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San Diego Community Newspaper Group

How does your garden grow?

SEE PAGE 16

Susan Wong plants her La Mesa Community Garden plot. (Photo by Jeff Clemetson)

Survey: positive but incomplete view of community opinion

By KENDRA SITTON

The City of La Mesa recently released its alt-annual community opinion survey. Every two years, True North Research conducts a statistically valid survey to find key issues for residents and rate overall satisfaction with the city. Over 1,200 surveys were completed through various methods online and over the phone. The margin of error was 2.7%.

The respondents matched the age demographics of the city. Age was one of the only demographic questions asked in the survey, which some city council members criticized. Survey

respondents were asked if there was a child in their household. There was no ethnicity data gathered although a surname analysis split off people with Asian and Hispanic surnames from everyone else to show how different ethnicities responded to the survey.

Dr. Timothy McLarney presented the findings of this year's survey at the May 25 City Council meeting. While the survey tackled many topics, there was an extra emphasis on public safety because of the events of May 2020. In addition, more questions were added



View the entire community survey at bit.ly/3vCFpFP. (Courtesy image)

SEE SURVEY, Page 3

NEWS BRIEFS

MISS LA MESA PAGEANT SEEKS PARTICIPANTS

The Miss La Mesa organization is seeking young women ages 10-26 to participate in this year's program!

Miss La Mesa has been a tradition in the city since the early 1950's. The program has evolved over the years into a mentoring and leadership opportunity. As the city's ambassador the young ladies who participate volunteer countless hours in the La Mesa community each year.



(l to r) Ruth Almarez, Samantha Clary and Mary Aumack (Courtesy photo)

The application process consists of a speech, essay and interview and the participants also receive points for academic achievement. The program aims to give young women public speaking and interview skills that will guide them into their future years of education and the workforce.

On Sunday, June 20, Mayor Arapostathis will announce the 2021 Miss La Mesa, Miss Teen La Mesa and Junior Miss La Mesa at the Sundays at 6 Concert at Harry Griffen Park! Interested participants should

SEE NEWS BRIEFS, Page 3

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Survey

CONTINUED FROM Page 1

about homeless issues after a request from Council member Bill Baber in 2019 for further analysis of that subject.

McLarney said there were several opportunity areas for the city to improve: homeless issues, affordable housing, repairing streets, improving public safety and communication. Still, residents were happy with the community of La Mesa as well as the city government. Quality of life measures did dip some from the past, but McLarney said that should be expected following a pandemic and civil unrest.

“Despite going through all that, we find that the vast majority of residents still have a positive view of the community and the city government,” McLarney said.

He also noted that during the beginning of the survey, residents were asked what could be improved and 1 in 5 residents did not have an answer.

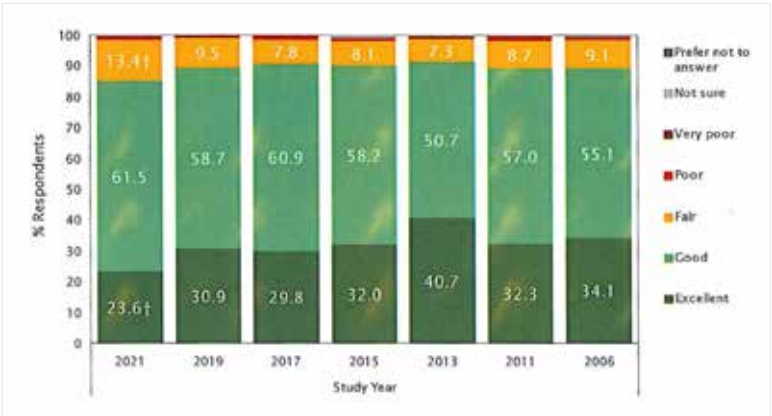
“You had about one in five respondents say ‘you know, I can’t think of anything I would want to change about La Mesa.’ When you think about it, that’s probably the best response to expect from this type of question,” he said.

After residents with no answers, homeless issues were the top concern. Road repairs and public safety went up as a concern from past years while affordable housing went down.

There was a slight increase in people dissatisfied with city services but there were still seven residents satisfied to every one resident who said they were dissatisfied.

Overall, 80% of survey takers felt safe in La Mesa. This number was consistent across demographics and neighborhoods. Perceptions of safety did dip slightly after dark.

There were also several questions on the La Mesa Police Department. While overall most



Overall quality of life by year (Graphic by True North Research)

La Mesans had a positive perception of the police, that perception went down to less than half of the population when asked whether LMPD held its officers accountable.

Vice Mayor Jack Shu was upset that there was no ethnicity question on the survey because it made the data gathered on police not grapple with how Black people perceive the police since Black residents were lumped into the “other” category. Around 5% of La Mesa’s population is Black.

“When I see this data, to me it’s just not helpful. And in fact, knowing that this survey was taken after the events in the country and here in La Mesa, I’m actually quite upset that we missed the most important ethnic group to measure,” Shu said. “For this city to conduct a survey and not include that is a glaring omission — like Black people don’t count. The whole Black Lives Matter notion and movement was ignored.”

At the end of the meeting, Baber echoed those concerns and suggested that even if it made the survey longer, more demographic questions needed to be asked in the next survey.

“The other thing I thought was missing was that it’s not done by income either,” Baber said. “That’s important too because sometimes we worry our less affluent members of the community don’t get the city services that they deserve or we pay less attention to them.”

Baber said he had been on the council through four of these

survey cycles and seen it adjust to the city’s needs over time.

While most areas remained steady or went down from past years, the survey did find that 70% of the population saw traffic as good which was a 5% increase from 2019.

The survey found 30% of the population had interacted with a staff member of the city in the past 12 months and most of those interactions were helpful, professional and responsive.

An area of major struggle over the many years this survey has been conducted is city communications reaching the public.

“This is an area a lot of cities have struggled with over time, I can tell you,” McLarney said. “If you go back 10 years or so, residents were relying on the same sort of handful of information sources when it came to news and events in their community. What’s happened over time is there’s been this explosion of various sources for information that we can turn to and consequently, it’s made the challenge of reaching out to residents that much harder.”

Today, respondents said they preferred to receive city communications and news via email or other digital methods like social media.

To view the full survey, visit bit.ly/3vCFpFP.

—Contributing editor Kendra Sitton can be reached at kendra@sdnews.com.

News briefs

CONTINUED FROM Page 1

email MissandTeenLaMesa@gmail.com for more details or checkout the Miss La Mesa Facebook and Instagram pages.

OUTGOING
TITLEHOLDERS:

•Junior Miss La Mesa 2019/2020 – Mary Aumack

Mary is an accomplished dancer and student at Helix Charter High School.

•Miss Teen La Mesa 2019/2020 – Samantha Clary

Samantha is a student at Helix High School where she is involved in ASB and plays volleyball and lacrosse.

•Miss La Mesa 2019/2020 – Ruth Almaraz

Ruth graduated from San Diego State University with a Business Finance Degree and works for a

property management company. She is also a cancer survivor.

HUMANE SOCIETY
DISCOURAGES GLUE TRAPS

San Diego Humane Society’s Project Wildlife team is urging the public to refrain from using glue traps due to the devastating consequences they have for wildlife, and sometimes pets. The medical team at the Pilar & Chuck Bahde Wildlife Center works tirelessly for wild animals who are found



Project Wildlife treats an owl after it was caught up in a glue trap. (Courtesy SD Humane Society)

stuck in glue traps. Without rescue, these animals experience prolonged suffering and death, often from starvation.

On April 29, a barn owl arrived at the Bahde Wildlife Center with most of her feathers saturated in glue. It is unknown how long the bird had been stuck in the trap, but she was extremely fatigued when she arrived. The owl received two medicated baths to remove the contaminant, as well as pain medication and fluid therapy as part of her treatment plan. Despite the medical team’s best efforts to save her life, the owl was not able to recover and passed away in care.

On April 24, an orphaned joey opossum arrived at the Bahde Wildlife Center, also stuck in a glue trap. The animal’s body was fully attached to the tray, which would have meant a very slow

How to Sell Your San Diego Home
Without an Agent

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

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

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Women's Club weathers pandemic, celebrates 119 years

By CYNTHIA G. ROBERTSON

This year is a stand-out for a La Mesa organization that has always made a remarkable influence upon the community. At 119 years, the La Mesa Women's Club (LMWC) is still standing strong as the members celebrate the anniversary.

For the first time in 14 months, LMWC had its first in-person gathering on May 17 to celebrate the anniversary. Fifty-seven people, including several men, attended the happy event.

Andrew Hayes, district director for Sen. Brian Jones, was one of the many local dignitaries commending LMWC for its years of service.

"If there was a tagline I could assign to the La Mesa Women's Club, it would be: 'A legacy of service,'" Hayes said.

Indeed, it has taken the efforts of many strong women to keep the club in the forefront for more than a century. Betsy Quinn, co-president with Kathy Tinsley, has been a member of the club since 2012. Together they have co-presided since 2019.

Typically a board serves for two years, but the impending clubhouse sale as well as the pandemic helped them determine to continue into 2021.

LMWC first vice president Sandi Phoenix has been associated with Women's Clubs for 51 years. She joined Allied Gardens Junior

Woman's Club first, then transferred to La Mesa Junior Women's Club when her family moved to East County. In 1979, she graduated into the general membership of La Mesa Women's Club.

As first vice president, Phoenix primarily oversees philanthropic projects, which is one of the major missions of the club, and the writing of the annual end-of-the-year service and federation advancement reports. She also writes articles each month in the monthly newsletter, Gavel Talk, to report on past service projects.

"The position of first vice president is a busy position," said Phoenix. "It is one that I enjoy because it provides opportunities to be involved with everything going on in the club, and to be a liaison between the club and community organizations and programs."

Phoenix has always had women's clubs in her life, starting when she was a high school student. As a member of the San Bernardino Women's Club, her mother often drafted Quinn to provide luncheon serving duties or set-up and clean-up duties for the club.

"I feel like I just grew up in women's clubs," she said.

Early on, just as now, the purpose of women's clubs was to provide socialization and friendships along with the mission of providing charitable community service.

Quinn explained that some of LMWC's older members had



At far right, La Mesa Chamber of Commerce President Mary England commends La Mesa Women's Club Co-Presidents Kathy Tinsley, far left, and Betsy Quinn, May 17, 2021 (Photos by Cynthia G. Robertson)



A cake to celebrate the 119th anniversary of La Mesa Women's Club, May 17, 2021

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"These strong ties along with my many close friendships with a diverse group of women are my reasons for staying a member for 51 years," Phoenix said.

Quinn has similar sentiments. She said that the benefits of membership in a service organization like the LMWC are many. The group of 37 women is diverse and mostly retired from a wide variety of careers.

"We have interests in supporting causes related to children, education, health, military, environment, safety, animals, local history and women's issues," Quinn said. "While working in education, I found most of my companions were in the same profession as mine. Meeting intelligent women from different careers has been enlightening and has expanded my perspective. Sharing time with others to make a difference for good is both satisfying and fun."

After she retired from her 37-year career in education, Quinn found that she was not satisfied without a focused sense of purpose. Through LMWC, Quinn has organized fundraising activities and service projects that address some of the area's pressing issues. She has also served on the scholarship committee, which annually receives applications from outstanding seniors in the Grossmont High School District. For more than 40 years, LMWC has awarded five \$1,000 scholarships each year to outstanding high school seniors.

Phoenix explained that women's clubs also provide leadership training and skills that she has utilized in various chairmanships and officer positions within the club districts.

"These skills have also provided a strong resource for me to draw from during my 20 years working as a registered nurse. The women's club has helped me to grow as a person," she said.

Both Phoenix and Quinn recognize that in order for LMWC to stay strong and growing, the women have to learn flexibility and adaptability. The pandemic, of course, gave them all unprecedented opportunity. That, and the



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Guest Editorial

Help kids that COVID-19 pushed further behind

By NANCY L. SASAKI

If 2020 has taught us anything, it's that our most marginalized communities are not included in the American Dream. The public health and economic crisis brought on by COVID-19, combined with the social justice movement sparked the George Floyd tragedy, have illuminated this truth. This past year, San Diego children whose families were already struggling have faced unprecedented challenges and have fallen further behind as the pandemic continues to impact their lives.

It is a known fact that, in order for children to succeed across the education continuum, their basic needs – such as food on the table and a roof over their heads – must be met. United Way of San Diego County (UWSD) brings together community partners so together we can identify barriers to learning and align the solutions to ensure that every student has the opportunity to thrive – regardless of race, ethnicity, income, or zip code.

It's not just the digital divide, or unequal access to distance learning technology, keeping kids behind either. In San Diego County, many entrenched systemic barriers have led to racial and economic inequities keeping many families in poverty. Family stability plays a critical role in early childhood development, while adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) such as long-term parental unemployment cripple their ability to learn and succeed emotionally, socially, and academically.

Some sobering statistics that illustrate the gaps created by these disparities:

- 80% of White and Asian third graders read at grade level, but only 50% of their Brown and Black classmates do.
- Nearly 24,000 students in grades K-12 live in households that are doubled up with family or friends because they are unable to maintain housing on their own. This can be uncomfortable, make it difficult to learn, and can impact education success. It's not just about a child not reading at grade level. Students are facing challenges like this and if there's instability in the household it can impact a child's ability to learn and thrive.
- Black and Hispanic students are twice as likely as white students to have received no live contact with teachers while learning remotely.
- Students on average could lose five to nine months of learning by the end of June 2021; students of color could be six to 12 months behind, compared with four to eight months for white students.

• 31% of San Diegans are food insecure. When families don't have access to food, that becomes their first priority and daily stressor, making it difficult to focus on other important tasks like finding a job or getting their kids to school. If parents or guardians don't know where their next meal is coming from, this can also significantly impact a student's education success.

These data points are evidence that today's pandemic has a vastly disproportionate impact on our Black and Brown kids. For the past 100 years, UWSD has been committed to ensuring every child, young adult, and family has the chance to succeed. But for this to happen, it's clear we must harness every resource available to rebuild the systems that have kept so many kids behind.

That's why we've adopted a new strategy for improving San Diego's future, "Mind the Gap: EDICT 2030." EDICT stands for "Ending Disparities In Communities not Thriving." At UWSD, our "superpower" is bringing together partners, leveraging their expertise, and using data to find the best ways to support early childhood success and family stability. However, we need our community's help to make this vision a reality. Some ways you can help us end systemic inequity include:

• **Volunteer your time.** From packing hygiene kits for families in need to reading virtually to kids, there are so many ways to get involved safely.

• **Get your company involved.** Become a corporate partner, and harness the power of many employees giving time, talent, and treasure to improving their community.

• **Donate.** All donations of money are 100% tax deductible and go toward efforts that help children from cradle to career.

As our country works to recover from the pandemic, we must also reimagine our future, and partner to rebuild our communities in ways that ensure a more just and equitable society where all children have the chance to thrive and succeed. EDICT 2030 is a vision of what could be, and we are all going to have to work together to achieve it.

—Nancy L. Sasaki is the president and CEO of United Way of San Diego County. She is a change-maker focused on the immense and complex social challenges within the San Diego region and works to build a positive future for children, young adults, and families experiencing inequities. Learn more about United Way of San Diego County's work at uwsd.org.

Stop dumping sexual predators in East County

Notes from Joel

By JOEL ANDERSON



Would you be surprised to learn that 67% of all sexually violent predators (SVPs) are currently located in East County? It's true. What makes matters worse is that the courts may soon place as many as three more of these criminals in unincorporated El Cajon. If this happens, that percentage will jump to over 70%.

I understand, and fully appreciate, that nobody wants these individuals in their community, and I've heard the argument that they must go somewhere, but 70% in one district? Some districts in San Diego County have zero percent. How did this happen? Like everyone else, this is what I wanted to know.

I instructed my staff to research this issue and, after several weeks, the information we received from state and local officials was unclear, contradictory, and incomplete. Most of the public agencies we contacted indicated that they have no ability to expand their roles in the notification of registered sex offenders and the housing of SVPs. We found there is no requirement for local law enforcement to be notified until 10 days after a registered sex offender moves into a residence. We also found a lack of clarity and inter-communication exists between governmental departments, agencies, and law enforcement task forces. Disturbingly, the San Diego Sex Offender Management Council (SOMC), a board of law enforcement and public health officials responsible for community protection and prevention of future sexual violence, has been inactive since 2019.

In other words, the process is dysfunctional, lacks transparency, and has inadequate public notification requirements. This is unacceptable.

I believe the county has the resources and the ability for an improved notification and placement process on the housing of registered sex offenders. It is for this reason I introduced a directive by the San Diego County Board of Supervisors instructing the San Diego County Counsel and the Chief Administrative Officer to fully investigate and report back with actions that can be taken to improve the processes and procedures in notifying the public on proposed placements and living situations for sex offenders.

I am pleased that the Board of Supervisors unanimously approved my item and I want to thank my colleagues for their support. The appropriate placement of these dangerous individuals demands our full and immediate attention. When simple questions cannot be answered on such an important matter, the consequences threaten the safety of our citizens — particularly our children. It is irresponsible to allow this situation to continue and I intend to do everything I can to prevent the dumping of sex offenders in our communities. It's time for local authorities to step up and lead this process.

I would appreciate the opportunity to keep you updated on this important issue. Please visit my website at supervisor-joelanderson.com to join our mailing list and receive news on future developments.

—Joel Anderson represents District 2 on the San Diego County Board of Supervisors.

Crisis at our Southern border



By LAURA CRIVELLO

Please join us at or next Republican Women of California – Navajo Canyon (RWCNC) luncheon at The Legacy Hotel in Mission Valley on Tuesday, June 8. We will feature a speaker from U.S. Border Patrol and Immigration. Check in begins at 10:15 a.m., meeting begins at 11 a.m. RSVP to diane.randolph@att.net. You can save time by purchasing tickets ahead of time at waveapps.com/yb847m-vb2kme. Credit and debit cards accepted.

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We are a country of immigrants — legal immigrants. We want lawful immigration, but there is a process and it is not storming our borders. You must apply to become a citizen and wait your turn. We ask that you assimilate and become contributing members of our society.

Our forefathers were honored and proud to become American citizens. My father-in-law was so proud of his new homeland that he would not allow Italian

GOP now just a culture war platform



By SEAN QUINTAL

In 2004, Thomas Frank wrote a book entitled “What’s the Matter With Kansas?” In it, he examined why his home state of Kansas, long a hotbed of progressivism, had developed into a bastion of conservative GOP politics. Why, Frank wondered, did lower- and working-class people so frequently vote against their own self-interest and well-being. Frank concludes that the culture wars allowed the GOP to capture the populist language of social class and to present themselves as the embodiment of working-class anti-elitism. Or more recently, as the slovenly sinister Steve Bannon phrases it, “Politics is downstream from culture.”

Today, we see the Republican Party relying almost exclusively on the same playbook. In 2021, however, it’s called “cancel culture,” and the GOP has come to embrace opposition to it as one of two reasons for the party’s existence (the other being fealty to the deposed Mad King in Mar-A-Lago). Republicans have been peddling lies that President Biden wants to force Americans to eat less meat, or that the government was handing out copies of Vice President Harris’ books to refugees, or that Virginia was eliminating advanced math in schools in pursuit of racial equality, or that “cancel culture” emasculated Mr. Potato

Head. All these are lies, yet the GOP and the right wing media machine have repeatedly belied them. As Congress debated President Biden’s COVID relief bill, Kevin McCarthy, the top Republican in the House, read aloud from a Dr. Seuss book to promulgate another lie that the author’s books were being “canceled” by Democrats.

Why do they perennially beat this drum? Because Republicans win elections by scaring the hell out of their voters. They do this by otherizing the opponent: Obama is a socialist Muslim! Hillary is a crooked murderer! Crazy Bernie! The Squad! Unfortunately for the GOP, President Biden is really hard to demonize; the Trump campaign tried every trick in the book in 2020 and failed pretty miserably. More importantly, both the President and his policies are popular with Americans. So instead, the GOP has invented a “cancel culture,” and a “woke mob” to focus on, purely to stoke conservative outrage. Because the last things Republicans want to talk about are the Democrats’ economic initiatives that have proved popular, such as an infrastructure package and a stimulus law that coupled pandemic relief with major expansions of safety-net programs.

But American voters will know the facts. Every Republican recently voted against a COVID relief bill with 70 percent support nationally, according to polling. The GOP ignores the pandemic and pretends something called “cancel culture” is an

existential threat to the republic. Republicans prefer to talk about Dr. Seuss and Potato Head toys, because they need to distract from their unpopular, special interest agenda. While Democrats have been putting money in people’s pockets and shots in their arms, Republicans have fought to prevent Americans from getting a pay raise and pushed to cut taxes for multi-millionaires.

This is the turf on which next year’s elections will be fought. Democrats will run on an agenda of competent leadership, vaccinating people, distributing \$1,400 relief checks, and rebuilding America’s infrastructure. Republicans will try to enrage white voters with phony controversies about children’s books and red meat.

So “What’s the matter with Kansas” is what’s the matter with California, and what’s the matter with America. The Republican Party chooses to be a force for division and distrust in this country, rather than an institution dedicated to competent and just governance. And that’s a culture that needs to be canceled.

Join the La Mesa Foothills Democratic Club on June 2 at 7 p.m. The meeting will focus on local issues related to climate change, and on the local presence of extremist and hate groups. Find the link to join the Zoom meeting on our website lamesafoothillsdemocraticclub.com

—Sean Quintal writes on behalf of the La Mesa Foothills Democratic Club.

RWCNC

CONTINUED FROM Page 6

to be spoken in the home when my husband was growing up. He always said, “We are Americans now, we speak English.”

We want you to come, support yourselves and your families without being a burden to U.S. taxpayers. What we have now with the Biden administration is quite the opposite, illegals are encouraged to come with the promise of “free” everything. The problem with “free” is that someone else is paying for it, that someone is you and I.

This policy is a direct violation of the Constitution, laws and COVID regulations. While we have been shut down, lost our jobs, our children have been out of school for over a year, our borders are wide open with no regard for our health and safety. Security, jobs and safety of our country and our people is a right that has been taken away. We are more unsafe than ever!

Drugs are spilling into the U.S. at an alarming rate. Mexican and Chinese cartels are responsible for making the drugs and smuggling them into the United States. Five thousand pounds of fentanyl has been seized since the year began, more than all of

2020. It takes exactly two days from the time these drugs enter the country to reach major cities such as New York and Chicago and are shipped to all over the interior of our country shortly thereafter.

I could fill this entire newspaper with shocking reports on the drug problems caused by this crisis at the border, unfortunately I don’t have the space. I encourage everyone to research the alarming statistics. It’s absolute insanity.

What are the Democrats doing? Well, it’s actually quite simple. The Democrats’ interest is in other countries — not America. They are perpetuating the notion that we are systemically racist. That is a lie that is being taught to our children. If you are against open borders, you are deemed a racist.

We are not a country if we don’t have a border. Large scale immigration shifts the control of power. That is what this is all about, power. Frightening — and they are getting away with it. What a country we are leaving to our children and grandchildren. This must be a wake up call.

—Laura Crivello writes on behalf of the Republican Women of California–Navajo Canyon.

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A look back into the past

Kindergarten class reunites as students prepare for high school graduation

By ELAINE ALFARO

On May 6, soon-to-be high school graduates from across La Mesa reunited at Jackson Park. What all these graduates have in common was that they attended kindergarten together at Murray Manor Elementary School. Even after 12 years, growth spurts and facial hair, some things never change.

“There’s some people here that I don’t even recognize, but the ones that I do, it’s really cool to see how much they’ve changed and also how much they’ve stayed the same,” said Max McCormick, a soon-to-be graduate of Helix High School.

The reunion was planned by their kindergarten teacher (now retired), Ruth Leiderman. She has planned reunions for most of her

kindergarten classes, especially since retiring, but this one had a special meaning because students opened their 12-year-old time capsules and they remembered a fellow student who passed away on April 24, 2018.

Emma was one of Leiderman’s students who was diagnosed with cystic fibrosis. At the reunion there was a table that displayed her kindergarten memory book, a picture, and a candle lit in her honor. Her mom, Kristin Hetrick, attended the reunion.

“We have kept in contact [with Ruth] and she has always been there for our family,” said Hetrick. “We stay in touch on Facebook but it’s been a couple of years since we’ve seen each in person. Ruth is a force to be reckoned with. When she called me and asked ‘Are you coming?’



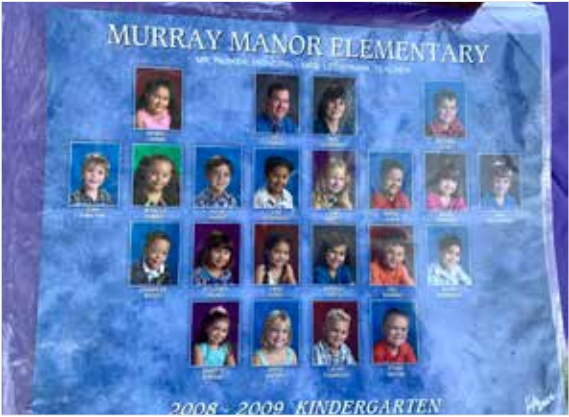
Ruth Leiderman

I was like ‘Well I wasn’t ...’ She said ‘you need to be there.’”

During a moment of remembrance for Emma, Leiderman said, “She left us a few years ago but we all know she’s looking down on us with that beautiful smile of hers. She is so sweet. That was Emma. We love you Emma. You’re forever in our hearts.”



Murray Manor kindergarten students, 12 years later (Photos by Elaine Alfaro)



Yearbook photo of the kindergarten class



A page of Emma's artwork

After the moment of remembrance, the students opened their time capsules. Gigi Hewitt and Jaron Lisama hadn’t seen each other in person since middle school and upon seeing each other, were ecstatic.

“We haven’t seen each other in forever. There’s a lot of kids coming in that none of us recognize. A lot changes in 10 years,” Hewitt said.

However, what they do remember are fun times and their time capsule creations.

“We had that memory of sitting there and making these time capsules. I put in a Littlest Pet Shop Toy,” Hewitt said. Lisama put in his favorite seal stuffed animal.

McCormick couldn’t find his time capsule. However, he shared that his favorite memory was learning to tie his shoes in her class and watching “The Polar Express.”



An all grown up Gigi Hewitt

Now seeing his teacher as an almost high school graduate and adult, McCormick said, “She’s just so cool for putting this on. She’s an amazing teacher and super nice. When you’re a kid, you don’t

SEE KINDER REUNION, Page 10

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Guest Editorial

COVID-19 takes its toll on teens

By BRANSON BAJOUA

Jogging down a stretch of sidewalk, edged with vibrant sprouts of grass as a breath of air gently passes by. Soaking in the summer sun floating just above the horizon before settling a match of volleyball. Or perhaps you're eyeing an empty row of seats in a packed theater, popcorn in one hand with a slushy resting in the other, as you signal to your friends. Admittedly, we have all imagined ourselves in any one of these scenarios. Being in quarantine for over a year, who could blame us?

It's true, we've all made sacrifices, and many might have wondered how teenagers have fared during this chaotic time. For a high schooler like myself, quarantine has definitely been a rocky experience. Back in March of 2020 when it all began, receiving news of what was then called an "extended spring break" was nothing short of exciting. At least at first. It was the middle of the second semester, and we were more than ready to have a pause from the constant stream of assignments and tests.

The pandemic makes it harder for patients recovering from drug/alcohol issues. People seeking help are now forced to deal with their

issues alone or online. COVID-19 could have increased substance misuse since young people were not physically attending school and not needed for jobs and internships. Along with several organizations across the region, East County Youth Coalition meetings were cancelled early on and have been held virtually for a while now. Being away from school, extracurricular activities and friends meant students turned to alternative outlets. Whether working productively or drinking while underage, this is a time when people are developing strong habits that can carry on throughout their life.

However, for my peers and me, tensions revolving around school began with the arrival of national exams. Studying and reviewing for what was essentially a set of college entrance exams, only with our teachers' emails as a source of direct help, was frankly a frightening experience. Now an entire year later, we're back in the same position, but instead of only having a small portion of the school year consumed by digital learning, the entire year has been consumed.

Although, truthfully, having online and open-note assignments has been rather calming, there are serious questions that have been

raised about our preparedness for college, since inevitably we will be back in the classroom regardless of our comfort in the online setting. Getting ready to graduate this upcoming school year, readapting to the pace of a classroom environment will definitely pose a challenge for many of us, especially because my classmates and I haven't been in an actual classroom since sophomore year.

Unfortunately, in-classroom learning is not the only thing that has been squeezed by the grips of quarantine. The onset of the lockdowns abruptly stopped the spring season of last year's high school sports, even postponing the fall and winter seasons. As a third-year track and field runner and personally knowing many others also involved in sports, the cancellation of competitions really stung. Hard.

In any case, it is no secret that quarantine has flung obstacles at every corner of our society, and, of course, those who have contracted the virus itself have experienced the worst of it. Luckily, there is real hope that our world is returning to some form of normalcy. As vaccines have been rolling out over the past few months, COVID transmissions have been dropping steadily according to the CDC. This is good news, amazing news in fact, but we must be careful in how we digest this information.

As soon as we treat these numbers as an excuse to stop wearing masks and social distancing, that's when we run into problems. If we want to see meaningful change in the transmissions, we need to keep our momentum, at least until more of the country becomes vaccinated. After all, only about a third of U.S. adults have been fully vaccinated as of mid-April.

For the past year, we've all been told to be passive in our precautions against the virus: stay indoors and only leave when necessary. But if we really want to hasten our return to normalcy and the lifting of social distancing guidelines, we need to take on a more active approach as well. We need every family to sit down and discuss a plan. Whether it be researching which vaccine to take and their side effects, scheduling an appointment to get the shots, or even volunteering at a vaccination site, every family should have some sort of plan of attack against this virus. I'm faithful that if we all continue working together and if we all hold in for just a little longer, this virus will be nothing but a memory.

—Branson Bajoua is a junior at Valhalla High School in Rancho San Diego and a member of the East County Youth Coalition, a group of students advocating for healthy, safe and thriving neighborhoods.

News briefs

CONTINUED FROM Page 3

death had she not been found and brought to San Diego Humane Society's Project Wildlife team for care. Luckily, she responded well to treatment and after two weeks in care, was released back into the wild!

"Glue traps are incredibly inhumane, since the traps themselves don't kill the animal," said director of Wildlife Medicine Dr. Jon Enyart. "The animal gets stuck and is left unable to move until they starve to death. It is devastating."

Many of the animals who get stuck in glue traps are not invasive to humans — on the contrary. Owls control the pest population as their prey includes rodents and insects. Opossums are an excellent animal to have around your property because they eat rats, mice, snails, slugs and insects, as well as rotten fruit and vegetables — they will even eat rattlesnakes and ticks! Opossums and owls are also nocturnal, which means they're much more active at night. They are relatively disease-free, as it is extremely rare for them to carry rabies, parvovirus or distemper.

San Diego Humane Society offers a number of humane resources to deter and coexist with wildlife. To learn more, visit sdhumane.org/coexist.

CITY TO HOST VIRTUAL FLAG DAY

The La Mesa Flag Day Parade will not be held again this year but the annual tradition will be brought to life through a new online event.

SEE NEWS BRIEFS, Page 15

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Kinder reunion

CONTINUED FROM Page 9

necessarily appreciate everything fully but I definitely do now. She is such a sweet sweet person."

Leiderman said the purpose of these reunions are really to show that these foundational memories and experiences are important and to be celebrated.

"I wanted to get out of it [this reunion] that kindergarten had such an impact on them. These memories were ones that they will always cherish," she said. "I felt that I was a teacher that just wanted to reach every single child in every single way and I wanted to make an impact. I wanted to make a difference in these kids."

For her last lesson to these students going into adulthood, Leiderman shared a few bits of wisdom: "The focus changes. Never give up. You're going to succeed. Put your heart into it. Put your work into it. I think the most important thing is, things will be okay. It will be okay."

Women's Club

CONTINUED FROM Page 4

fact that the clubhouse went up for sale kept them busy even during this past crisis year.

Because of the pandemic, the clubhouse was closed due to COVID-19 restrictions. The lack of rental money coming in added to financial problems for the club. Currently, the clubhouse is in escrow.

"The club does not yet have a new building and truly have not addressed whether or not another clubhouse is wanted in the future. Thanks to the club's history in La Mesa since 1902, the members have options in the community for meeting sites," Phoenix explained. "We also have strong ties to many community programs and charitable organizations, and a wealth of service guidance from our federation. LMWC will never run out of things to do and will continue to go forth in a strong and professional way."

Besides, change is not always a bad thing as Quinn sees it, explaining that any healthy organization must experience change and the accompanying growing pains.

"Our clubhouse has been closed for over a year, which has resulted in a lack of revenue — it was a popular rental — as well as an inability to conduct large meetings. The eventual sale of the property, which we have owned since the 1950's, will mean meetings in a new location," she said. "We have already changed our focus to participate in worthwhile events that allow us to follow COVID guidelines. For example, we formed teams to walk outdoors with masks and social distance in support of charities like ALS and the San Diego Humane Society. We will present our five scholarships at virtual awards assemblies at our local high schools. Zoom meetings have definitely kept us on track to conduct business as well as to connect with our members virtually."

However, there is one thing that Quinn, Phoenix and other members of the LMWC are looking forward to: "Returning to person-to-person activities," Phoenix said.

Together, with the larger community, the women of this club will make that happen. There's no better time than right now for interested women to join the club.

—Cynthia Robertson is a local freelance writer and author of



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Solve the mystery in ‘whodunit’ books



By JAKE SEXTON

After watching the popular movie “Knives Out,” I became hooked on “whodunit” mystery stories.

The set-ups vary: sometimes a person is found dead under impossible circumstances, sometimes a wealthy heiress has been killed by any number of shady friends or relatives and sometimes a group of posh aristocrats are locked in a mansion, getting picked off one by one.

When done right, you — the reader — are almost an unnamed co-protagonist in the story, trying to piece the clues together before the grand reveal that the butler (or mistress or long forgotten half-brother) has, indeed, done it.

The grandmother of all the whodunits is probably Agatha Christie’s “And Then There Were

None.” In the book, 10 strangers are invited by an unseen host to a party at a mansion on a remote island. Unfortunately, once they get there, they find themselves prey to an unknown assailant who kills them one at a time, in a manner depicted by a spooky nursery rhyme. Tensions run high, secret sins are revealed and suspicions are raised and dashed as the guests’ numbers dwindle. This excellent novel became almost its own genre by offering, not one, but many murders to solve as suspects get eliminated, and the body count rises.

A recent discovery (to me, anyway) was the shin honkaku (“new orthodox”) subgenre of mysteries, popular in Japan in the 1980s. Often written by authors who were huge fans of classic mystery writers like Christie or Ellery Queen, these stories focus on depicting a crime as a complex



puzzle for the reader to unravel. A prime example of shin honkaku is “The Decagon House Murders” by Yukito Ayatsuji. Members of Kyoto University’s Mystery Club decide to have a holiday weekend on a deserted island where, you guessed it, they begin to get murdered. Hidden backstories are revealed, and lots of twist, turns and subtle clues eventually lead the reader to the guilty.

Author A.A. Milne is primarily known for his “Winnie-the-Pooh” books. But when he wasn’t writing about stuffed bears and

friendship, he at least once delved into the topic of murder. “The Red House Mystery” is about a Holmes and Watson-like duo who visit their friend Mark at his home in the English countryside, only to find out that Mark is missing and his brother has been shot to death. This is more a story about two chums solving an intellectual puzzle than a grisly thriller, but it maintains its cleverness throughout, and the eventual reveal is satisfying.

Finally, Stuart Turton takes the whodunit formula and gives

it a hard shake in “The 7 1/2 Deaths of Evelyn Hardcastle.” In this inventive story, the eponymous Evelyn is murdered at a late-night party at Blackheath Manor, and every morning, the day resets, she is murdered again. Each day, guest Aiden Bishop magically wakes up and relives the same day as well, but in the body of someone else at the mansion, with no recollection of the events he just lived. All he knows is that this cycle will repeat until he can catch Evelyn’s killer. This book is often described as a cross between the novels of Agatha Christie and the movie “Groundhog Day.”

For these titles and all upcoming news about the library, visit SDCL.org.

—Jake Sexton is a librarian at the La Mesa branch of the San Diego County Library.

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Pet Stuff

June’s featured artists: A mother-daughter show



For June, the Foothills Art Association are featuring mother and daughter artists Connie Grace and Sharon Meng. Visit foothill-sartassociation.com for more information about these artists and more.

Connie Grace: “I discovered colored pencils when I attended the CPSA International show when it was in Washington, DC many years ago. It was love at first sight. I couldn’t believe you could accomplish that with colored pencils. So I signed up for a class with the incomparable Pat Barron at the Torpedo Factory Art Center in Alexandria, Virginia. I already had a studio there but it was a printmaking only studio and I could not show my drawings there.

“I joined the local chapter of the CPSA and entered the international show for the first time and was accepted. I was elated and knew then that I had found my niche. I have since been accepted seven more times. I introduced my daughter, Sharon to the colored pencil several years ago and she took to it immediately. She has become a very accomplished artist. My other daughter is an artist as well so I guess it’s in the genes.”

Sharon Meng: “It must be genetic because I have no formal art training! I have been creative all my life but only came to drawing about 10 years ago. In my professional career, I worked as a nurse midwife. I do believe there is some artistry involved in guiding a woman through pregnancy and bringing her child safely into the world.

“Creatively, I began with needle arts, progressing from cross stitch to quilting to bead

weaving. I spent many years designing beaded jewelry. This served me in good stead when I had the opportunity to work as a midwife for three years on the Navajo reservation.

“When I told the Native women that I was a beader, they were hesitant to believe that a non-Native’s beading could be comparable to theirs. When I brought in my work, it opened doors to friendship.

“Ten years ago, my mother, then living on the east coast, came to San Diego to attend a colored pencil convention in Brea. I went with her one day and saw the phenomenal exhibition of works in colored pencil. When we returned home, we placed a small Navajo pottery bowl on the table and Mom and I both sketched it with colored pencils. My sketch was not bad so my mother encouraged me to continue drawing. Since then, I have attended the Colored Pencil



“Carousel” by Connie Grace (Images courtesy Foothills Art Association)



“Life is Tough in the Hood” by Sharon Meng

Society annual convention every year, participating in two workshops on various topics each year. I have also taken several portrait workshops with noted colored pencil artists.

“I draw because it brings me peace and fulfillment. I choose portraits because I love the geography of the face. When I draw a

portrait, I fall in love with my subject as I explore each subtle color and curve of the face. I find each colored pencil painting I do takes me a little further down the path of artist expression.”

—Bonnie Owen is editor of Footnotes, the monthly newsletter of the Foothills Art Association.

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Adorable coffee shop opens on 'other side' of La Mesa Blvd



Baked goods display case

By ROBIN DOHRN-SIMPSON

There is a new tea and coffee house on the block — the “other side” of La Mesa Boulevard that is. May 2021 marked the grand opening of this new hot spot in La Mesa Village — The Pink Rose Café.

Working through the pandemic, Nadia Zamora and husband Jose Guzman have finally opened their labor of love to the public. Nadia wanted to create a fun business that would give people a place to gather and offer a special location for events. She has always liked coffee; add tea and pastries and you have a tea party. The Pink Rose Café is the result of that vision.



A pink bike decorates the entrance to Pink Rose Café. (Photos by Robin Dohrn-Simpson)

The Pink Rose Café is pairing with local coffee company Ryan Brothers to provide eight different organic cold brew coffees that are

dairy free. If you prefer syrup, you can order coffee with a variety of flavors, or powders in three flavors: vanilla, white mocha and

caramel. They even offer an organic, raw, non-roasted, vegan and Keto-friendly Ggreen coffee. You can enjoy a variety of lattes or try an iced oat milk mocha with chocolate. Children are also special customers and can enjoy tasty juices, hot chocolate (with lots of whipped cream) and a unique Unicorn Lemonade. A sprinkle of rose petals in some drinks adds a special surprise.

The pastries vary with muffins, cinnamon rolls, scones and also include a vegan chai scone.

Nadia plans to host private parties for tea parties, birthday parties and mother/daughter teas. Put on a cute dress, don a fancy

SEE PINK ROSE CAFÉ, Page 15

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Pink Rose Café owner Nadia Zamora in front of a wall of flowers (Photo by Robin Dohrn-Simpson)

Pink Rose Café

CONTINUED FROM Page 14

hat and escape to the tearoom for an afternoon of fun.

Men, don't worry, the inviting decor with signature rose-colored walls, pink pay phone, acrylic chairs and marble tables doesn't mean you are not welcome. In fact, you are

welcome! Anyone who loves coffee or tea will find themselves enjoying a cuppa and a pastry.

Until the sign arrives, look for the pink metal bicycle with a basket filled with roses on the sidewalk in front of the store. The Pink Rose Café will certainly be a new hot spot in La Mesa. Located at 8209 La Mesa Blvd., they are open daily from 7 a.m.-6 p.m.

weekdays. Friday and Saturday, they are open until 8 p.m. and Sunday until 4 p.m.

For Instagram fans, check out the rose wall or the pink pay phone for fun photos.

—Robin Dohrn-Simpson is a local food and travel writer. Reach her at dohrnsimpson@hotmail.com or visit robindohrnsimpson.com.

News briefs

CONTINUED FROM Page 10

For this year's salute to "Old Glory", a two-week long virtual event will run from Monday, May 31 through June 14, 2021. The first 100 households to sign up to participate will receive a take-home kit with activities, themed accessories and a guide

to participating in tasks to complete their Flag Day Virtual Parade bingo card. Completed cards can be submitted for an opportunity to win great summer prizes.

Sponsorship opportunities for La Mesa businesses are available and will be recognized in both printed and digital materials. Businesses are also encouraged to include a themed special or deal

for the two-week event to encourage community members to get out and support local merchants. All donations go into an endowment fund to help with costs for future parades.

For more information or to register for your take-home kit, contact FlagDayHelp@cityoflamesa.us or visit the City website at cityoflamesa.us/1665/Flag-Day-Parade.

MINT AND TOMATO TABBOULEH



By JULIE WHITE

Tabbouleh is an easy to make, refreshing vegetable and Bulgur wheat salad. It will last several days in the fridge and still be delicious!

INGREDIENTS

- 1 small bag of Bulgur wheat or combo Bulgur wheat and quinoa — found in the rice section of the store.
- 1 1/2 cups of boiling water
- 4 green onions or 1/2 of a red onion, chopped
- 1 cup of fresh flat leaf parsley, chopped
- 1/2 cup fresh mint leaves, chopped (an essential ingredient to give you that fresh taste)
- 1 hot house cucumber cut into half-inch pieces

(they come wrapped in cellophane so you don't have to peel)

- 3 medium tomatoes cut into half-inch pieces

- Juice from 1 lemon
- 2 tablespoons of olive oil
- 1/2 teaspoon of salt
- 1/2 teaspoon black pepper

DIRECTIONS

Cook the Bulgur according to package. Cool. Add the remaining ingredients.

Cover and chill for about an hour or longer. Flavors will blend after chilling.

Taste and adjust seasonings.



(Photo courtesy Julie White)

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Green thumbs celebrate opening of community garden

By JEFF CLEMETSON

An old saying goes: “April showers bring May flowers.” And while April did not bring the precipitation promised in the first half of the traditional rhyme, the La Mesa Park & Recreation Foundation did its part to deliver on the second half when it held its grand opening for the La Mesa Community Garden on May 1.

The garden, located at the former putting green and golf club house at MacArthur Park, has been a long-awaited amenity for the city’s gardening enthusiasts — especially those living in apartments or condos who lack a yard of their own.

Rick Martin has been waiting for a community garden to open in La Mesa since moving here 10 years ago. When he first arrived and inquired about a community

garden, he was told to put his name down on what he thought was a wait list, but turned out to be a petition to set the city to start a garden. Over the years, he watched many attempts at a community garden fail, including a proposed garden at Helix High School and another at a local church that ultimately failed because some parishioners were against the idea. Martin speculates that people thought a garden would invite “the wrong people, homeless people, drug addicts.”

Martin became involved in a group he called the Community Garden Network that advocates for forming community gardens. Since he moved to La Mesa over a decade ago, he said there have been lots of changes in attitudes toward community gardens and other farming hobbies like raising backyard chickens.



(l to r) Vice Mayor Jack Shu, Mayor Mark Arapostathis and City Council members Colin Parent and Bill Baber cut the ribbon at the La Mesa Community Garden grand opening. (Courtesy photo)



Garden sign (Photo courtesy La Mesa Parks & Recreation Foundation)

“A lot of that red tape got cut and all of a sudden you’re seeing community gardens all over the county.” He said. “Finally it dawned on our city there’s people in need of it — that, wow, this is really helpful.”

Martin said he is very happy to have his plot at the La Mesa Community Garden because his apartment manager was against him starting a garden at his complex. For him, gardening is a healthy way to stay grounded and connect with the earth.

“This is nourishing,” he said. “Anything that goes bad in your life, guess what, go to your garden. If it’s not in your house, go to your community garden, and if you don’t have one, help somebody out who does have one.”

La Mesa resident Susan Wong also got a plot due to constraints

of living in a condo without a yard.

“I have two balconies but this is good opportunity,” she said.

Wong said she enjoys community gardening because it is a chance to be outside and to meet



A planted garden plot, complete with gnome (Courtesy photo)



Gardeners planting their plot (Courtesy photo)



Rick Martin (Photo by Jeff Clemetson)

SEE COMMUNITY GARDEN, Page 17



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Supes approve native plant landscaping initiative

By ELAINE ALFARO

On May 5, San Diego County Board of Supervisors voted to approve the creation of a native plant landscaping policy with the hopes of fostering biodiversity and sustainability in San Diego's natural environments.

The initiative was presented by Supervisor Terra Lawson-Remer and Supervisor Chair Nathan Fletcher.

According to the statement of proceedings, due to unanimous approval, the Chief Administrative Officer must, "collaborate with the San Diego Regional Biodiversity Working Group to develop options for a comprehensive Native Plant Landscaping both for public and private landscaping with guidelines, requirements, incentives, and equity-based resources and training, to circulate for stakeholder and public input." As of right now, there will be no fiscal impact but the topic will be revisited in 8 months according to the statement of proceedings.

With over 1,700 native plant species belonging to San Diego, Lawson-Remer called for fellow constituents and the public to recognize the importance of approving this policy. Currently, San Diego County does not have guidelines in place for bioregionally appropriate native plants in landscaping development.

"If we don't really think about how we revitalize and invest in our native plants and our native landscaping, we're certainly in danger of losing quite a bit of that biodiversity, which has massive



An example of native plant landscaping seen at the La Mesa Native Garden. (Photo by CNPS-SD Native Garden Committee co-chair Christine Hoey)

implications not only on the kind of landscaping that we see in our day to day lives but also on our biodiversity in terms of our species as well as on the sustainability of our soil."

Lawson-Remer outlined the main areas of focus in the policy.

"A big purpose of this in my mind is to send strong signals to growers and retail service and landscaping professionals that there is a robust regional market for locally produced native plant stock. Another big important part of this initiative is giving traditionally underserved communities the ability to actively participate and have access to support, resources and subsidies to help transform our region in terms of our native plant landscaping."

Frank Landith, conservation chair of the San Diego Chapter for the California Native Plant Society called in via phone to express the chapter's support for the policy.

Landith made the distinction that the policy will not come at the expense of landscapers and nursery owners.

"One quarter to third [of the 1,700 native plants in San Diego county] have been cultivated. We want to make it easier for nurseries, landscapers and the public to incorporate these plants into gardens and landscapes; not to force them to do so."

La Mesa City Council member Jack Shu also called via phone in support of the policy, especially after the City of La Mesa passed a resolution earlier this year declaring La Mesa in a state of climate emergency.

"The city [of La Mesa] needs help implementing our climate action plan and keeping our city from getting further polluted," he said. "We are looking forward to watching and seeing what the county does so that the city of La Mesa may learn some of these steps that you are taking."

Community garden

CONTINUED FROM Page 16

other people. "And just hanging out, gives me something to do," she said, adding that she feel lucky to have one of the plots to grow her tomatoes, squash, corn and flowers. "I think [the community garden] is very nice. I was amazed I got chosen."

When the garden opened on May 1, there were 40 plots and all were taken by the 40 people who signed up for one.

"We didn't know if we'd have to do a lottery but we had just enough applications as we had beds," said La Mesa Park & Recreation Foundation Community Garden chair Michelle Langdon. Since then, demand for a plot has created a waitlist and additional plots are being installed, including ADA accessible plots.

Other future plans for the garden include hosting workshops with master gardeners and other educational opportunities.

The community garden was made possible through grant funding, including a \$30,000

grant from The San Diego Foundation and a \$5,000 grant from the San Diego Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects. EDCO, The Cushman Family Foundation, Laurie MacDonald of Coldwell Banker West and La Mesa Sunrise Rotary also contributed to the garden through founder level sponsorships.

Garden plots cost \$100 per year and water and electricity for the garden storage area — the old golf clubhouse — is paid for by the city.

For additional information about the garden, contact LaMesaCG@gmail.com or visit lamesaparks.org.

—Reach editor Jeff Clemetson at jeff@sdnews.com.

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Post-pandemic life for seniors

By SIMONA VALANCIUTE

Seniors have been hit hard by the pandemic. Highly effective COVID-19 vaccines now offer hope of a return to a more normal life, but many of our institutions might be changed forever.

However, this can be a good thing. Life for many people post-pandemic will likely never be the same—but seniors can and should re-engage with a changed world safely.

Recently, San Diego Oasis hosted an “After Your Shots” webinar, featuring advice from local experts including Dr. Daniel Hoefer of Sharp Healthcare and psychologist Dr. Ken Druck. Here’s what they said seniors can do post-vaccination, how they can cope with the changes in our world and why lifelong learning and social connections are so important for their health post-pandemic.

What can I do now that I’m vaccinated?

First things first: all eligible adults should get vaccinated against COVID-19 (you can call 211 for help scheduling an appointment over the phone).

According to Dr. Hoefer, socializing with another fully vaccinated person unmasked and inside is very low-risk once you’re fully vaccinated. If you’d like to visit unvaccinated family members, friends or grandchildren, you will likely pose minimal risk to them, but it’s safest to wear masks. In the meantime, we should all continue to wash our

hands, wear masks and keep our distance in public, to protect those who may be immune-suppressed or have not had a chance to be vaccinated yet.

If you’re vaccinated, you can get haircuts, massages, manicures and pedicures, go shopping at local stores, do errands and travel domestically. Just be sure to make appointments ahead of time, and follow all mask and distancing rules they may have. If you plan to travel, laminate your vaccination card, take it with you and have a picture of it on your phone for back-up—and confirm any travel restrictions your destination may have.

Changed for good

The past year has been traumatic for everyone, so trepidation about resuming some activities is normal. But according to both Dr. Hoefer and Dr. Druck, staying socially connected, physically active and mentally curious was key to survival for most of their senior patients throughout the pandemic, and will be crucial for them post-pandemic too.

The past year-plus has been a trying time, starkly highlighting the health risks of social isolation for all of us, especially older adults. The top predictor of early death among retirees and older adults is social isolation, according to Dr. Hoefer. Over the past year, his patients who were socially isolated experienced more diabetes complications and heart failure than those who had strong social connections, whether

through online classes and volunteering or regular chats with friends and family.

At San Diego Oasis, which offers lifelong learning classes for older adults, we observed the same phenomenon in many of our students—those who stayed engaged with classes and friends reported better health than those who withdrew. Throughout the pandemic, San Diego Oasis has focused on building a “senior center without walls” where older adults can find learning and connection, even at home, through a wide variety of free or low-cost classes. Our students and instructors, most of whom are 65 and older, have eagerly adapted to online learning, and can now attend class both virtually and in a hybrid, part-online, part in-person format.

Humans are social creatures, and we thrive on positive mental challenges. Dr. Druck put it best: life may never be the same, but we can use the challenges of this past year and the challenges ahead of us to try new things, engage with the world and build a healthier, more fulfilling life.

—Simona Valanciute is the President and CEO of San Diego Oasis, a nonprofit organization serving people age 50 and better, who pursue healthy aging through lifelong learning, active lifestyles, and community service. Learn more at sandiegoasis.org.

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Located in downtown La Mesa, MesaView Senior Assisted Living offers Independent Living, Assisted Living, and Memory Care services in a smaller, home-like environment. Experience the comforts of home while benefiting from trained staff who put your safety, health, and well-being first every day. Completely remodeled and updated, MesaView’s quaint and inviting feel is met with extensive outdoor space and gardens, as well as newly

designed living spaces. MesaView promotes the physical, social, and spiritual aspects of its residents’ lives, embracing cultures and celebrating their experiences. The well-trained and compassionate staff offer individualized care and support services to the residents. A short walk to local stores, restaurants, and coffee shops, MesaView offers independent living services for those who are able to live on their own but want to live in a communi-

ty setting or prefer a living situation that includes housekeeping, social activities, dining, transportation, security, or the option of reminders of daily tasks or medical needs. Schedule a tour to learn more about MesaView Senior Assisted and Independent Living!

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Seniors share thoughts on student life in pandemic



Foothiller Footsteps

By CONNIE AND LYNN BAER

In March 2020, the lives of Grossmont's 100th graduating class, the Class of 2021, were dramatically changed. In the past 14 months, Foothillers have faced the challenge of distance learning as well as the challenge of transitioning from a semester to a quarter system and adjusting to the varying in-person and distance-learning schedules. At the end of 2020, students could choose to return to class one day a week; in 2021, two days; and now four days a week. At the same time, some students have continued to learn from home while the teachers teach simultaneously to those at home and those in class.

These challenges have especially tested this year's senior class as they face a year without the traditional senior experiences. We recently asked them to share their thoughts with us.



Todd Bell period 6 seniors holding a photo of the Class of 1921

During the past 14 months, what has been the most difficult thing about the COVID shut down for you?

Kaevyn Bouma: "The most difficult thing has been learning to become flexible and learning how to adapt to whatever life throws my way."

Christopher Martinez: "Arriving early to school every morning used to be my favorite part of the day as I would be able to go into the library and get some work done in a peaceful environment without distractions. Because of the pandemic, many libraries, including our own, were temporarily closed which made many of us have to learn how to

work from home with all of our distractions."

Noor Shamasyousef: "Remaining calm, ever since the COVID shut down, my anxiety has been worse because of constantly worrying about the present and the future."

Anaya Harris: "The most difficult thing about the COVID shut down for me is not being able to do normal things as in visiting friends and enjoying my last year of high school."

Camila Sanchez: "I am not the best with change, so when it came to adapting to a completely different way of living I struggled a bit."

SEE FOOTHILLER, Page 22

Denise Whisenhunt selected as new Grossmont College president

An educator with more than two decades of experience in higher education has been selected as the next president of Grossmont College.

Denise Whisenhunt, who now works as vice president of Student Services at San Diego City College, was selected for the position by Grossmont-Cuyamaca Community College District Chancellor Lynn Neault. She will start her new position July 1, pending contract approval by the Governing Board.

"With the many challenges facing our district as we emerge from the pandemic and build back enrollment, Ms. Whisenhunt will bring a fresh perspective toward building a strong future," Neault said. "She has an engaging style of leadership and will work collaboratively with all groups to promote the best interests of the college."

Whisenhunt has been in her current position since 2013. As vice president for Student Services, she provides leadership for a wide range of programs, including Admissions



Denise Whisenhunt (Courtesy photo)

and Records, Financial Aid, programs for disabled students, and veteran services. She also served for 14 months beginning in May 2106 as Interim President of San Diego City College until a permanent president was selected.

Whisenhunt has worked at San Diego City College since 2001. She worked for four years as Dean of Student Affairs at the college. She previously served as Interim Dean of Student Development and Matriculation

SEE GROSSMONT COLLEGE, Page 21



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Helix grads celebrate with ‘Car Cruise’



Helix Highlights

By JENNIFER OSBORN

It goes without saying that the 2020-21 school year has been like no other in our lifetime. While it was not the year the class of 2021 would have expected when they started high school, they are finding ways to celebrate and make the most of the end of their high school careers. Much credit can be given to their Grade Level Team — grade level principal Elena Smith, counselor Arica Villegas, academic advisor Gillian Morgan and administrative assistant Sara Brown — who have worked tirelessly to plan events to bring the students together and make memories as a class.

While brainstorming ideas for student activities, Villegas almost jokingly expressed to Helix High

School Foundation board member Judy Kirk her wish to have a parade through the streets of La Mesa. Never one to shy away from a challenge, Kirk’s wheels began turning. After a few iterations that weren’t feasible, discussions between Kirk, the Grade Level Team, and Helix alumnus and La Mesa Mayor Mark Arapostathis (class of 1985), resulted in the Class of 2021 Car Cruise, which took place on May 23.

Students convened in the La Mesa Community Center parking lots as a staging area to decorate their cars and line up for the drive. Led by Arapostathis in his golf cart, students followed the route through the streets of the La Mesa Village, waving to family, staff, and alumni who lined the sidewalks to cheer on the soon-to-be graduates.

Seniors will participate in commencement ceremonies on Thursday, June 3 on Jim Arnaiz Field at Benton Hart Stadium. It will be a full in-person ceremony, with limited attendance and COVID safety measures in place.



Students and family preparing for Car Cruise (Photos by Jim Cook)

Approximately 500 students will graduate in the Helix class of 2021.

SPORTS WRAP UP

While the final sports seasons are still wrapping up, many of the teams enjoyed great success in an abbreviated year. The following is current as of the time of writing:

- The boys’ golf team finished the season as League Champions, and earned an automatic berth in the CIF playoffs, which will begin between June 1 and 3.
- The girl’s soccer team advanced to the CIF DI Semifinals as they topped Canyon Crest by the score of 2-0. They were scheduled to play the next round on May 25.
- The boy’s soccer team lost to Poway, 2-1 in the CIF quarterfinals ending their season.
- The girl’s lacrosse team was seeded 10th in the CIF DI Playoffs and were to begin tournament play May 25 at Mission Hills High School.
- The boy’s volleyball team was seeded fourth in the CIF playoffs. They were to begin tournament play on May 29.

Other sports are still in progress, and playoffs will take place after Helix’s graduation date.

SPEECH & DEBATE CHAMPIONSHIPS

The Helix Speech & Debate team made a splash at the California High School Speech Association, finishing 17th out of more than 150 schools statewide. Individual accomplishments include:

- **Grace Roche and Rachael Sharp:** State champions in Duo Interpretation – 56 competitors (112 teams competed statewide to qualify)
- **Lucas Osborn:** 10th place in Student Congress – 88 competitors (435 students competed statewide to qualify)
- **Ruby Anderson:** Semifinalist in Dramatic Interpretation – 14th of 56 competitors (229 students competed statewide to qualify)
- **Jeremy Potter:** Semifinalist in Student Congress – 17th of 88 competitors (435 students competed statewide to qualify)

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

Grossmont College

CONTINUED FROM Page 20

and as Associate Dean of Student Services/Outreach at the college.

Before joining San Diego City College, Whisenhunt was a Transfer Center Coordinator at the University of California, Merced. She started her career in higher education in 1991, serving for almost three years as an Outreach Officer at the University of California, San Diego.

Whisenhunt earned her juris doctorate degree at The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. She has a Bachelor of Arts degree in political science and English literature from the University of California, San Diego.

A vacancy was created for the Grossmont College presidency when Nabil Abu-Ghazaleh retired as president in December 2020. Marsha Gable, the college’s vice president for Student Services, has been serving as interim president.

Grossmont College has served the diverse educational needs of San Diego’s East County since 1961. With more than 150 certificate and associate-degree programs, Grossmont College provides workforce training, career development and transferable college-level coursework to its more than 15,000 students. For more information, visit grossmont.edu.



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Footiller

CONTINUED FROM Page 20

During the past 14 months, what have you learned about yourself and/or others?

Chrestina Khoso: "What I learned about myself is that I don't quit easily."

Ariana Hamid: "I have learned that I needed to learn more about caring for others. I have learned that not even a deadly virus could stop some people from being self-ish. On a positive note, I have learned that I am stronger than I thought."

Samar Amiri: "To not take anything for granted. I appreciate every little thing."

Harrison Cox: "The past 14 months have taught me a lot, but the most important being the self-discovery of my own worth and others. This time allowed many people, including me, to reckon with themselves finding out things they wouldn't have if it weren't for the lockdown."

Nazanin Fnu: "I discovered the many things I like to do as a hobby such as cooking, crocheting. I grew and learned many things such as that my family is very important to me and that I want to be a better person."

What makes Grossmont special or unique?

Alyssa Bolden: "Something that makes Grossmont special is the teachers. They went out of their way to check upon us or even remembering our birthdays even though we are not in the class anymore."

Olivia Vasquez: "Grossmont always finds a way to bring school spirit and make everyone feel like they are a part of something."

Grace Freeman: "The atmosphere. Everyone is so welcoming. The school spirit is amazing."

Murtadha Alrubaiee: "The teachers truly care about their students' education, even during a pandemic. Teachers were trying hard to prepare us for the AP test and they made different programs and student sessions in order to help all of their students."

SEE FOOTHILLER, Page 23

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Multiple offers, sold \$125,000 Over Comps!

SOLD!

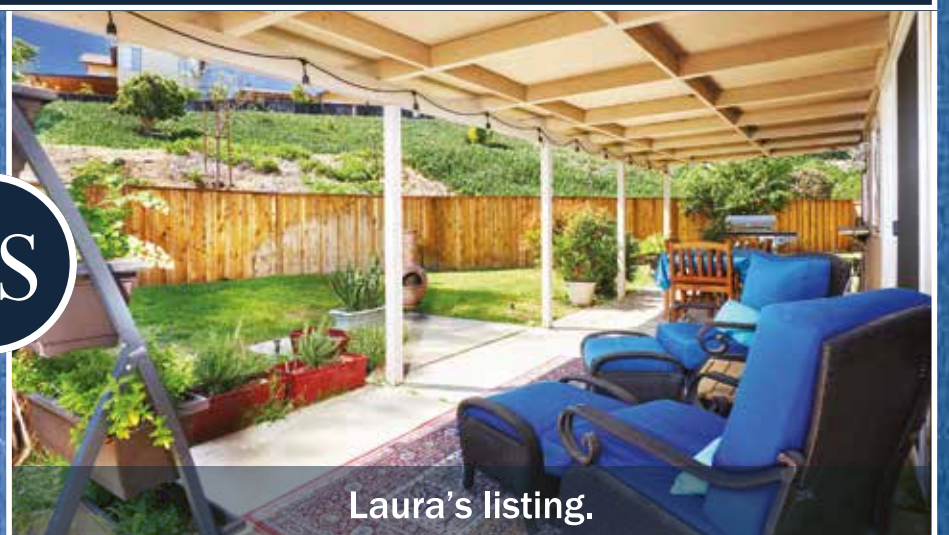
CARLSBAD
Multiple Offers. Sold in First Week

Work Pride Matters.



The other guy's listing.

VS



Laura's listing.

Same house. Same patio. Different agent.

Staging, angles and an eye for detail generate captivating photos and higher sales prices!



Follow Laura on Instagram
@LauraLothianRealEstate

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