveway, filled with lathe, plaster and \$100,000 worth of old-growth Douglas fir molding.

Blame it on the internet, where all opinions are legitimate, no matter how unqualified the source. Blame it on reality TV, and the home shows dedicated to the premise that the road to happiness stops off at the dump, where you can unburden yourself of the previous owners' ill-conceived design ideas.

OK, I'm probably being too hard on today's old house owner — if he or she wants to get some professional advice about how to sensitively remodel his or her historic house, it's hard to figure out who to turn to for advice. The internet is full

of charlatans and self-promoters selling snake oil (which can be used to revive your woodwork — see the YouTube video). The average contractor doesn't know how to restore a 100-year-old house. He only knows how to gut it and build a 21st-century house inside it.

And the average architect might have good ideas about the use of space, and proportion, and how to insulate your house for a Chicago winter, but he knows nothing about Spanish Revival plaster textures or arts and crafts millwork.

That's where the restoration architect comes in.

“The restoration who?” you might ask. “The restoration architect has a broad perspective and a background in handling both the scope of work and the unexpected situations you're going to encounter when work-

space. Any homeowner has some affiliation with a dwelling and the emotions attached to it. But an architect specializing in restoration understands the emotions of clients as well as certain core principals in our field, and certain situations to avoid.

“We have 35 years of studying architecture. We understand the materials and spatial concepts from decades ago. And we try to understand the original intent [of the original designer].

“Not that we're perfect. The client and other professionals have certain information that they add. We're the commander of the ship, making sure it stays true to its course.”

Eisenhart and his partner Eva Thorn have decades of experience and years of training (he in architecture and preservation from the University of Michigan; she in architecture from the University of Kaiserslautern, in Germany). This has given them some unique insights into the lives of their predecessors, the master builders whose work they endeavor to preserve.



The kitchen of the Harmon residence in Kensington, profiled in these pages as “The Perfect House” (Photo by David Harrison)

ing on an old house,” said John Eisenhart, principal of Union Architecture, a local firm that specializes in restoring early 20th-century vernacular architecture.

For the renovator, there are two separate issues to consider. “One issue is with the city, with permitting, building codes and the general construction practices one needs to get through. The more important issue comes down to the basic day-in and day-out. We deal with space and spatial issues and the emotions attached to

“In the teens and twenties, most of the houses weren't even built by architects,” Eisenhart said. “They were the product of builders who used pattern books. And the plans in the books might not have even have been designed by an architect. Actually, a home designed by an architect was pretty rare. Maybe 5 percent.”

Eisenhart makes a distinction between the sort of journeyman builder who stuck to the plans he purchased from pattern books and the master builders such as Nathan

Rigdon, Martin Melhorn, Cliff May and Richard Requa. Requa started out as a site foreman for Irving Gill but eventually became a licensed architect as well.

The majority of the houses built at the beginning of the 20th century were based on vernacular designs. (Vernacular architecture is “indigenous to a specific time and place,” Eisenhart explained.) The journeyman builder stuck with the designs he found in books like “Wilson's California Bungalow.”

“The master builder had a greater interest in architectural styles,” Eisenhart said. “Not just in what was built around them. They referred to the journals that were available at that time. They worked within the vernacular.

“Richard Requa worked within the vernacular. But he also played within the vernacular theme, like a jazz musician. Not like a classical musician, who can't improvise. In general the classical musician is playing the music the way it's written. Some of the builders, like Rigdon or Melhorn, had some improvisation going on. How deep was that vibe? It's hard to say. Cliff May . . . he was always evolving. (May was a big-band leader before he took up architecture and introduced the California ranch house.)

“When you look at Irving Gill,” Thorn said, “you can see the change; he was evolving. Over time his trim work, instead of having the trim pronounced from the wall, he recessed it from the wall.”

Then you have the classic gentleman architect, like William Templeton Johnson, who married into money and designed for the class of people to whom he belonged.

“That guy could do various styles. He could do classical. He got into art moderne. He got into deco. He could flow with any style,” she said. “Usually builders had a couple styles they could go with. Whereas an architect has that, but he also has a general background and awareness of the history of architecture and he draws from that. Not just local building, he's looking at it from the standpoint of his educational background. It can be a very unique house, even though it shares something with the vernacular.”

True to their training, Eisenhart and Thorn's most

recent projects have run the gamut from Mid-Century Modern to early 20th century vernacular; Spanish Colonial to Cliff May-inspired Rancho. They've done residential and commercial, designed dream homes in La Jolla and monitored historic structures in the path of a high-rise development Downtown. That particular project, a

1906 Church for a Mexican congregation Downtown, stood in the way of progress — from the developer's perspective. As Eva put it, with their influence, the project went from: “Let's get rid of this old shack,” to, “How is this interesting? How can we use it?” It's now on its way to becoming a jewel, rather than an eyesore.

Architects are famous for their egos. You need to believe in yourself to build something that could last for a hundred years. But restoration architects have to possess humility as well; after all, they're trying not to screw up something that's already lasted a century.

“With every job you get to the point where, you know everything and then, suddenly, you don't know anything,” Eisenhart said. “You had a certain prejudice about things. And then you encounter new stuff and discover it's different. You never want to think you know everything. That's one of the things that's interesting. When you get with clients, a bit of what they know gets added to what you know and the concept of the house grows.”

Perhaps because she grew up in Europe, where houses evolve over the centuries, Eva thinks even modern tract houses can be improved — if homeowner associations would let them. Instead, many a 1980s tract home is frozen in time by CC&Rs. “That's why I feel HOAs have too much control over tract houses. They don't let people expand on their houses based on their own needs.”

Not that the average old house owner can't use a little guidance — perhaps even from a restoration architect.

“People always want something unique and they don't understand they already have something unique,” Eisenhart said. “I think we can help them see that. We can help them learn to love it and appreciate things they didn't see before.”

—Contact Michael Good at [housecallsdun@gmail.com](mailto:housecallsdun@gmail.com). To learn more about Union Architecture, go to [unionarch.com](http://unionarch.com).

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FROM PAGE 3

PROFILE

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(l to r) Dolly Bakshai, Beauty by Dolly founder and CEO, and Merri Knight, a resident of Big Sister League of San Diego’s housing program, after Knight received a makeover (Photo by Jamie Reyes of Luxuria Public Relations)

“We keep up with the times with constant training and education. We are firm believers in ‘you can never learn enough.’ Things are changing so quickly these days with social media, and it is our duty to keep our eyes and ears open for the safest, lasting trends to provide to our clientele! We also offer ThreadingU(niversity), an elite threading academy for all eyebrow enthusiasts, exclusively focused on providing professional education and teaching you the technique of threading. With just one weekend seminar, you will acquire the skills you need to perfect the art of threading by learning from the creme de la creme of our browtists. For more information, visit [threadingu.com/](http://threadingu.com/).”

**5. You located your business in Hillcrest, so why do you love this neighborhood so much?**

“At the Beauty by Dolly and Big Sister League of San Diego event, we were taking group photos with all the ladies, and a man was walking by and saw us. He stepped in and told the woman taking the photo, ‘Get in there! Let me take the picture for you all!’ He took the photo and said, ‘This is what Hillcrest is all about; taking care of each other, loving your neighbors and spreading happiness wherever you go!’ We couldn’t agree MORE, and the sense of community in Hillcrest is unbeatable. We are so grateful to be part of this community!”

—Ken Williams is editor of Uptown News and can be reached at [ken@sdcdn.com](mailto:ken@sdcdn.com) or at 619-961-1952. Follow him on Twitter at @KenSanDiego, Instagram at @KenSD or Facebook at KenWilliamsSanDiego.❖

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# San Diego Uptown News

123 Camino de la Reina, Suite 202 East  
San Diego, CA 92108  
(619) 519-7775  
Twitter: @SD\_UptownNews



## EDITOR

Ken Williams  
(619) 961-1952  
ken@sdcnn.com

## CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Jeff Clemetson, x119  
Morgan M. Hurley, x110

## ASSISTANT EDITOR

John Gregory

## WEB & SOCIAL MEDIA

Sara Butler, x118  
web@sdcnn.com

## COPY EDITOR

Dustin Lothspeich

## CONTRIBUTORS

Charlene Baldrige  
Susan A. Davis  
Michael Good  
John Gregory  
Dr. Ink  
Margie M. Palmer  
Frank Sabatini Jr.  
Lucia Viti

## SALES & MARKETING

### DIRECTOR

Mike Rosensteel  
(619) 961-1958  
mike@sdcnn.com

## ADVERTISING

### CONSULTANTS

Andrew Bagley, x106  
Annie Burchard, x105  
Heather Fine, x107  
Sloan Gomez, x104  
John Watson, x113

## ACCOUNTING

Priscilla Umel-Martinez  
(619) 961-1962  
accounting@sdcnn.com

## WEB DESIGNER

Kim Espinoza  
kim@kespinoza.com

## SENIOR INTERN

David Sengmany

## INTERNS

Jennifer Gottschalk  
Alex Ehrie

## PUBLISHER

David Mannis  
(619) 961-1951  
david@sdcnn.com

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**OPINIONS/LETTERS:** San Diego Uptown News encourages letters to the editor and guest editorials. Please email submissions to ken@sdcnn.com and include your 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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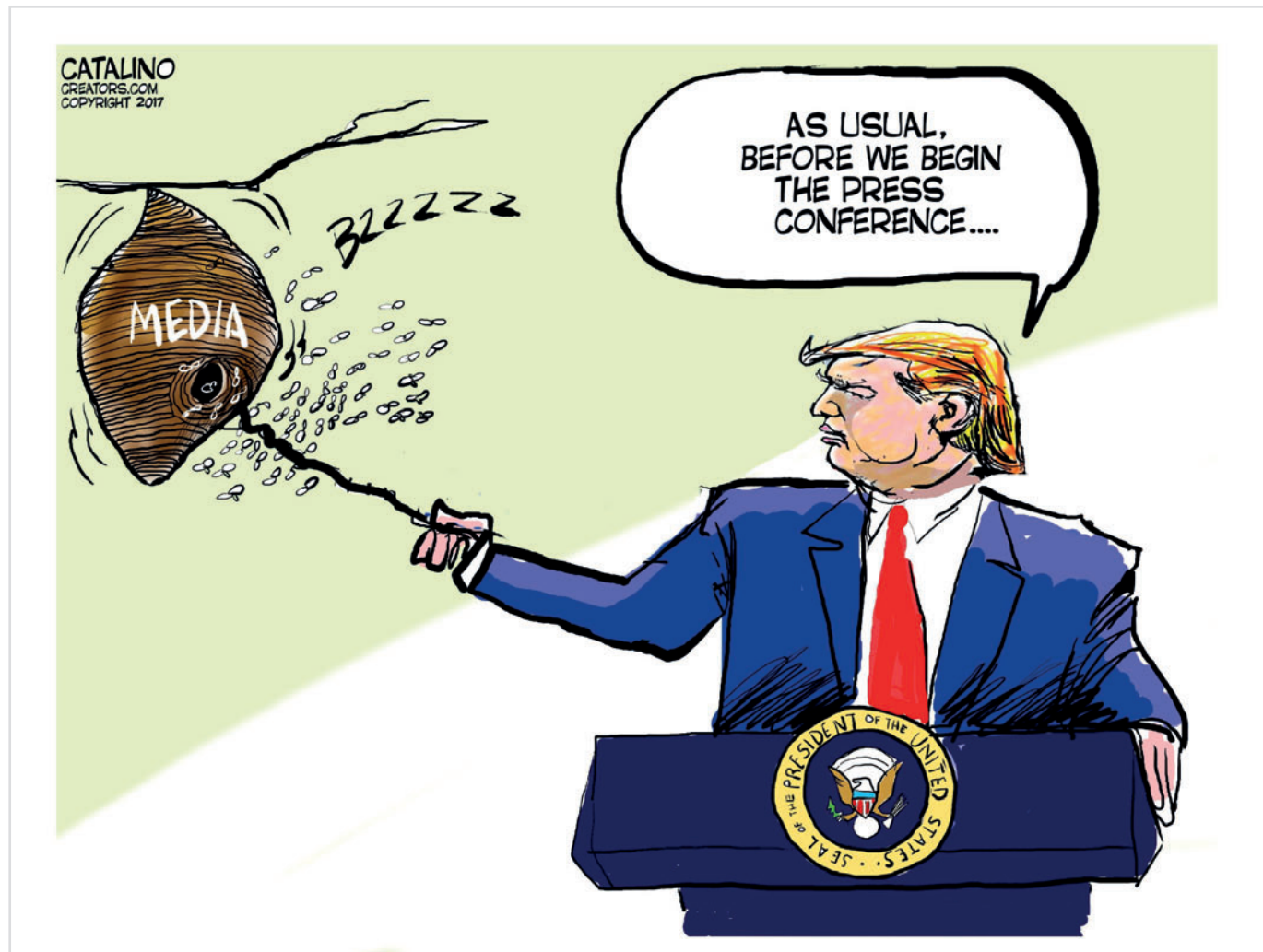
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## GUEST EDITORIAL

# Higher education is the issue of our time

By Rep. Susan A. Davis

A nation's potential is aligned closely with the strength of its education system. America's success is a result of the quality and abundant opportunities in the area of higher education.

Education has always been a passion of mine. I got my start in public service because of education. In 1983, I ran for a seat on the San Diego Board of Education. Serving for nine years, including as vice president and president, I saw firsthand the importance of the federal role in shaping how our children are educated.

When I came to Congress, I prioritized the House Committee on Education and the Workforce as one of the committee assignments I wanted to land.

When I was presented with the opportunity to become the ranking member of the Higher Education Subcommittee this year, I jumped at the chance. This means San Diego will have a key seat at the table when it comes to making higher education policy, such as the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act.

The Higher Education Act was last reauthorized in 2008 and is in desperate need of another update. I hope to hear what you think needs to be done to make the law as effective as possible.

Here are some of my priorities:

College is out of reach for too many students, with access and affordability being two major factors. This is true for all students, but even more so for students of modest means and students of color.

According to U.S. News, the average tuition at private universities has jumped 179 percent since 1995. The average in-state tuition at public universities has jumped 226 percent in that same time.

As tuitions continue to rise, it is clear we are no longer making the investment in our people. Between 2008 and 2012, 44 of 50 states decreased their funding support for public colleges. That needs to change.



Rep. Susan A. Davis (Official photo)

Making a degree more affordable will be a priority for me in any reauthorization of the Higher Education Act. Protecting Pell grants is crucial for providing access for low income students. The Pell grant program needs to be protected and expanded.

While many for-profit schools provide a quality education, there are bad actors. We need to provide oversight to protect students against for-profit schools that are more concerned with earning a profit than with teaching a student.

Active duty personnel and veterans have been particularly vulnerable to rogue for-profits. Over a quarter of all Department of Education student aid funds, a third of all post-9/11 GI Bill benefits, and half of Department of Defense Tuition Assistance funds go to for-profit colleges.

Congress has a responsibility to guarantee these taxpayer funds are a worthwhile investment for our students.

We need to look at how we define higher education to include two-year degrees and teacher credential

programs. We also need to align higher education with workforce needs.

As we help students realize their dreams and full potential, they must also feel safe on campus. Many California campuses have responded to my bill to establish resources for survivors of campus sexual assault. We need to expand that nationally to create a positive campus environment.

While I will be pushing these priorities, protecting the progress we have made from this new administration is likely to be a full-time job.

We are already seeing some of the progress being scaled back. The House of Representatives recently voted to undo vital protections that ensure higher education teacher preparation programs are at the top of their game.

It sounds like this could be just the beginning. President Donald Trump plans to appoint Liberty University president and creationist Jerry Falwell Jr. to head his higher education task force. His comments about rolling back Title IX protections, especially as it pertains to sexual assault, are particularly disturbing.

It is important to remember that behind these safeguards there are students whose interests we must protect.

We need the best educated workforce to compete in today's global economy. The future of America's success depends on our commitment to a quality education and investing in our nation's best resource — its people.

—Rep. Susan A. Davis represents Congressional District 53, which includes including the San Diego communities of Old Town, Kensington, Mission Hills, University Heights, Hillcrest Bankers Hill, North Park, South Park, Talmadge and Normal Heights, as well as La Mesa, Lemon Grove, Spring Valley and parts of El Cajon and Chula Vista.\*



# Diversiónary presents Kron in repertory

## Theater Review

Charlene Baldrige



### '2.5 Minute Ride' (seen Feb. 18)

They call it the San Diego revival of Lisa Kron's "2.5 Minute Ride." Early in the script's development, La Jolla Playhouse presented the monologue, featuring the playwright in the role of memoirist.

Diversiónary Theatre in University Heights — which recently received the San Diego Critics Circle Don Braunagel Award for Outstanding Small Theater — currently presents Kron's one-woman "2.5 Minute Ride" and her six-actor "Well," also autobiographically based, in rotating repertory through March 19.

Though this writer experienced the original production of "2.5 Minute Ride" in 1996, detailed recollection of the event fails, and there is no review or write-up to be found. So the experience of the 75-minute work, with Shana Wride profoundly portraying Lisa under Rosina Reynolds' precise direction, was as if a new experience, and a splendid one at that.



Samantha Ginn as Lisa and Annie Hinton as Ann in "Well"

Kron weaves together three interlocking journeys, seemingly willy-nilly streams of consciousness, but actually structured for maximum effect, dramatic and comedic, a combination that prevents our being overcome by the tragic by providing leavening agents that keep us from being overwhelmed. The principal journey is Kron's trip with her father to Germany and Poland that culminates at Auschwitz, where his parents died. He, like many others who never saw their parents again, was removed in 1937 by participation in the kinder transport.

The other stories detail the annual family excursion from Lansing, Michigan, to the Cedar Point amusement park in Sandusky, Ohio, which has a huge rollercoaster collection (hence the play's title). This type excursion, accomplished by using three full-size automobiles, was common to families

of yore. The third journey concerns Lisa's attendance, with her longtime lesbian partner, of her brother's orthodox Jewish wedding ceremony in Brooklyn. They went expecting to scoff and were instead enchanted.

### 'Well' (seen Feb. 19)

Kron's "Well," which premiered on Broadway in 2006, is the playwright's effort to deal with her mother, of whom she says, "We were entwined."

Lisa (played by the luminous, insightful Samantha Ginn in this play directed by Kym Pappas), places said Mom, Ann Kron (the brilliant Annie Hinton), in a recliner, far stage right and proceeds to tell mom's story. Naively, she expects mom to remain tacit. Wrong. Ann, who has been physically ailing most of her life, refuses to accept her daughter's account of truth, makes corrections, and battles ensue, fleshed out by others who play an assortment of characters from the past (Adam Cuppy, Cashae Monya, Durwood Murray and Tiffany Tang).

The truth of the matter is that Lisa wants Mom to be well, as well as she, Lisa, is; all the while realizing that it cannot be. It's the eternal mother/daughter paradigm, the eternal family paradigm: few who were there at the same time in the same place remember an identical reality. There will always



Shana Wride as Lisa in "2.5 Minute Ride" (Photos by Daren Scott)

be amendments. Furthermore, one may possess all the personal power and strength in the world, but fail to heal oneself.

Kron's journey in "Well" is at least as perilous as that she took in "2.5 Minute Ride," in which she attempts to limn her beloved father. The two works, written a decade apart, make a courageous duet, bravely produced in alternating repertory (both may be seen on Saturday or Sunday) by Diversiónary Theatre. See one or both and you will be rewarded.

One of our nation's great lesbian writers and a founder of the New York theater collective Five Lesbian Brothers, Kron went on to great success with the autobiographical plays such as "101 Humiliating Stories" and with the musical, "Fun Home," which received multiple 2016 Tony Awards, including best original score, shared with Jeanine Tesori. Kron is recipient of the 2017 Kleban Prize of \$100,000 for most promising musical theater librettist.

—Charlene Baldrige has been writing about the arts since 1979. Follow her blog at [charlenecriticism.blogspot.com](http://charlenecriticism.blogspot.com) or reach her at [charb81@gmail.com](mailto:charb81@gmail.com).

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By Lisa Kron

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**SAN DIEGO REP**

## FROM PAGE 1 PLANNERS

Nakhshab said the property was used in the past as a dumpsite and as an abalone factory. He said one of his biggest challenges would be to remove the artificial fill on the land and replace it with soil, which will need to be compacted.

The terrain in the area is uneven, and the owner of an apartment building at 613 Torrance St. said he opposed the proposed project. The owner also objected to Nakhshab's plan to share and enlarge the apartment building's driveway off Torrance Street so the developer can construct a 20-foot-wide driveway that would loop around to the family compound. The apartment building's owner said his tenants had to drive up a knoll exiting the parking garage, and that adding traffic to and from the private driveway would create a safety hazard.

Other neighbors feared that motorists traveling on Torrance Street — which ends just before the apartment building but connects to Dove Court — would mistakenly drive onto the private driveway before realizing that it wasn't a city street. The private driveway will dead-end at the third house, which will be Nakhshab's home. The neighbors said motorists would have difficulty turning around, but Nakhshab said signage could curb the potential problem.

Nakhshab said he had met with San Diego Canyonlands about bringing natural habitat

back to the neighborhood and plans to add trees, shrubs and other plants to accomplish that goal.

"We build sustainable properties," he said.

While some neighbors were concerned about traffic and construction issues, other neighbors gave the "thumbs-up" to the project and thanked Nakhshab for working with them to address their concerns.

The Uptown Planners voted 12-0-2 with chair Leo Wilson and Nakhshab abstaining. The chair typically abstains, except to break ties.

The Process Three application — the midpoint level of scrutiny of the five types of reviews — goes to a staff-level review by the Planning Department and then to a hearing officer hearing. Any appeal of a decision would be heard by the Planning Commission, and the owner of the apartment complex vowed to appeal if the decision is to approve the project.

### 2124-2138 Front St.

The Uptown Planners voted 11-1-1 to approve the request to convert the Front Street property to condominiums. The developer has gutted a designated historic residence, which he will live in, and will add a three-story condo building over a parking garage.

The condo building will have eight units totaling 10,002 square feet. The entire site is 0.181 acres.

### Other business

The Uptown Planners heard informational items, including:

- India Street traffic lane reduction in Middletown. Gary Pence, representing the city's traffic engineers, described plans to reduce India Street between

see Planners, pg 15

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# 'Q' comeback

## Restaurant Review

Frank Sabatini Jr.



Everything is still pristinely intact: the wagon-wheel chandeliers, knotty wood paneling and the red-and-yellow checkered flooring. So is the menu of smoked meats and basic side dishes worthy of a hootenanny in Texas Hill Country.

Welcome to The BBQ Pit, a historical North Park eatery that operated from 1952 to 2002 until its newest owner, Tony Daniel, resurrected it in December from a 16-year nap.

Daniel was a longtime employee at the company's National City location before purchasing the shuttered restaurant from Doug Jenson, whose late Texas-born uncle, Joe J. Browning, and grandfather, Edward C. Jenson, launched the business Downtown in 1947.

Throughout the course of its history, The BBQ Pit branched into 30 addresses within San Diego County. Today only two others remain — in National City and El Cajon, both of which are owned by Browning family members.

An enormous brick pit with heavy steel lids resides in the North Park kitchen, which was used in the dark years for occasional back-door catering orders. A few feet away is an old storage closet filled with oak, the only wood Daniel uses

for smoking hams, beef roasts, chickens, hot links, and marvelously messy pork and beef spare ribs. All of the meats are available in plate form with a choice of two side dishes.

The offerings are pretty much the same as decades ago, including the company's sole barbecue sauce made from ketchup, vinegar, sugar and various spices. We wondered if cinnamon or star anise was one of them.

Daniel's additions to the menu are pulled pork (juicy but a little chewy), mac n' cheese (commendably smooth and tangy) and green beans (flavorful because they're braised with ham bones).

My companion's favorite protein during an early lunch was the pork spare ribs, which flaunted thin, brittle bark on top, hammy layers of flesh underneath, and tasty patches of fat along the bones. If you're looking for neat, dainty baby backs, you've come to the wrong place. Ditto if you prefer flame-broiled meats. Neither exists here.

I was especially fond of the beef, which was cut from a smoked roast into lean, medium-thick slices and stacked modestly on a plain hamburger bun without any jus, condiments or garnishes. Horseradish is available upon request, and I assumed at first it would be needed. But the meat contained enough moisture and flavor that I didn't bother.

Pork spare ribs with beans and coleslaw



Pulled pork sandwich with green beans and fries



Roast beef sandwich with salad and mac-n-cheese

Other sides we tried included coleslaw tossed in The BBQ Pit's original dressing of white and apple cider vinegars, mayo, sugar, salt and pepper. It's your basic, unadulterated 1950-era recipe best eaten in concert with french fries, which are of the golden, crispy type here.

The baked beans were thick-skinned and mildly smoky, and a simple green salad with shredded carrots and red cabbage perked up from a few dribbles of zesty Italian dressing of unknown origin.

As the only place for Texas-style barbecue in North Park's central commercial district, the eatery offers good bang for the buck and non-cramped seating. Portions are fairly generous, and the interior is bright, clean and roomy. Also, free parking is available in the back despite the lack of signs indicating so.

But Daniel assures they'll soon go up and that customers can legally park there.

The BBQ Pit will celebrate its grand reopening March 10 with free smoked-meat sliders from noon to 3 p.m., plus raffles for BBQ Pit gift certificates and other prizes taking place throughout the day.

—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. Reach him at fsabatini@san.rr.com.✪



Owner Tony Daniel tends to the smoke pit (Photos by Frank Sabatini Jr.)

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# Sake and sushi on the cheap

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Family members visiting from out of town tipped me off to Maki Maki Sushi (formerly Kimiya Sushi), which opened under new ownership about three months ago with some of the best happy hour steals I've seen in a while.

Situated next to Rubio's in a cookie-cutter strip plaza at Rosecrans Street and Midway Drive in Loma Portal, the interior offers a touch of style with black granite tabletops, leatherette booths, an aquarium, and a modest-size sushi bar toward the back.

With a cheerful staff in place, the sushi rolls, tempura dishes and other vittles are priced at \$3 in the midst of the dinner rush on weekdays. In addition, sake starts at \$4 per serving.

Visiting as a foursome, my share of the bill for a full-size spicy crab roll, a bowl of garlic edamame, and a quaint carafe of boozy, hot sake amounted to an easy ten spot. Granted, the "crab" was "krab" and it should be legally listed as such. But the roll was fresh and moist,

constructed adroitly by a shy Asian woman I was told is Maki's sushi master.

The un-shelled edamame was hot and steamy and speckled generously with sautéed garlic. It carried us through the first half of our stay as we noshed also on a few tempura dishes involving shrimp, mixed veggies, and avocado wedges, which become gloriously creamier when entombed in fried, light batter.

The portions of everything we ordered from the happy-hour menu, including a plate of pan-fried gyoza, exceeded our expectations for the low prices, which will remain in place beyond Maki's ongoing grand opening, according to an employee.

A pretty pink bottle of chilled semi-sweet Ginjo Hana (\$8) was the sake choice for one of our tablemates, who loosened his wallet and sprung for the King Dragon roll (\$9.25) on the regular menu.

Made with smoked salmon and crowned with eel, panko flakes and green onions, it was a velvety departure from the bargain crab roll I ordered, thanks to the inclusion of cream cheese and avocado tucked inside. A little too mushy, however, for my liking.

Happy hour also rings in discounts on "large" Sapporo, Asahi and Kirin beers,

which sell for \$4 each. Indeed, whether you come for sake or suds, and pair either with food, the dent to your budget compared to other sushi joints goes practically unnoticed.❖

## RATINGS

- Drinks:** ★★★★  
The list is short, but accommodates with four types of sake and three different Asian beers.
- Food:** ★★★★  
Imitation crab is used in many of the rolls, although all of the seafood we encountered tasted clean and fresh. And the tempura was light and non-greasy.
- Value:** ★★★★  
All of the appetizer and rolls on the happy-hour menu are \$3, a near giveaway considering portion sizes are actually shareable. In addition, sake and large beers are priced graciously between \$4 and \$8.
- Service:** ★★★★  
Water, drinks, food and condiments were brought to our table swiftly without any lapses.
- Atmosphere:** ★★★★  
The vibe is casual and the décor and lighting are a cut above what you'll find in most sushi restaurants hidden in strip plazas.



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Dishes such as salt-n-pepper pig ears, Chinese sausage risotto, and creamy walnut shrimp are in the offing at the long-awaited **Whistling Duck Tavern**, which opened Feb. 1 in **The Hub** shopping center in Hillcrest after a series of delays. Launched by Convoy District restaurateur Charles Sun of Shanghai Saloon and the Dumpling Inn, the Asian-fusion restaurant also features wine, sake, and two-dozen craft beer choices. 1040 University Ave., 619-255-4046, [whistlingducktavern.com](http://whistlingducktavern.com).



Chapulines are hopping onto menus in North Park, La Jolla and Little Italy. (Courtesy of Bracero Cocina de Raiz)

**Tacos Perla** in North Park has them. So does **Galaxy Taco** in La Jolla. Now, the southern Mexican delicacy known as chapulines (grasshoppers) are appearing on plates at **Bracero Cocina de Raiz** in Little Italy as a snack or an addition to guacamole and tacos. Touted for their crunchy texture and herby flavor, the chapulines are sourced from the central valleys of Oaxaca and dehydrated before leaving the kitchen. Their recent entry into American food culture has been limited mostly to cities straddling the Mexican border. 1490 Kettner Blvd., 619-756-7864, [bracerococina.com](http://bracerococina.com).

More than 100 boutique wineries from throughout the state will pour their latest and greatest releases at the **Family Winemakers of California** tasting, from 2–5 p.m. March 5 at the Del Mar Fairgrounds' Wyland Center. Consumers can sample from nearly 40 varietals and blends offered by reps and owners of the wineries. Admission is \$75, and free for non-drinking designated drivers. 2260 Jimmy Durante Blvd., Del Mar, [familywinemakers.org](http://familywinemakers.org).



Gibran Fernandez is Mr. Moto. (Courtesy of Mr. Moto Pizza House)

A second San Diego location of **Mr. Moto Pizza House** recently opened in North Park with the same selection of creative pizzas as its original kitchen in Pacific Beach. Owner Gibran Fernandez (aka Mr. Moto), previously ran **Pizza on Pearl** in La Jolla, where he says “my whole career in pizza making started.” His menu at Mr. Moto features 15 specialty pies, including the popular “California love” with bacon, chicken, caramelized onions and garlic paste, and the “vodka cream” pizza topped with vodka and raspberry-chipotle sauces and sour cream. Stromboli, calzones and meatball subs are also available. 3773 30th St., 619-642-0788, [mrmotopizza.com](http://mrmotopizza.com).



Rocky Road and other types of pancakes will be served for a good cause. (Photo by Sarah Jacober)

In celebration of National Pancake Day on Feb. 28, **Snooze** in Hillcrest and Carmel Valley will donate 100 percent of its pancake sales to various local gardens in Southern California, including those at Jefferson Elementary (in North Park) and Del Mar Heights Elementary schools. The pancakes will be available from 6:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. that day on a sushi-style menu, allowing customers to choose from about 10 varieties available at \$4.50 per pancake. 3940 Fifth Ave., 619-500-3344, and 3435 Del Mar Heights Road, 858-703-5300, [snoozeeatery.com](http://snoozeeatery.com).



“The Ham” and other breakfast sandwiches make their debut at Grater Grilled Cheese. (Courtesy of Alternative Strategies)

The Mission Valley location of **Grater Grilled Cheese** has introduced several breakfast sandwiches served on buttered brioche buns. Each features scrambled eggs (or egg whites) tucked inside with either, turkey and Muenster cheese; ham and Swiss cheese; bacon and sharp cheddar; or tomatoes, arugula and goat cheese. Served with tater tots, they're priced at \$6.50 each (\$1 extra for egg whites only). 5618 Mission Center Road, Suite 1002, 619-458-9611, [gratergrilledcheese.com](http://gratergrilledcheese.com).

—Frank Sabatini Jr. can be reached at [fsabatini@san.rr.com](mailto:fsabatini@san.rr.com). ❖



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Breakfast	Margarita	Insurance Broker	
Brunch	Martini	Jeweler	
Burger	Mexican Cuisine	Massage	
Casino	New Restaurant	Men's Apparel	
Casino Buffet	Nightclub	Museum	
Casual Dining	Outdoor Dining	New Business	
Chinese Cuisine	Pet Friendly Dining	Optometrist	
Cocktail	Pizza	Pawn Shop	
Coffee Shop	Romantic Dining	Personal Trainer	
Dance Club	Rooftop Lounge	Pet Boarding	
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Dinner	Seafood	Preschool	
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9/6

**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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Puzzle answers on page 13

## Uptown Crossword

**Tourist Spots**

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

By Charles Preston

- ACROSS**

1 Poet Khayyām

5 Cigar city

10 Vertical pole

14 Gertrude Stein’s flower

15 Circa

16 Presumptuous glance

17 Extorted money from

18 Denmark’s Victor

19 Russian river

20 Vacation retreat

22 Adorned

24 Acquire by labor

25 Composition for two

26 Controversy

29 Sweets, Darling, etc.

33 Go astray

34 Fixed look

36 Frontlet

37 Exclamations of dislike

39 Save

41 Near S. Dak.

42 Let’s bake

44 and lonely

46 Peer Gynt’s mother

47 chances: playing
- it safe

49 Apples, in Paris

51 Variety of chalcodony

52 Inca country

53 Actress Ritter

56 City of trunk fame

60 Othello’s antagonist

61 Freshet

63 Tel \_\_\_\_\_, Israel

64 Pitfall

65 Fire stirrer

66 Narrative

67 Inactive

68 Whirls

69 Building additions
- DOWN**

1 Spherical bodies

2 Breakwater

3 Voyaging

4 Its waters parted

5 Small stools

6 \_\_\_\_\_ liar: chronic fibber

7 Additional

8 Fighter

9 Dined in a café

10 Great mass

11 Tourist spot in India

12 Venetian blind part
- 13 Far: comb. form

21 Toques

23 Schism

25 Supposes

26 Treat, as in skimming milk

27 Heath

28 Fracture

29 Boxer Carnera

30 Form of address

31 Expunge

32 Japanese wines

35 Two of \_\_\_\_\_

38 Winter sports spot

40 Room decorators

43 Hindu land grant

45 Little Dorothy

48 Clutches

50 Alter

52 Church plate

53 Southern US tree

54 Difficult

55 Equal, in Nice

56 H. H. Munro

57 Egg-shaped

58 Small liquid measure

59 Class of vertebrates

62 Cork sound

Puzzle answers on page 13

## Classifieds

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FROM PAGE 1

ARTIST

that it's important to feed one's sense of wonder for exploration and discovery. Inspired by nature and animals, she enjoys learning characteristics and behaviors that enable subjects to "thrive in their environment," she said. "Maybe then we can learn how to respect our planet and the sentient beings we share it with."

Her love for animals is exquisitely portrayed as fabric collages in her book. Noting that her fascination stems from the shapes, sizes and personalities of these creatures, Hui Hekman added that although "humans are but one kind of animal among countless species; animals, whether a fuzzy kitten or ravenous shark, deserve my respect and spark my curiosity."

As with all of her fabric collages, Hui Hekman researches the subject, sketches, and forms a ceramic sculpture used as a reference for computer illustrations that become patterned as a collage, printed out in pieces, attached to fabrics, cut accordingly and sewn together using a sewing machine. She learned to sew from her grandmother, who was a seamstress.

"Each time I pull a subject into a different physical space, whether it's 2D, 3D or digital, it's translated in a way I wouldn't expect," she explained. "And with each translation, I lose a little more control and the art takes on its own unique look. That's why I chose to combine drawing, sculpture, computer graphics and sewing to create each book illustration."

Hui Hekman plans to publish two additional art/poem books: "Animals In Flight" and "Animals Underwater."

Encouraged by her parents, Hui Hekman said her passion for art began at an early age. Birthday presents included reams of computer paper for drawing as much as she was inclined to do so.

"My father, a mathematician, appreciated and collected art," she explained. "I drew a lot and loved to sew with my grandmother. I still gravitate to both activities; they're therapeutic. I wouldn't be where I am today without my family and friends who supported my passion for the arts."

Hui Hekman graduated with a degree in interdisciplinary computing and the arts from the UC San Diego. She worked as a designer for Whole Foods Market in La Jolla, followed by a stint with University Readers, an academic publishing company, designing book covers and marketing materials until the yearning for fine art outweighed her status within the corporate world.

"I missed working with my hands," she said. "I missed the focus of finishing a project that would incorporate all of my skills, so I embraced my art full time. I surrounded myself with other

'The Polar Bear'

By Monica Hui Hekman

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PUZZLE SOLUTIONS

Sudoku

Puzzle from page 12

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

Tourist Spots

Crossword from page 12

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

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artists at Glashaus Studios so I wouldn't feel alone."

Glashaus Studios, located in San Diego's Barrio Logan, hosts 21 art studios for glass-blowing, ceramics, mixed-media, painting, sculpture, jewelry and woodworking artists.

Hui Hekman's work in Glashaus Studios expanded to metalsmithing, a skilled craftsmanship that she describes as being both folk art and fine art. And true to form, not a single piece of jewelry is crafted from prefabricated elements and everything is inspired by plants, animals and landscapes. Themes include desert landscapes, ocean waters, whales, cat eye succulents and beetles. Her first ring was modeled after the Fig Eater Beetle.

"Fig Eater Beetles develop into adult beetles from larva underground when all of a sudden, they're flying around — aboveground — everywhere," she said. "When they can no longer fly, they land on the ground and most likely get stepped on. People often have a visceral reaction to them as icky and a bit creepy, but I think they're beautiful. I love looking at the beauty in all things."

Hui Hekman added that while City Heights is a growing artistic community, next-door neighbor North Park is exploding with a multitude of venues that support artists. Hui Hekman's measures her artistic success by her ability to connect people with an environment that she considers precious.

"Life must be experienced with our eyes and our hands," she concluded. "We must live out in the world, not through TVs and computers. Discover the little things. Nothing should be taken for granted. Everything is precious."

—Contact Lucia Viti at [lu-ciaviti@roadrunner.com](mailto:lu-ciaviti@roadrunner.com).

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# UPTOWN CALENDAR

## FEATURED EVENTS

### Parkeology

Friday, Feb. 24

The parking lot at Marston Point, also known as the “Fruit Loop,” will be transformed into a listening theater. Parked cars will play the firsthand stories of the men and women who remember when Balboa Park was a prime meeting place during a time when being gay was illegal. “Queen’s Circle: Cruising Oral Histories of Balboa Park” will be presented from 5:30 to 11 p.m. in Marston Point, Balboa Park. Free. Visit [bit.ly/2kQA8bw](http://bit.ly/2kQA8bw).

### Log Cabin Republicans meeting

Monday, Feb. 27

Tony Krvaric, chairman of the San Diego Republican Party, will speak about the “State of the County” and will answer any questions at the Log Cabin Republicans of San Diego monthly meeting, 6:30 to 8 p.m. at Uptown Tavern, 1236 University Ave. in Hillcrest. Visit [bit.ly/2kQA77B](http://bit.ly/2kQA77B).

### Hillcrest Mardi Gras Revival Tour

Tuesday, Feb. 28



The original Hillcrest Mardi Gras is back. Celebrate Fat Tuesday with a street fair on University Avenue between First and Fourth avenues from 6 to 11 p.m. There will be a dance party, performances by Urban MO’s Dreamgirls Revue, a costume competition, two bars, DIY Mardi Gras mask booth, exclusive VIP area with private bar and DJs from Rich’s Nightclub. Age 21 or older. A Mardi Gras-themed costume competition begins at 10 p.m. includes a chance to be named Queen of Mardi Gras. \$10 in advance; \$15 day of the event. VIP tickets are \$30; \$35 day of the event. Event benefits the Hillcrest Business Association. Visit [fabulousshillcrest.com](http://fabulousshillcrest.com).

### ‘What Can We do About Climate Change?’

Tuesday, Feb. 28

Uptown Democratic Club presents “What Can We do About Climate Change?” Speakers include Derek and Nancy Casady of the San Diego Climate Mobilization Coalition, and Carl Yaeckel of the Citizen’s Climate Lobby. Social begins at 6:30 p.m. and program starts at 7 p.m. in the Joyce Beers Community Center, 3900 Vermont St. in Hillcrest. Visit [bit.ly/2ls5Z0Z](http://bit.ly/2ls5Z0Z).

### Mardi Gras Concert

Wednesday, March 1

Celebrate Mardi Gras one day late with live music by the Bayou Brothers, 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. in the Mission Hills Library, 925 W. Washington St. 619-692-4910.

### ‘Beaches, Boats & Books’

Wednesday, March 1

Ladybug Art Center, 4685 Biona Drive in Kensington, will host a free art exhibition titled “Beaches, Boats & Books” for the month of March. Opening reception is Saturday, March 11, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. This exhibit will feature works by Gordon Bashant, Susan Mae Hull, Charlie Jack, Angela Kriel, Julianne Ricksecker, Deanne Tiffany and Tom Zephyrs. The exhibit will also feature an original 2-by-3-foot parchment hymnal created in 1780 and multiple hand-lettered pocket journals from the 1920s. 619-563-0082 or visit [ladybugartstudio.com](http://ladybugartstudio.com).

### Senior Housing Informational Session

Wednesday, March 1

Looking for more information about North Park Senior Apartments, the new LGBT-affirming senior housing development? Attend an informational session from 5:30 to 7 p.m. at the San Diego LGBT Community Center, 3909 Centre St. in Hillcrest. Visit [bit.ly/2kQo9dW](http://bit.ly/2kQo9dW).

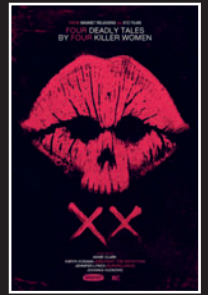
## DIGITAL GYM GEMS



**Sunday, Feb. 26:** Cops, secretaries and prisoners stuck in a soon-to-be-shuttered police station fight off a horde of gang members in “**Assault on Precinct 13.**” Caught in the crossfire is Lt. Ethan Bishop, who forms an unlikely alliance with the prisoners. Rated R. 91 minutes.



**Friday, Feb. 24-Saturday, March 4:** “**Dying Laughing**” is a documentary focusing on the creative process and complicated lives of stand-up comedians told from the perspective of top comedians including Jerry Seinfeld, Chris Rock, Sarah Silverman, Kevin Hart, Jamie Foxx and Amy Schumer. Unrated. 80 minutes.



**Friday, Feb. 24-Thursday, March 2:** “**XX**” is a horror anthology featuring four tales written and directed by women: Annie Clark with “The Birthday Party”; Karyn Kusama exorcises “Her Only Living Son”; Roxanne Benjamin screams “Don’t Fall”; and Jovanka Vuckovic opens “The Box.” Unrated. 80 minutes. ♦

Visit [DigitalGym.org](http://DigitalGym.org) for show times and tickets and information on additional films.

## RECURRING EVENTS

**Cinema Under the Stars:** Films presented at an outdoor viewing space on various nights of the week. Upcoming films:

- “Manchester by the Sea,” 8 p.m. Friday, Feb. 24 and Saturday, Feb. 25
- “Dr. Strange,” 8 p.m. Friday, March 3 and Saturday, March 4

Films start at 8 p.m. \$15. 4040 Goldfinch St., Mission Hills. Visit [topspresents.com](http://topspresents.com) or call 619-295-4221.

### Mondays:

**North Park Toastmasters meeting:** 6:30–8 p.m., weekly meeting at St. Luke’s Episcopal Church, 3725 30th St., North Park. 619-694-9148. [toastmastersclubs.org](http://toastmastersclubs.org).

**Open Mic Night:** 7:30 p.m., the mic is open to you at Lestat’s Coffee House, 3343 Adams Ave., Normal Heights, free. [Lestats.com](http://Lestats.com).

### Tuesdays:

**Curbside Bites:** 5:30–8:30 p.m., gathering of gourmet food trucks at 3030 Grape St., South Park. [Curbsidebites.com](http://Curbsidebites.com).

**Tasty Truck Tuesdays:** 6–9 p.m., Smitty’s Service Station hosts several food trucks under their well-lit shade structure, 3442 Adams Ave., Normal Heights. [Sdfoodtrucks.com](http://Sdfoodtrucks.com).

### Wednesdays:

**Wednesday Night Experience:** 7–8 p.m., uplifting and spiritually inspiring experiences for all, weekly at Universal Spirit Center, 3858 Front St., Hillcrest, love offering requested. [Universalspiritcenter.org](http://Universalspiritcenter.org).

### Thursdays:

**Uptown Sunrise Rotary Club meetings:** 7 a.m., weekly meeting at Panera Bread, 1270 Cleveland Ave., Hillcrest. [Sdurotary.org](http://Sdurotary.org).

**Gentle yoga for seniors:** 2:30–4 p.m., presented by The Center and Silver Age Yoga Community Outreach (SAYCO) at the San Diego LGBT Center, 3909 Centre St., Hillcrest, free. [Thecentersd.org](http://Thecentersd.org).

**North Park Thursday Market:** 3–7 p.m., at 3000 North Park Way, between 30th Street and Granada Avenue, North Park, free. [Northparkfarmersmarket.com](http://Northparkfarmersmarket.com).

**Kornflower’s Open Mic:** Signups at 6:30 p.m., open mic (no poetry or comedy) 7–10 p.m. Family-friendly event at Rebecca’s Coffee House, 3015 Juniper St., South Park, free. [Rebeccascoffeehouse.com](http://Rebeccascoffeehouse.com).

**Liberty Toastmasters Club:** 7 p.m., at Saint Paul’s Community Care Center, 328 Maple St., Bankers Hill. [Libertytoastmasters.org](http://Libertytoastmasters.org).

see Recurring Events, pg 16



### Oscar Viewing Parties

Sunday, Feb. 26

The Academy Awards deliver the biggest night in Hollywood, and it’s a pretty big deal in the Uptown area as well. The stars will shine brightly at the following three local venues preparing for glitzy Oscar night events:

### Oscar Night Viewing Party

Cinema Under the Stars presents an Oscar Night Viewing Party, 4:30 to 8:30 p.m. at Tops Salon, 4040 Goldfinch St. in Mission Hills. Dress up to be photographed on the red carpet between 4:30 to 6 p.m.

Enjoy small plates provided by The Patio on Goldfinch and Lefty’s Chicago Pizzeria. House beverages will include sparkling wine, sparkling water, red and white wines, and Stella Artois — or bring your own beverage (no alcoholic beverages). \$60 by cash or check only (credit card holds your seat). Limited reserved seating. Tickets available at Tops salon or by calling 619-295-4221. Visit [topspresents.com](http://topspresents.com).

### Red Carpet Party

Join San Diego’s biggest Academy Awards Viewing Party featuring 25 HD widescreen TVs, \$1,000 in cash and prizes, food, drinks and live entertainment from 4:30 to 9 p.m. at True North, 3815 30th St. in North Park. Walk the red carpet, pick the winners for a chance to win cash and other prizes, and enter the raffle to win two fourth-row floor

seats to see Mariah Carey and Lionel Richie live in concert. Enjoy a complimentary glass of Champagne, tray-passed hors d’oeuvres, specialty food stations, two full-service bars and 30 taps. All proceeds benefit the San Diego Gay Men’s Chorus. Hosted by Landa Plenty. Visit [bit.ly/2IN48U1](http://bit.ly/2IN48U1).

### Oscar Night at Brick Bar

Share the fun and excitement of Oscar Night at Brick Bar, 1475 University Ave. in Hillcrest. Cast Oscar ballots for prizes for first, second and third places. Door prizes will be awarded during the evening. Win film passes and movie swag, and enjoy complimentary popcorn. A \$5 donation is requested to benefit the programs and services of the San Diego LGBT Community Center. Doors open at 4:30 p.m., the awards broadcast commences at 5:30 p.m. Visit [bit.ly/2IN4gmw](http://bit.ly/2IN4gmw). ♦



FROM PAGE 7

PLANNERS

West Laurel and Sassafras streets from three to two lanes in order to install a buffered bicycle lane on the former east traffic lane. Existing parking will be preserved. The goal is to reduce vehicle speeds and accommodate bicyclists and pedestrians to improve safety, comfort and convenience.

• Adding parking meters in Hillcrest and Mission Hills, and modifying parking meter hours in Hillcrest. Elizabeth Hannon, head of the Uptown Parking District, outlined the proposal to add parking meters on the north side from 422-510 W. Washington St. in Mission Hills; and the north side of the 1000 block and 1700 block of University Avenue in Hillcrest. All the locations are in business districts, and Hannon said the goal was to create turnover of vehicles every two hours to help the nearby businesses. Hannon also said the parking district has studied occupancy rates at meters in Hillcrest, and recommends shifting enforcement hours from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Mondays through Saturdays, except holidays.

• Fixing University Avenue “gap” in the bicycle lane project. Brian Genovese, a senior traffic engineer, said the city wants to fix a big portion of the “gap” in the University Avenue bicycle lane caused by a compromise approved by SANDAG. This project would add painted bicycle lands and 12 street trees along University Avenue between Fifth Avenue and Normal Street. This will result with the loss of 29 parking spaces along University Avenue between Sixth Avenue and Vermont Street, but reconfiguration of parking spaces would add 20 parking spaces on Essex Street, three parking spaces on Tenth Avenue and 13 parking spaces on Eighth Avenue. Genovese said the additional parking spaces on side streets would require the approval of property owners and residents who live along those roads. The project would begin after the pipeline improvement is completed, which will require street resurfacing and allow the city to add the bicycling lane at that time. Bike San Diego reminded the audience that there will still be a gap between First and Fifth avenues.

• Conversion of Sommerset Suite Hotel into The Whitson. Doug Arthur of SENTRE Partners shared plans for turning the shuttered hotel into upscale housing. Arthur said the building at 606 Washington St. in Hillcrest was built in 1986 as an 81-unit apartment complex. But for the past 20 years, it served as a hotel. The developer plans to renovate the property, paint the exterior and add new landscaping. Arthur said the company expected to begin renting out units by mid-June and expected to be fully occupied by the end of July. He called it “high quality, amenity-rich” housing that would include an on-site fitness facility and pool. Arthur said the name pays homage to William Whitson, a major developer of the neighborhood after founding the Hillcrest Company in 1908.

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

FROM PAGE 1

ESCAPE

said. “We went and played a couple and I after that, I couldn’t stop thinking of how to make my own.”

Skantz turned out to be uniquely qualified to design and build these types of games.

As a child, she grew up between the U.S. and South America; her parents had a strong affinity for volunteer work and as such, she found herself involved with, and eventually managing, a number of construction projects.

She’s also had a lifelong love affair with puzzles and brainteasers.

“At one point, I actually sat down to plan what [my puzzle room] would look like. I finally got brave enough; I had savings and I said, ‘I am going to do this.’ I looked and looked for a place, I signed a lease and that’s when I realized this was actually happening,” Skantz said.

Escapism currently consists of three rooms, The Attic, Gallery 3919 and The Alchemist’s Dungeon.

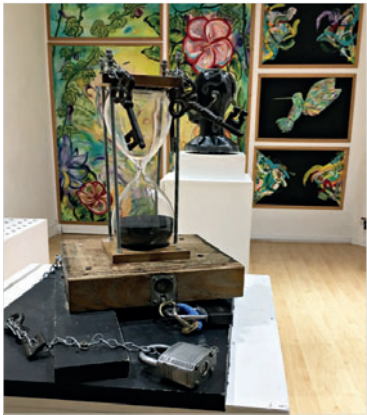
Those who play The Attic are told they are house

sitting for a seemingly nice neighbor. The only request he has, Skantz said, is that you don’t enter the attic, but eventually, your curiosity gets the best of you. You enter the room and the door slams shut.

You’re trapped. The only way to escape is to work through a series of puzzles and clues, and in doing that, you discover more about who your neighbor truly is.

The escape rate for The Attic, she said, is less than 15 percent.

Those who play Gallery 3919 are told that a secret spy organization has been watching them for over a year. They want to recruit you, but before they can do that, they need to send you on a test mission. That mission



Can you escape? (Courtesy of Escapism)

### Escapism

3919 Fourth Ave.  
Suite A (Hillcrest)

Monday through Friday  
11 a.m. to 10:30 p.m.

Saturdays and Sundays  
9:30 a.m. to 11 p.m.

619-866-2670  
escapismsd.com

involves going into an art gallery and recouping an item that has been stolen from them.

The security systems will be down for an hour. You have 60 minutes to recover the item and escape.

The escape rate for this room is less than 30 percent.

The Alchemist’s Dungeon opened recently, not long after San Diego Uptown News visited Escapism. According to the website, participants are locked in a medieval dungeon previously occupied by The Alchemist, who failed to execute his escape plan.

Playing a room is intense; the clues are intricate brain teasers that require a lot of out-of-the-box thinking. Each time a puzzle is solved, it provides you with clues as to how to solve the next. Those who can

successfully follow the white rabbit win the game.

Those who aren’t successful generally don’t mind, because the gameplay itself is electrifying.

“The feedback we’ve been getting has been amazing. Even the people who go in skeptical, the overwhelming majority come out with a huge smile on their face,” she said. “I’ve had people who have come to play one room who have come back the next day to play the other one. It becomes an addiction.”

Ani Kennel is among those who have played Gallery 3919. She gives the room high marks.

“It was unexpectedly multifaceted and challenging with unique tests of teamwork and intellect,” Kennel said, adding that she intends to return to play The Attic in the near future.

Now that she has opened The Alchemist’s Dungeon, Skantz will be moving onto her next project, Escape the Brewery. She hopes to open it during the summer of 2018 at a location to be determined.

—Margie M. Palmer is a San Diego-based freelance writer who has been racking up bylines in a myriad of news publications for the past 10 years. You can reach her at margiep@alumni.pitt.edu.✧

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