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Questions of what to do about and who owns artwork like this multi-colored mural that covered damaged windows following the May 30, 2020 riots are difficult to answer. (Photo by Jeff Clemetson)

# Complicated issues surround community art

By JEFF CLEMETSON

When protests over policing in La Mesa turned into destructive riots that damaged storefronts

throughout the Downtown Village shopping areas, the city's residents immediately stepped up to help clean the damage and offer support in any way they could.

One of the more visible ways community members showed their support for the businesses was to paint and beautify the large plywood boards used to cover broken

windows and protect intact ones from the possibility of a repeat of the May 30, 2020 incident.

SEE MURAL BOARDS, Page 14

# New police chief starts community conversations

By KENDRA SITTON

La Mesa Police Chief Ray Sweeney recently finished his first community conversation tour, but he promised this will not be his last. For four Thursday evenings in a row, July 29 to Aug. 19, the new chief held town halls in different parts of La Mesa where people could learn more about his vision for the department and to give locals a chance to ask him questions.

"This is not the end of our community conversations. We have not done a good job getting into the community [for the past several years.]" Sweeney said. "I wanna hear from you."

Sweeney said many of these conversations have been paused for COVID-19 and he is thankful to be back because they are critical for healing.


At the third community conversation at Maryland Elementary on Thursday, Aug. 10, Sweeney explained that he wanted to spend most of the two hours answering questions but started with a presentation on his six-step action plan. [Editor's note: For more information on his action plan, please see La Mesa Courier's interview with Chief Sweeney in the July edition.] In addition, he shared the types of training the department conducts due to questions at the last session. That training includes crisis response with PERT, de-escalation from District Attorney Summer Stephan, principle policing (an eight-hour course that is all encompassing and includes understanding of implicit bias), mobile field force and the incident command system.



La Mesa Police Chief Ray Sweeney speaks at a community conversations meeting on Aug. 10. (Photo by Kendra Sitton)

SEE NEW CHIEF, Page 16

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# Lothian sticks to pro-business message

By JEFF CLEMETSON

Laura Lothian is hoping the third time is indeed the charm on her now third run for a seat on the La Mesa City Council — that and a new traditional approach to campaigning.

“This will be my most professional run ever,” she said. “I am a do-it-myself person — I don’t ask people for things I just do it myself, and this time I will be raising money accepting donations and now I have people expecting things from me and I have to deliver so this will be a different election.”

In her last election in November, Lothian received just under 19% of the vote, but with her new embrace of political consultants to help with messaging, website and fundraising, as well as endorsements from conservative groups and individuals like the Lincoln Club, Republican Party of San Diego County and Carl DeMaio, she is hoping to win a council seat just one year later. Although her strategy might be different, Lothian’s political platform is not.

“My opinion on governing and individual liberties and pro business hasn’t changed,” she said. “I’m still that person who [believes] the businesses are the lifeblood of any community. People forget sometimes that our parks our fire departments our school and our hospitals are all funded by business and businesses keep getting stomped on in this state and I think there is an overflow not getting the support they need all the way to the city level.”

Lothian, who has a successful career as a local realtor, said she wants to speak for business owners because she is one.

“So last year before the election, I suffered along with all the other business owners,” she said. “I watched business owners crying and losing their life savings and not being afraid of the pandemic as much as being afraid of being shut down permanently.”

Lothian said she fears another shutdown could be “around the corner” as the COVID-19 Delta variant spreads and makes headlines nationally and locally.

“Shutdowns] didn’t work the first time and I don’t think it will work a second time and I don’t think our economy could take a second shut down,” she said. “I think we’ll collapse and a collapsed economy will bring all kinds of nightmares. It will bring crime, it will bring suicides, depression, drugs, alcohol abuse, loss of employment, loss of homes — we can’t go through it again.”

In addition to being against government agencies shutting down businesses, Lothian said she will also oppose vaccine mandates and onerous mask requirements. She said she opposes the recent decision by the County Board of Supervisors to recommend employers mandate vaccines for employees,

“I know that city councils have the power to do that [for city



La Mesa City Council candidate Laura Lothian (Courtesy photo)

employees],” she said, and shared that her daughter was recently hired to work for the city of Cary, North Carolina but would have needed to wear a mask at work. “She said she won’t do it and rejected the job.”

Lothian also pointed out that the city of Los Angeles voted to require vaccine passports to enter interior public spaces.

“If that vote comes to La Mesa, I’m going to be a voice against that,” she said. “I know this is federal and not local, but this is important: Up until five years ago, if you were terminally ill in the United States of America, you are dying, and you’re begging your doctor for experimental drugs, you’ll do anything to live, our government blocked it. They did not let terminally ill, dying people try experimental drugs. This same government is now coercing healthy people to try experimental drugs. That is insane.”

In addition to a pro-business campaign, Lothian also stresses her pro-police stance.

“I speak to police off the record, on a personal level, and I know that we have some — I can’t speak for all — that are not feeling the love. They feel demoralized,” she said. “If I’m on City Council, they’re going to have a friend on City Council, someone who really appreciates what they do and is not naive. I recognize how hard it is to keep a community safe and I think a lot of people don’t realize that — and I do, so they would have my full support.”

When it comes to the issue of development in La Mesa, Lothian said she sees it as a “great debate” that she can passionately see from both sides.

“I am in real estate and I believe that property owners have the right to develop their property within zoning restrictions or whatever,” she said. “And the other side of me is like, well you also love the charm of La Mesa and erecting these monolithic, half-mile long stretches of condensed apartments on railroad tracks is not charming.”

Lothian said the cause of “unattractive” high-density housing is government entities “trying to make public transit housing the thing.”

“So the vision is you live on public transit housing, you don’t need a car, you hop on trains and buses to get to work and go out and do your social life,” she explained. “And what I think is going to happen is you’re going to have high-density living and people are still going to have their cars and I believe Spring Street and Allison and Palm and all around here is going to get clogged like nobody’s business and instead of improving the environment, we’ll be polluting the environment.”

Another area of housing policy Lothian sees as problematic is the nationwide eviction moratorium implemented by the Centers for Disease Control, which she described as “unconstitutional.”

“I’ve got four clients right now that are in anguish because they need to sell. They can’t sell their homes, they can’t move into their own home, they can’t get rid of a tenant unless that tenant is a danger and if you don’t have property rights, where are we?” she said. “As a real estate person and someone who believes in property rights I think this whole moratorium has been a nightmare. All we’ve done is postpone the pain. I don’t know what to predict, what kind of nightmare we’re going to have but when that moratorium ends I have clients who are going to list their houses in a minute. So you multiply me by thousands of agents, what is that going to do to the market?”

Worrying about the direction of the real estate market is just one aspect in what motivated Lothian for her third run for City Council — one aspect of many that she thinks is heading La Mesa in the wrong direction.

“I’m personally terrified of the medical tyranny, the property rights tyranny all of it. I can’t believe what were living through and I just want to do my small part,” she said. “I’m running for City Council because I want to bring common sense back to the conversation. We have all gone off a cliff.”

For more information about Laura Lothian, visit [lauraforlamesa.com](http://lauraforlamesa.com).

—Reach editor Jeff Clemetson at [jeff@sdnews.com](mailto:jeff@sdnews.com).

## Why Homeowners Leave Thousands Behind When Selling Their Homes

La Mesa – A new report has just been released which reveals 7 costly mistakes that most homeowners make when selling their home, and a 9 Step System that can help you sell your home fast and the most amount of money.

This industry report shows clearly how the traditional ways of selling homes have become increasingly less and less effective in today’s market. The fact of this matter is that fully three quarters of homesellers don’t get what they want for their homes and become disillusioned and worse financially disadvantaged when they put their homes on the market.

As this report uncovers, most homesellers make 7 deadly mistakes that cost them literally thousands of dollars. The good news is that each and every one of these mistakes is entirely preventable. In answer to this issue, industry insiders have prepared a free special report entitled “The 9 Step System to Get your Home Sold Fast and For Top Dollar”. To order your FREE copy of this report, call toll-free 1-800-270-1494 and enter 1000. You can call anytime, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

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# Afshan campaign highlights platform of equity

By JEFF CLEMETSON

Mejgan Afshan has a long resume of campaign work, but is now taking that experience and applying it to her own run for the

open La Mesa City Council seat on a platform of equity and social justice.

Afshan and her family — refugees from Afghanistan — moved to La Mesa when she was in fifth

grade. She attended La Mesa Middle and then Helix High School where she began an interest in public events as news editor of the Highland Fling. After high school, she attended Grossmont

College where she was a member of the school parliamentary debate team.

Afshan transferred to San Francisco State University where she majored in international relations. During her last semester, she started interning for then Mayor Gavin Newsom. When the internship ended, she was hired by Newsom's office as a confidential aide. After her stint working for the mayor's office, she went to work in the San Francisco congressional office of Nancy Pelosi as a staffer.

"Then she transferred to Madame Speaker of the House and I was there through that transition and it was really phenomenal," she said, adding that the experience wasn't all good as she had to answer calls to the office that were sometimes "really vile" and "vitriolic" against the new Speaker. "Now it seems like a million years ago but it was a big deal to have a woman shatter the glass ceiling and especially a woman of her rank to do so at that time in the country's history and really change how people think about women in politics in general I think and women in places of leadership in our country."

Afshan returned to San Diego and worked as a field director for the 2008 slate of Democrats running in San Diego County. "That year there were around 120 candidates that ran throughout San Diego County and incredibly the party and our field team helped support the party and all of them won. And that is what helped turn San Diego County blue for the first time [in a long time]."

After working for a few more political campaigns, Afshan put political campaigns on hold to pursue a new direction — working as an International Rescue Committee (IRC) readiness trainer helping refugees from war torn countries in the Middle East and Africa and Asia.

"I ended up finding my passion by going back to my roots and started to work with refugees," she said.

After the IRC, she went to work in the advocacy and public policy department at the Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR) San Diego. "That's where I did work pushing back against the Muslim ban and making sure that we were an inclusive and welcoming country," she said.

In 2020, Afshan left CAIR and co-founded Borderlands for Equity a — pro bono civil rights nonprofit focused on creating advocacy and education around issues in the immigrant community and legal representation for those experiencing discrimination.

Through Borderlands for Equity, Afshan ended up doing work that would inspire her current run for City Council: being



City Council candidate Mejgan Afshan (Courtesy photo)

a legal observer during the May 30 protest at the La Mesa Police Department.

"That experience, watching people get tear gassed and seeing rubber projectiles and people scattering in this complete mayhem, something was triggered in me that we have to do better by people in La Mesa and do better as a community on the local level," she said, adding that she wants to see the community be more equitable on the local level. "I never considered running for office before because I'm a very straight person, a very transparent person, a very direct person, actually not very political even though my resume would say otherwise. I believe in being who you are, stating what you need and getting the job done."

Afshan describes her campaign as "based on an equitable policy platform," especially in regards to environmental justice and housing justice.

"We want to be able to make equitable changes across the board," she said. "[Environmental degradation] absolutely impacts the most marginalized and underrepresented people of our community — our Black and Brown siblings in La Mesa — so I think it's critical to make sure we are doing as much as we can to not just fulfill our Climate Action Plan goals for 2035, but also improve them to where we can really be able to have a sustainable impact on changing the direction of our environment."

To make housing more equitable in La Mesa, Afshan supports the creation of a first-home-buyer initiative.

"With all the housing that's going to be built in La Mesa, we must be able to ensure that there is a larger percentage of affordable homes for low-income families to be able to secure in these new spaces," she said. "You can build all the homes in the world but if there's not equitable access to affordable housing, how are people that are struggling going to be able to really move in? How are they going to be able to secure a safe home?"

Afshan's platform also includes support for a new library and said

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## Trump Republicans want to defy the will of CA voters



By SEAN QUINTAL

It's not a news flash that Trump and most of the GOP are comfortable lying about elections; they continue to do so daily, and still with no evidence, nine months after the election. Their demonstrably false claims often include some version of "the will of the people should be respected." This makes the hypocrisy of Republicans about the recall election of Gov. Newsom is especially galling.

Gov. Newsom was elected in 2018 with 62% of the vote, that's 7.7 million Californians. His opponent, Republican and captive bear enthusiast John Cox, received just 38% of the vote. By any analysis that's a resounding and unequivocal mandate rendered by the citizens of California.

By comparison, it took only 1.7 million petition signatures to force this recall election (a threshold reached only after a judge extended the original deadline). Now, just 14 months before Gov. Newsom will stand for re-election, the state must spend \$276 million to conduct an unnecessary and unjustified recall attempt.

The reason is simple: A majority of Californians don't much like Republicans and, consequently, GOP candidates can't win in statewide elections. So the GOP, which in its current iteration has all but declared war on the democratic process, is trying a naked power grab to intentionally flout the will of California voters. It bears noting that this is the sixth(!) recall attempt of Gov. Newsom in three years.

The Republicans' thinking is: "If we can't win the governorship fairly, we'll just abuse the system to steal it." Troublingly, the bizarre nature of recall elections makes it entirely possible they might succeed.

The recall ballot consists of two questions: Question 1: "Should Governor Gavin Newsom be recalled" and Question 2: "Who should succeed him if he is recalled?"

If fewer than 50% say "yes" to the first question, then Gov. Newsom remains in office. But if more than 50% of the voters say "yes" to the first question, then the candidate who receives a plurality (NOT a majority) in the second question will become governor.

There are 46 candidates to be listed on the recall ballot. A plurality is just one more vote than the second-place finisher. This means that California, a state of nearly 40 million people, could have a person installed as governor who had earned just a few thousand votes. This is all outrageous, particularly since Californians will go to the polls next year to normally elect their governor.

In order to prevent this hijack of California's electoral process, voters need to do two things: Vote "NO" on the recall; and ensure your vote gets counted. Once you mark "NO," on your ballot to the first question, that's it. All you need to do then is close up your ballot and mail it in or drop it off.

To help be sure your vote gets tabulated, here's the election timeline: Aug. 16: All voters will be sent a mail-in ballot; Aug. 17: ballot drop-off locations open; Aug. 30: voter registration deadline; Sept. 11-14: various "super-poll" locations open; Sept. 14: Election Day.

In a week or so, once all Californians start receiving ballots in the mail, it's a relatively small task to mark the ballot "NO" and submit it as you prefer. Though it may be a simple action to take, it's the only way to protect the will of the voters from this dangerous attempt by a few right-wing zealots to undermine our political process.

We are happy to announce that the LMFDC will resume our in-person monthly meetings in September. As always, we will gather at 7 p.m. at the La Mesa Community Center (4975 Memorial Drive, La Mesa, CA 91942), on the first Wednesday of the month.

We'll meet Sept. 1, to discuss issues related to the attempts to recall Gov. Newsom, and several other recall attempts against local politicians. Members will hear from three nationally renowned political experts — Jesus Cardenas, Eva Posner and Dan Rottenstreich, as well as Charda Bell-Fontenot, a local school board member who has been targeted for recall. Because we care about each other and our neighbors, particularly in light of the resurgence of COVID cases, all attendees must provide proof of vaccination, and wear a mask.

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

## Reasons to recall Gavin Newsom



By LAURA CRIVELLO

Happy summer everyone! Hopefully, everyone is safe, healthy and enjoying time with friends and family. The RWNC have been very busy preparing for our annual fundraiser. Our very popular fashion show is back for 2021. This year we have chosen saved in America as the recipient of our fundraising efforts. For more information on this were the cars please visit [savedinamerica.org](http://savedinamerica.org).

Our fashion show will be held on Oct. 12 at the Bali Hai on Harbor Island at 11 a.m. We look forward to much support for this great event — more to follow.

It's almost that time. The long-awaited special election for the recall of Gov. Gavin Newsom is scheduled for Sept. 14. Regardless of what side of the political fence you are on, this is an issue that deserves every Californian's attention. A surprising 31% of the verified signatures needed to

qualify for a recall election were from non-Republicans. This fact discounts the claim being made by Newsom and other Democrats that this is a "Republican" recall. That is what Newsom wants us to believe, but it is again just one of his many lies. The facts are that he has abused his power and his handling of the COVID-19 crisis. California faced some of the harshest and longest closures and restrictions in the country, but his mishandling of the pandemic is only a small sampling.

Here is a list of some of his most harmful and egregious offenses since taking office (edited from [recallgavin2020.com](http://recallgavin2020.com)):

- Clemency for felons, including those who raped and murdered even committed heinous crimes against children;
- AB 5, affecting truckers and independent contractors;
- Highest homeless rate in our nation;
- Infringements of our 2nd Amendment rights and new gun and ammo laws;

SEE RWCNC, Page 7

## Prepare against wildfires

### Notes from Joel



By JOEL ANDERSON

In July, I partnered with my colleague Chairman Nathan Fletcher to hold a "Ready to Respond" press conference, highlighting the ways in which the County of San Diego is ready to respond to potential wildfires and other natural disasters.

With hot temperatures and strong winds approaching San Diego County, it's time for us to prepare for potential wildfires. East County is especially prone to wildfires, so each of us has an individual responsibility to prepare ahead of time and be ready to evacuate. Although the backcountry is typically hit the hardest, it's not unlikely that a fire could start in the Mission Trails area.

When I first moved to Alpine more than 30 years ago, within two weeks, my wife and I experienced our first wildfire evacuation. At the time, we were ill-prepared and didn't know what to do. We both worked Downtown and for a few days weren't allowed to go home. That taught me the importance of being prepared against wildfires.

After that first experience with evacuating, my wife and I bought a video camera and video taped everything in our house. Once a fire has done its damage, it's nearly impossible to remember everything that you owned. We took that videotape and stored

it in the city of San Diego where we thought it might be safer. Nowadays, everyone has a video recorder on their smartphone and can save the video in the cloud in the unfortunate incident that you lose your home.

I am grateful to my colleagues on the Board of Supervisors for not waiting for the next fire, but getting out ahead and helping our communities to be better prepared. They have also committed to offering more support to all our firefighters and other emergency and disaster personnel. These selfless and committed individuals have saved countless lives throughout the years. We can always replace cars, we can rebuild houses, but we cannot replace lives and that's why the work that our firefighters and others do to protect us from wildfires is so important.

One of the best ways you can help firefighters is by being prepared yourself. My staff and I have put together a list of available online resources to ensure the safety of you, your families, and our community. If there are any other resources you would like to see included on our wildfire preparedness website, please send them to [Joel.Anderson@sdcounty.ca.gov](mailto:Joel.Anderson@sdcounty.ca.gov) and we would be happy to add them. For the Wildfire Preparedness Resources, visit [supervisorjoelanderson.com/wildfire](http://supervisorjoelanderson.com/wildfire).

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



RWCNC  
CONTINUED FROM Page 6

- Sanctuary state for illegals and criminals;
- Made it legal for illegal aliens to sit on state boards;
- Highest state income tax in our nation;
- One of the highest state sales tax;
- Attempting to restructure Prop 13, increasing property tax;
- Highest vehicle registration costs in our nation;
- Vaccination requirements for children or be denied public education;
- Children’s medical records automatically entered into database;
- Attempted a drinking water tax;

- Signed law requiring mandatory health insurance or be fined to pay for illegals’ health insurance;
- Supported Prop 47 that reduced felonies to misdemeanors of violent criminals;  
Release of Violent Criminals
- Constricted ability for law enforcement to do their jobs;
- No longer illegal not to help an officer in need;
- Highest gas tax in nation before COVID-19;
- Teachers no longer can discipline disruptive students;
- Illegals are given income tax refunds, welfare, medical insurance, housing, education, food stamps and cell phones;
- Overruling vote of the people to reinstate the death penalty;
- Redirecting gas tax – not being used for improving roads, dams and bridges;

- Funds for the “Bullet Train to Nowhere;”
  - Refusing to set up water claim system with taxes collected to do just that;
  - Dismantled death chamber and redistributed death row inmates through the system;
  - PG&E power outages and threatening to take over PG&E;
  - \$20,000,000 tax dollars directed to study vaping;
  - Billions of dollars in collateralized loans from China; and
  - Funding illegal alien-owned businesses in the amount of \$50 million.
- Please vote in person or hand-deliver your ballot to your polling place or the Registrar’s office. Mail in ballots invite fraud.

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

Mejgan Afshan  
CONTINUED FROM Page 4

she will work with the new library task force in securing a new location and funds to build it.

“Our community needs and deserves better,” she said. “Libraries are one the rare spaces to this day that don’t require you to purchase anything to just be in public, so we want to make sure we secure a permanent home for our La Mesa Public Library.”

Afshan is a strong proponent of police reform in La Mesa and

wants to empower the auditor with investigative authority in the new Oversight Committee and ensure its funding.

“For those of us who grew up in La Mesa and are from La Mesa, we don’t want our community to be known as this terrible place where these incidents happen and nothing else good comes of it,” she said. “We want to be able to turn the page on what has already happened and these racial justice issues will continue to plague our community if we do not make sure our police oversight board has teeth.

If we don’t hold [police who discriminate] accountable, then who will?”

When it comes to the city’s role in responding to the pandemic, Afshan said the city should secure equitable vaccine and test kit access in community; and would defer decisions on shutdowns and mask mandate policies to county health officials.

For more information about Mejgan Afshan, visit [votemejgan2021.com](http://votemejgan2021.com).

—Reach editor Jeff Clemetson at [jeff@sdnews.com](mailto:jeff@sdnews.com).

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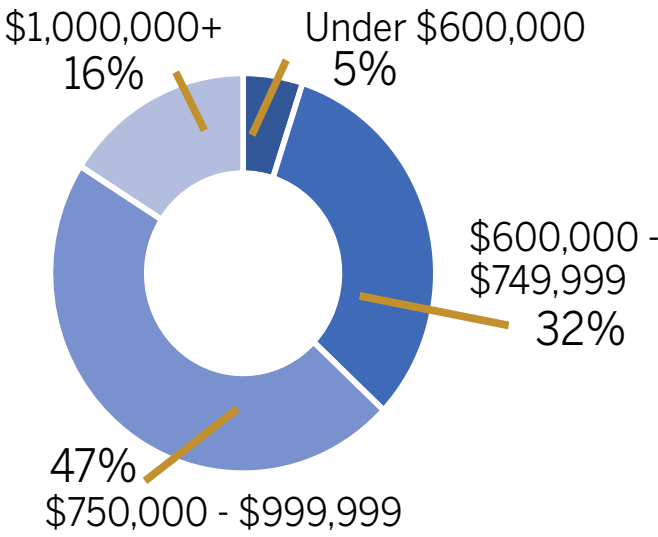


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Average Price per SF	\$430	\$504	17.2%
Average Days on Market	18	12	-33.3%
Highest Price	\$985,000.00	\$2,218,750.00	125.3%
Sold Properties	63	58	-7.9%
Average % of Last List Price	99.8%	102%	2.4%

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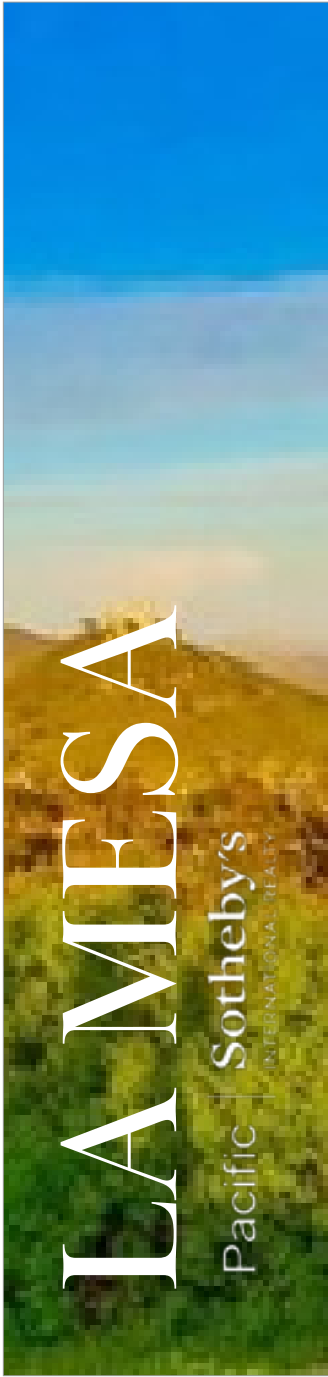


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# The making of the GHS Museum makeover



## Foothiller Footsteps

By CONNIE AND LYNN BAER

The Grossmont High School Museum's grand opening was celebrated on Oct. 17, 2008, but really, the museum's roots trace back to the amazing teachers from the 1920s who began

saving memorabilia, realizing that Grossmont was meant to be a special place. Looking at today's enlarged museum, the 1920s displays fill nearly one entire wall. The large silver plated trophies are just one example of the pride that staff, students, and the community had for their school.

The genesis for a physical space on campus to display and house the memorabilia can be traced to 1996. Preparing for the 75th anniversary in 1996, Assistant Principal Bruce Davidson began gathering items on campus for display and asking for donations from alumni. These items were showcased in a storage room for the district wide celebration. Then, when Davidson returned to the classroom to teach AP Government, an old, unused trailer near his classroom housed the historic treasures.

In 2007, when we began creating the GHS Museum, these items were then in boxes and shelves in

the old bookroom. Over the next 18 months, we scrounged the campus gathering items for our displays as well as display cases and contacting our alumni for donations of memorabilia. Today, these items are displayed throughout the campus — in the museum itself, in the foyer of the New Gym, in the lobby of the PE Building, in the lobby of the school office and in the district office.

One year ago, we began our move into our new space, into what was the 1950s Girls PE building dance room and hallway. The continued support of Grossmont Principal Dan Barnes, Facilities Manager Tom Fordham, and the GUHSD Superintendent Theresa Kemper has made this possible. Before our move, the new space was painted, the hardwood floors refinished, the outside doors replaced with security doors, and more.

There were so many district maintenance employees who

worked to create the new museum. Tony Patton, district carpenter, has been amazing. He hung the iconic 1922 double doors for us, with help from Rory Gooden and Carl Cable. Patton has hung all of the photos and other memorabilia on the walls and recently installed the French doors from the lobby of the "Castle" in the Spirit Hallway.

Next up for Patton is installing 1960s and 1970s surfboards, donated by Tom Bloomer (Class of 1967). Whatever we ask, Patton finds a way to make it happen.

The district electrician Greg Kielinen ran electrical outlets on the perimeter of the room for our new lighted showcases and added lights to the five large showcases we had, two dating from the 1950s. He also replaced ceiling lights in the Spirit Hallway and added lights to the storage closets and recessed display cases.

The district locksmiths Gary Hoke and Marcus Benefield made the original inside double doors operational, proudly sharing with us the 1918, 1919, 1920 patents on the internal workings of the locks, which they rescued for us. The district glazer Dave Henderson replaced our broken or missing showcase shelves. The



**Worker Bees:** Bill Woolman, Class of 1962; Paul Miller, Alumni Director, Class of 1966; Jerry Botts, Museum Volunteer, Class of 1970, granddaughter Serena Thornton; nephew Matt Vellone; Lynn and Connie; niece and nephew Kijan. August 28, 2020

district plumber Carlos Gomez helped us as we modernized the bathroom, making it handicapped accessible and more.

We thank Eddie Ramos, Refugio Magana and Sal Samaniego and the evening custodial staff for moving the items too heavy for us, including five large showcases, four small showcases, a switchboard, tables, benches, three filing cabinets and more. Whatever we needed done, they stepped up in every way.

The oak bookcases and storage shelving were created and installed by Dave and Matt Vellone of Vellone Woodworking and funded by Bill Woolman (Class of 1962). Greg Baer (Class of 1973) refinished 12 1930s-1950s oak chairs, two 1930s oak teacher desks, and three 1920s and 1930s

SEE GHS MUSEUM, Page 9

### SEPTEMBER 2021 COMMUNITY/ALUMNI HOURS

Friday, Sept. 3 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Saturday, Sept. 25 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Wednesdays, by appointment only



Students Visiting the Museum. August 18, 2021

### 101TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

Friday, Oct. 16, 2021: GHS Museum open from 4-7 p.m.;

New Museum Dedication 5:30 p.m.

Saturday, Oct. 17, 2021: 2020 Hall of Honor Ceremony at 10 a.m. in the New Theater, followed by campus activities. Details to follow.



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### Voting in-person?

In-person voting locations will be open across the county for four days, Saturday, Sept. 11 – Tuesday, Sept. 14.

#### Take advantage of early voting:

- At the Registrar's office, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday
- At a voting location near you or the Registrar's office Saturday, Sept. 11 through Monday, Sept. 13, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

All again will be open on Election Day, Sept. 14, when hours change to 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. Visit [sdvote.com](https://sdvote.com) to find a voting location near you.

### Why are we having an election?

California is one of 19 states that allows any elected official to be "recalled".

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- 1) Do you want to recall the governor?
- 2) If recalled, who do you want to replace him?

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@sdvote #SDVOTE





# Helix High students return to campus



## Helix Highlights

By JENNIFER OSBORN

We're back! Full, in-person instruction resumed on the Helix campus on Aug. 4. While there are plenty of modifications to keep the campus safe, being back on campus has been well-received by just about everyone!

The year began with two "No Backpack Days." Students and staff participated in activities designed to reconnect students with their peers, as well as with staff and the campus. For many students, this was the first time they had been on campus, so getting everyone acclimated was a high priority.

Day 2 of No Backpack Days ended with a special event to kick off the Fall ASPIRE program. ASPIRE is an after-hours program at Helix, available to all students to assist in academic support, provide enrichment opportunities, encourage participation in physical activities, and develop health and wellness habits. The ASPIRE kick-off featured inflatable obstacle courses, games, food, a photo booth, and other fun activities. While they were having fun, students were also able to find

out about the programs offered through ASPIRE, and sign up for their favorites, such as Baking & Cooking, Beach Volleyball, or Board Games. Regular school days resumed on Aug 6.

### HELIX FOOTBALL CELEBRATES 70

The first football game of the year took place on Friday, Aug 12 versus Mira Mesa High School. The Helix Football Alumni, a group of former football players spanning decades, coordinated a 70th anniversary event to celebrate the program. They named All-Decade teams, and honored stand-out coaches and players at a pre-game ceremony. At halftime, all 10 CIF Championship teams were recognized, with many players from those teams attending the event.

With only one losing season from 1976-2019, and an all-time record of 530 wins, 203 losses, and 19 ties, there was plenty for the Helix Football program to celebrate. And to top it off, Helix won the game by a score of 28-20.

### HELIX BIOLOGY TEACHER HONORED

Helix biology teacher Lenelle Wylie has been selected as the 2021 California Outstanding Biology Teacher Award (OBTA) sponsored by the National Association of Biology Teachers (NABT), and was recognized

at a recent staff meeting for her accomplishment.

Wylie will be honored at the Honors Luncheon at the annual NABT Professional Development Conference. The 2021 NABT Professional Development Conference will be held Nov. 11-14 in Atlanta, Georgia.

Helix Executive Director, Kevin Osborn, wrote this about Wylie: "Ms. Wylie is continuously looking to improve her instructional practices by participating in various professional development opportunities. She has participated in AP by the Sea at the University of San Diego in 2013, 2015, 2017, and 2019. Since 2010 she has been a teacher intern in the week-long training on conservation ecology modules at the San Diego Safari Park. In 2012-13, as a Socrates Fellowship at UC- San Diego, she worked on improving curriculum development and implementation of labs based on current research. From 2013-2017 Ms. Wylie participated in San Diego State University's Noyce Master Teaching Fellowship. As a Noyce Fellow, she was one of 16 math and 16 science teachers who received intense professional development designed to improve practice, develop teacher leadership and engage in discourse with like-minded professionals in secondary math and science education. All of these professional development experiences not only prepared Ms. Wylie for success in her classroom but also as a teacher leader at Helix."



Charlie Phillips, member of the 1977 football team, honoring long-time Coach Jim Arnaiz.

### HELIX SOPHOMORE NAMED TO NATIONAL COUNCIL

Helix sophomore Riley Hull has been named to the 2021-22 Student Leadership Council for the National Organization for Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD).

From Helix's SADD advisor Cheryl Tyler: "I couldn't be prouder of this young lady. Riley is only a sophomore and was chosen to be one of just eight nationwide-representatives. This is an incredible opportunity for both Riley and Helix Charter High School. Under Riley's leadership, we are looking forward to having a great year."

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

# GHS Museum

CONTINUED FROM Page 8

worktables and painted the bathroom for us.

Once we began the move, there were several alumni and family members who were our invaluable "Worker Bees" who spent a year packing and physically moving boxes of memorabilia from the old museum and our two storage rooms and then setting up the new displays: Jerry Botts, museum volunteer (Class of 1970) and his granddaughter Serena Thornton; Bill Woolman (Class of 1962); our nephew Matt Vellone; our niece and nephew Kijan and Kyle Baer; Paul Miller, alumni director (Class of 1966); and our sister Yvonne Baer Vellone (Class of 1975).

All of these wonderful people again and again remind us of the love for Grossmont High School shown by the staff, alumni and community over the past 100 years and today.

For more information, visit our website at [foothiller-museum.com](http://foothiller-museum.com) or contact us at [ghsmuseum@guhsd.net](mailto:ghsmuseum@guhsd.net) or 619-668-6140. Masks are required indoors on campus when students are present and always indoors for the unvaccinated.

—Connie and Lynn Baer write on behalf of the GHS Museum.

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# SALMON CAKES



By JULIE WHITE

If you keep a few cans of salmon in your pantry, you'll always have a quick dinner at your fingertips.

## INGREDIENTS:

- 1 14.75 oz can of wild Alaskan pink salmon, drained and any visible bones removed (small bones left in mixture are actually healthy to eat. They add calcium.)
- 1/2 cup Panko breadcrumbs

- Pinch salt
- Pinch black pepper
- 1 teaspoon dried dill
- 1 egg, beaten
- Zest and juice from 1 lemon
- 1/3 cup mayonnaise
- 1 stalk celery, finely diced
- 2 tablespoons olive oil

## DIRECTIONS:

Combine above ingredients, except olive oil, and allow to sit for a few minutes.

Form mixture into four patties. Heat oil in skillet and cook patties until golden.

Drain on paper towels and serve with lemon wedges.

Serve with Tarter sauce.

## TARTER SAUCE:

Combine ingredients:

- 1/2 cup mayonnaise
- Squeeze of lemon juice
- 1/4 teaspoon Old Bay seasoning
- Dash of Worcestershire sauce
- 2 tablespoons of pickle relish
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- 1 tablespoon minced red or white onion



(Photos by Sandra Small, CeCePhoto and Rippee Photography, courtesy of La Mesa Chamber of Commerce)



# No diets allowed at this food focused event

By MARY ENGLAND

The 12th annual "Taste of San Diego—East" is right around the corner! The fun happens on Monday, Aug. 30 with an offering of a variety of ticket pricing and entry times.

This has been a challenging time for all of us. The "Taste" is shining the spotlight on one industry that has been hit hard throughout the pandemic—restaurants, caterers, bars, breweries, wineries, bakeries and other food and beverage related businesses. The numerous

stipulations, regulations and need to add outdoor dining, are just a few of the issues that the food industry has dealt with to stay open.

This year's "Taste of San Diego East" will allow guests to interact with chefs and staff from various food vendors, while sampling their delicious items they have prepared especially for this evening. This year sponsors will have an opportunity to be "up close and personal" with the restaurants and business vendors beginning at 4:30 p.m. (a half hour before everyone else.)



The "Taste of San Diego—East" will be held at the Town and Country Hotel, 500 Hotel Circle North, in the Pacific Ballroom.

SEE **FOOD EVENT**, Page 13

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Food event

CONTINUED FROM Page 12

Attendees will again be able to “taste, savor and mingle” in a 13,000 square-foot ballroom with ample space to interact and enjoy the great food samplings prepared by participants.

The Chamber is thrilled to announce the food lineup for this year: Brew Coffee Spot, Buckboard Catering and Events, Dream Dinners, Edible Arrangements, Hooleys Public House, I-Que BBQ, Lean and Tasty, Little Roma, Los Pinos Taco Shop, Marie Callender’s – La Mesa, Pick Up Stix, Submarina – La Mesa, The III Tier Macaron Ice Cream, and Ultimate Catering Concepts.

Guests will be able to interact and enjoy the great food samplings prepared by our participants and visit with our evening business vendors. Guests will also receive a Chamber Raffle Card when they arrive. Once totally filled out by visiting all our business vendors, it is dropped into the Chamber Raffle box for a chance to win the prize. An Opportunity Drawing has been added this year, which offers five groups of prizes for people who purchase raffle tickets. Guests will place the stubs in the jar/basket in front of their desired item.

Ticket pricing, which includes complimentary parking and unlimited visits to all food vendors, are: VIP tickets at a cost of \$60 that include three hours of tasting, 5–8 p.m.; and General Admission at a cost of \$40 for two hours of tasting

from 6–8 p.m. This is a 21-year-old+ event. All tickets must be purchased in advance, o tickets will be sold at the door. Tickets may be purchased at lamesachamber.com.

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—Mary England is president of the La Mesa Chamber of Commerce.

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## Mural boards

CONTINUED FROM Page 1

“You have to remember, we took lemons and made lemonade out of it. We now have this beautiful collection of art boards,” said Love La Mesa Strong founder Jimmy Long, who formed the group in the aftermath of May 30 and who has become the art boards’ “caretaker” after they were taken down from businesses.

Now more than a year after the riots that will forever be a part of the city’s history, the “lemonade” collection of art finds itself in a state of limbo, with no clear solution as to what to do with them and no clear entity that has authority over them.

### ART GOES UP, ART GOES DOWN

On the morning of May 31, 2020, Long, like many other residents of La Mesa, went into the Downtown Village to offer help. While there, he came up with the idea to form a Facebook group — Love La Mesa Strong — to organize community members wanting to aid in the riot recovery efforts.

“Before we knew it, we had 2,700 members in two days. I took that as a sign that we needed to do more because the community was hurting so deeply,” he said. “I’m a spiritual healer and also a caregiver for seniors that are crossing and so I decided to work with artists and encourage artists and start posting for artists to start painting. Some

of it was organic and then most of it was organized by Love La Mesa Strong the new Facebook group.”

Long said businesses contacted him through the group who wanted art on their storefronts and that he asked the artists to keep messaging on the boards positive, with three basic themes: love and understanding, equality, and support for community. Many of the boards painted in the Village were through Love La Mesa Strong’s organizing, including boards Long helped paint himself.

But not every artist connected to businesses through Love La Mesa Strong. Tova Galgut and fellow artists Wendy Kwasny and Ann Golumbuk directly approached local business and offered to paint boards — a mural of a crow on the Crow Salon, a hummingbird and flowers at Blackbird and some murals at Tam’s Alteration & Dry Cleaning as well.

“It was about supporting the community and supporting what was going on and painting a feeling through art,” Galgut said. “Personally it just felt good being part of the whole movement and the feel of contributing.”

Galgut said she doesn’t know what happened with the mural boards after they came down, and that she’s “fine with that.” Her last contact with the murals was to connect Tam’s Alteration with Long, who was helping businesses take down the boards and moving them to a storage area offered up by the city’s public works department.

Mary England, president of the La Mesa Chamber of Commerce, also contacted Long for help with removing boards from La Mesa Springs shopping center — one of the most damaged areas in the riot — because the leasing agent for the center tasked her with removing the boards.

“When the glass people came up, those boards had to be down. That’s where I came into it,” she said.

Long said he made himself available to businesses using a truck he inherited from his father that eventually became “worn out to the point of exhaustion and actually blew up at the very end.”

Once the over 170 boards finished off Long’s truck and made their way to the public works storage area, the task of organizing them began. With help from public works department, especially Leon Firsht, a group of volunteers including Envision La Mesa co-founder Ursula Koenig, did the work of cleaning the boards, removing screws and nails, restoring some damaged boards as well as photographing and cataloging them.

“This was seven months, sometimes for 40 minute shots in 100 degree weather,” Koenig said.

After those seven months, the city needed back its space at public works and reached out to Koenig and Long to begin finding a new place to put them. The city eventually released the boards to Long. According to City Manager Greg Humora, Long was given

possession of the boards because he was the one who brought them to the city storage. Humora said he requested of Long three things: to take care of the boards, to return any to artists or businesses who might want them back and to work with the community in any future plans for the art boards.

“I have had opportunities with other large organizations representative of La Mesa that they wanted to jump in and potentially store them, but then when they saw the amount of them and how much coordination it would take to manage them, I became the [caretaker] by default,” Long said. “Public [works] reached out to me and said, ‘we need the space.’ I was on a sabbatical in Sedona and started working with Leon on potential options of when we can pick up those boards. And there was a timing issue in respect to the city not being able to provide another space and then I became concerned because we were running up against, not a deadline, but a concept of me doing the boards for display for the first time for the one year [anniversary of May 30] and that’s where Open heARTS became a possibility.”

### APPROACHING ANNIVERSARY CREATES A SCHISM

Open heARTS was to be a three-day festival held May 29–31 at Harry Griffin Park featuring live music, live art, poetry and a display of the mural boards. Long eventually cancelled the event due to logistical concerns.



Jimmy Long (left) paints a mural (Courtesy photo)

“The red tape involved with the, I guess, unsureness of COVID-19 and how the changes were happening for public events, it just wasn’t ... there were limitations on how many people I could have and it was kind of confining because I knew if we had done this event, we would have many more people than they were going to allow,” he said.

Although the event never materialized, its proposal created a schism between Long and others working to care and plan uses for the boards, especially Koenig who objected to using the boards at an event that was charging money, calling it an “inappropriate” use for them. Koenig said she was in favor of allowing Grossmont Center to display them in a “walking path exhibition through the mall, with the most fragile pieces in the food court.”

Long said Open heARTS’ ticket prices were to cover expenses like the \$3,000 needed for the permit and that his intention — laid out in both the proposal and a mock-up of a potential marketing poster — was to donate money raised above the cost of the event to local charity groups. He also countered that using the boards at Grossmont’s shopping mall would be allowing large corporate tenants like Walmart and Target to exploit the display as a marketing ploy.

On the May 30 anniversary of the riots in La Mesa, the boards did end up being shown — a video display of the photos Koenig had taken while cataloging the boards was part of an event at La Mesa First United Methodist Church that featured remembrances by Mayor Arapostathis, California Secretary of State Dr. Shirley Weber and Assembly member Dr. Akilah Weber and more.

Koenig said her next project is to use the photos to create a “living Facebook page of the protest art boards of La Mesa.” The project is not only to share the art with the public, she said, but to also be a place for artists to find and claim credit for their work.

### WHERE DO THEY GO FROM HERE?

The schism over where it is and isn’t appropriate to display the

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# Mural boards

CONTINUED FROM Page 14

mural boards is indicative of the nature of how and why they were created in the first place, according to Galgut.

“I feel that because it was such a sensitive time between COVID and what was going on nationally with the murder of George Floyd, it became personal because of what happened in La Mesa and then it became like a national and international movement,” she said, adding that she personally did not want to claim the art and thinks most of the other artists who painted murals feel the same. She does however have an opinion on what should happen with them.

“I think they should be preserved and there should be a show of it,” she said, adding that because of the cost of such an undertaking there would likely need to be lots of volunteers.

That search for more volunteers, despite the fallout over the Open heARTS festival plan, is something Long, Koenig and others involved in the effort to preserve boards still agree on. Long pointed out that before the “static” between himself and Koenig, both were in support of finding another home for them, such as the La Mesa Historical Society.

“[The Historical Society] wanted a digital archive of all artists giving permission [to the society to use the images of their art work],” Koenig said. “They never

wanted anything to do with the physical boards, only the artists permission on the images.”

Long said he feels the Historical Society should have “stepped up” and taken the boards. And while he understands that taking and storing the 170 boards that he describes as “quite bulky” would be difficult, there might be other reasons why the Historical Society or other groups might shy away from taking charge of the collection.

“To me, I feel that it is part of the history of La Mesa,” he said. “But it is kind of a little bit emotional and sticky in the sense that we took something negative and made it positive, but the overall aspect of the event is negative and so you come up to the wall of ‘do we want to remember this that much?’”

Other plans for the boards included beautifying corridors to the city, specifically along SR 94 and Massachusetts Avenue on land that CalTrans owns, Koenig said.

“This is what started my connection to this project... I wanted a few boards to welcome us to La Mesa on that corner since no welcome sign to La Mesa exists there today,” she added. “CalTrans was on board, however they were skeptical if it was ‘doable’ and we left it at: ‘the City of La Mesa would need to be involved.’”

England suggested that if the art were to be displayed, the group should approach property owners in the Downtown Village.

“There’s a lot of buildings Downtown or wherever. Go to them, hand pick some boards and

see if they’ll let you display them on the side of the buildings,” she said. “Then every three or four months ... change them out. That way you can display them, and you got lots of buildings in the Village, as well as possibly La Mesa Springs, which was heavily damaged, that might want them on their walls on the side of their buildings.”

Long agrees that public displays would be the best use for them, and that there should be a system in place with bar codes to check out and return different art boards for temporary displays. That that process was started, he said, but completing it was difficult because they lacked the space needed to continually move and return the 8-by-4-foot and to 12-by-6-foot boards.

Cost of such an operation is also a factor. Koenig said while she was involved in the cataloging work, she had reached out to groups like A Reason To Survive (ARTS) and Tony’s Custom Framing for consulting on what it would take to professionally and properly display the boards.

“Their professional opinion and quote also included two framers’ work on oversized pieces, trimming, stretcher bars, professional varnish per medium, framework — possibly \$200-\$300 per board/artwork, per 5-by-10-foot size. We had an early estimate of \$125-160K, to properly have these weatherproofed and ready for exhibition,” she said.

Another idea for the boards is to offer the collection to a museum

such as the Smithsonian, which has expressed interest in preserving murals in other cities. Other ideas, such as auctioning the boards off for charity, came up but were dismissed.

Another option is to ask artists and or businesses to take possession of their work. Long said that any artist who wants to claim their work will need to go to the business that hung the boards first because that is how he has them cataloged and how he can verify who the artist is.

No matter what ideas may or may not come to fruition, the nebulous nature of who has the authority to actually make those decisions is still a factor in any plan going forward. An idea accepted and preferred by both Long and Koenig was also shared by England: a committee or commission formed by the city that could make decisions about the boards in a transparent way.

“Possibly ... a community group should get together, a committee of some type, like we do for everything, and collectively decide what should be done with the boards,” she said. “One person or one group should not have total control over something that many believe are part of the entire community.”

Long, who is currently in possession of the boards, agreed. However, for Long and other parties hoping a city-led committee will take control of the boards and be a transparent solution to the issues complicating what to



Tova Galgut with her crow mural  
(Courtesy photo)

do about them, there is good news and there is bad news.

The good news is that at the July 27 City Council meeting, Vice Mayor Jack Shu and Council member Bill Baber initiated a task force into forming an arts commission in the City of La Mesa. The bad news is that, according to Shu, the city would be hesitant to take any action involving the boards because of the various legal issues, such as copyright ownership of the images, that could arise — issues that are present for any person or entity in possession of the boards, including Long.

In the meantime, Long said the mural boards are stacked in his yard, horizontally on top of each other to avoid warping; wrapped in tarps and secured with rope; and atop a buffer from the ground, waiting for the right plan or opportunity to be displayed again.

—Reach editor Jeff Clemetson at [jeff@sdnews.com](mailto:jeff@sdnews.com).



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**BEST OF**  
**2020 LA MESA**

### In Memory: Brandon James Sanders

10/20/1991-03/21/2020

Brandon was born on October 20, 1991 in La Mesa, CA to his loving parents, Amy Rose Sanders and Patrick Kevin Sanders. His parents beamed with pride as they welcomed Brandon into this world, immediately recognizing his brilliant, tender, and energetic life force. Brandon had a larger-than-life personality, and easily won the love and admiration of all around him with his wondrous smile and charming humor. He and his older sister, Chelsea Laurae Sanders, were close in age and affection. The pair were known as “Brandon-boy” and “Chelsea-girl.”

Beginning in childhood, Brandon loved movies, music, and creating stories. He was so passionate about this that he spent hours by himself as a young boy imagining up entirely different worlds, complete with sound effects and scripts. As a child, he was inspired by the soundtracks and cinematography of movies like Toy Story, Free Willy, Jurassic Park, and the Titanic. While he appreciated all music, he developed a special adoration for the music of Modest Mouse and Pink Floyd (particularly when played on his turntable).

Brandon’s next love was sports. He enjoyed soccer, baseball, wrestling, and most of all, football. He loved football. He was the only sophomore in his class to be pulled up to Varsity at Helix Charter High School, where he competed in championship games and won awards for his sportsmanship. He loved the sport itself, but he mostly loved the sense of community and comradery that came along with being part of a team. “Helix! You know!” He graduated from Helix Charter High School with honors in June 2010.

Brandon not only excelled on the field, but in the classroom too – especially when it came to history, political science, English, and economics. Brandon’s brain was a vault of information for major world events, and he used this knowledge to shape his values to include a profound sense of ethical responsibility and justice. He believed that people should have strong convictions; no matter what it was that they believed, they should believe it whole-heartedly. Brandon graduated from San Diego State University with a Bachelor of Science in Economics in May 2016.

Brandon was a hard worker, and dedicated himself to every job he had. Throughout college, Brandon worked at Berry’s Athletic Supply where he had the pleasure of promoting and discussing sports all day with fellow athletes and beloved coworkers. After his college graduation, he worked for Qualcomm before moving to General Atomics in 2018. Brandon enjoyed his work in procurement and had just received a promotion in February 2020.

Brandon’s final love was the love of his life, Megan Louise Heid-



millier. At the time of his death, Brandon lived with Megan in their La Mesa home with their fur-child Sophie. Brandon and Megan were building a beautiful life together, and had plans for marriage and children in the near future. He loved Megan fiercely, and looked forward to having his own family with her. Family and tradition were incredibly important to Brandon.

Brandon passed away on March 21, 2020. His untimely death leaves a mark on many who loved him. He is survived by his parents, sister, and love of his life, as well as a large host of family and friends, including his stepmother Deborah Jean Sanders and stepsiblings Steven Michael Wrieden, Kaitlyn Hope Wrieden, and Ashley Rae Wrieden, brother-in-law Matthew Edward Focht, and mother’s fiancé Michael Christian Morris. Brandon was greeted on the other side by many, including his grandparents, James “Jim” Thomas Sanders, Sr., Melba Rae Foulke, and Lorraine Alvine Robinson, as well as Uncle James “Jimbo” Thomas Sanders, Jr., Aunt Marie Therese “Terri” Sanders Hugel, and Uncle Michael Thomas Mountain. While we mourn the loss of our sweet Brandon-boy on this earth, we have comfort in knowing that his vibrant light is always with us.

Please join us for a celebration of Brandon’s life. We will be hosting a memorial service, followed by a lunch reception, on September 18, 2021 at 11am at Journey Community Church in La Mesa.

In lieu of flowers, you may consider donating to the Brandon J. Sanders Scholarship at [helixhighschoolfoundation.com](http://helixhighschoolfoundation.com).



## New chief

CONTINUED FROM Page 1

After the presentation concluded, many members of the audience shared their experience with LMPD and asked questions of Sweeney.

City Council candidate Megjan Afshan attended the conversation as well as previous ones.

"I appreciate the adjustments you've made to the presentation. It's important to make sure we continue this conversation," she said.

Afshan was a legal observer at the protest and riot on May 30. Of course, many audience members made comments about those events and the cases of discrimination that led to them.

"We're never going to forget our past. That's what I can promise you," Sweeney said.

Carol R., an elderly Black woman who has lived in La Mesa for 25 years, said the May 30 riot was a wake-up call for many who thought this was an idyllic small town.

"For many of us it has never been an idyllic place," Carol said.

She welcomed Sweeney and said she is already feeling better.

"For the last year and a half, I have been afraid, very concerned for my safety.... It's not fun to live in fear. I've been an independent woman for a long time. I'm feeling better now. I'm feeling very hopeful," she said.

Dawn-Marie Tol, a social worker, asked whether officers would be required to get vaccines and if Sweeney could mandate masks at these events.

"I want to feel safe with the people who are protecting the community," Tol said.

Sweeney said a vaccine rule would have to come from Stephan's office. In addition, he said all of his officers present at the meeting were wearing masks. Only a few audience members chose to forego masks completely.

The social worker then explained to Sweeney how it is often frightening for mandated reporters to call police not knowing if their clients will actually be safe with the people meant to protect them.

"Every time I have to make a PERT call for a client who is

Black, [I'm] worried about safety when officers arrive as well as the person's immediate safety," she said.

Sweeney said that before becoming chief he specialized in mental health and it is still important to him in his new position. He also said many people do not get in to do police work to do mental health work but that is becoming more and more the case. To that end, he is ensuring his officers have training on how to de-escalate situations.

Later, Sweeney discussed how important it is to him that his officers are mentally well through peer support groups and the department's psychologist. Earlier that day, he learned the son of a family friend he mentored and helped become a police officer in Arizona died by suicide. He hopes to prevent a similar tragedy here.

Tol's husband Rob asked how Sweeney would create a culture where "the good apples" are willing to report "the bad apples."

"Culture eats policy and training for lunch and dinner. We have to mirror what we do and let our officers feel comfortable reporting," Sweeney said.

He also announced that officers will be able to make reports directly to the Community Police Oversight Board (CPOB). The newly formed board is already reviewing the department's current policies to make recommendations. Sweeney said he views the CPOB as a partner and promised to work with them.

The next people to speak were interested in staffing issues and hiring practices at the department. Sweeney said the department is currently short five officers but there are several people in the police academy who will hopefully graduate soon as long as COVID-19 does not cause any more delays. In the meantime, patrols and emergency calls have become top priority even if it means taking detectives and specialists away from their normal job.

Many officers are also doing a significant amount of overtime although they are limited to not work more than 14 hours a day and sergeants work to make sure it is evenly distributed.

"Police officers cost money. That's something you can't change," Sweeney said.

He said the demographics of the department currently match the demographics of the city exactly and diversity is important to them. Many officers, sergeants and LMPD specialists were present at meeting. A few people commented that they were all white. Sweeney said the officers of color in the department were invited but did not want to come. Sweeney said he respected their feelings about not wanting to be tokenized as well as the hours they are already working.

Another topic that came up was that of marijuana dispensaries. Sweeney tried to assuage fears about them by noting crime has not increased since the legal dispensaries came to the city and

said the owners are partners to the city who are quick to report any illegal drug operations they encounter.

Polly Kanavel was one of two people who shared that they enjoyed the Citizen's Police Academy and recommended other people attend the program to learn more about the department. Sweeney added that anyone can request a ride-along and he is always happy to get coffee with individuals who want to know him more.

Kanavel said she is a part of a walking group but certain streets have become unsafe to walk because drivers run so many red lights. Sweeney was quick to connect her with the person in charge of traffic enforcement. He also answered her other question: what are the most common low-level and high-level crimes?

Sweeney said he did not know the exact statistics but guessed it was likely people breaking into cars. As for high-level crime, he said domestic violence calls were probably the most volatile and emotionally-charged situation his officers had to be in on a regular basis.

Sweeney said he plans to be out in the community so much people will become sick of seeing him. He promised this is only the start of the conversation and there will be more opportunities for the community to meet him later.

—Reach contributing editor Kendra Sitton at [kendra@sd-news.com](mailto:kendra@sd-news.com).

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## 'The Front Porch' opens Lamplighters' 84th season

Lamplighters 84th season begins with a play written and directed by local San Diego playwright George Bailey — featuring a plot and premise set in the past that still resonates today.

"The Front Porch" takes place during the fall of 1967. Clara, a white widow, stubbornly refuses her daughter's insistence she move from her home due to increasing racial tensions throughout the country and because her new neighbors are African-American. Although both Clara and Janelle Johnson's family are a bit apprehensive about each other at first, they develop a friendly relationship. When Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. is assassinated in the spring of 1968, tensions explode throughout the city and both families are caught in the middle of a race riot. Through their shared experiences; they come to appreciate and value their neighborhood, community and each other by confronting their fears and prejudices and they become true friends.



'The Front Porch' writer/director George Bailey (Courtesy photo)

The cast of the production star Michelle Burkhart, JaVon Clarke, Jo-Darlene Reardon and Januari Simpson.

Lamplighters Theatre's production of "The Front Porch" runs Sept. 3–26 on Fridays and Saturdays at 8 p.m. and Sundays at 2 p.m. Tickets are available at lamplighterslamessa.com, or by phone at 619-303-5092, or by email at boxoffice@lamplighterslamessa.com.

Lamplighters will be requiring proof of vaccination at the door and the wearing of masks while in the theater. According to a press release, this is to protect you, our patrons, the actors and our staff. It will prevent us from becoming a hot spot and having to close the theater again. None of us wants that. We will continue to monitor County guidelines as to when we can lift these requirements."

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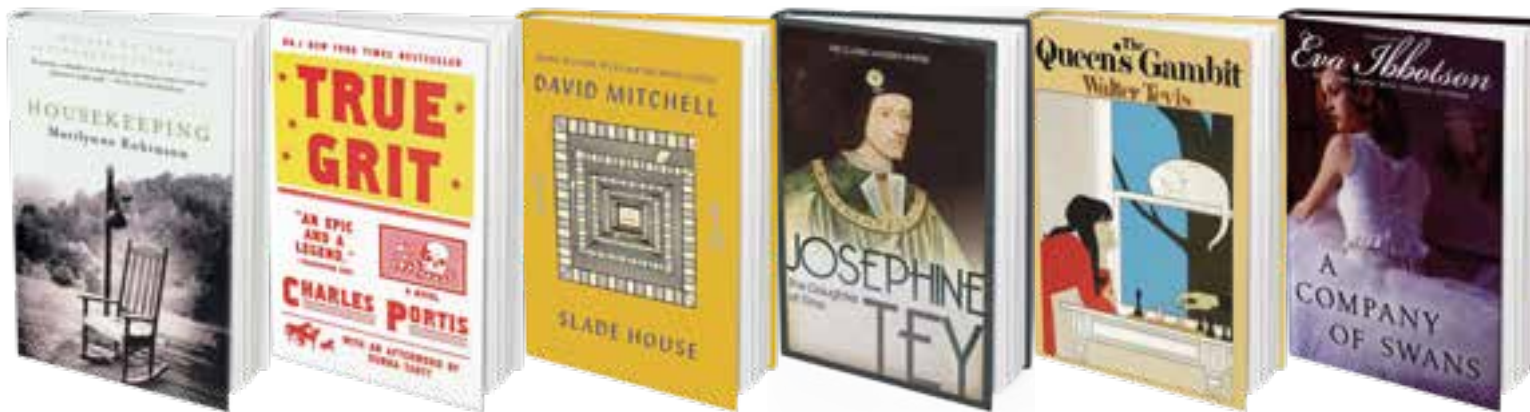


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## Quality quick read books



By JENNE BERGSTROM

Summer may be winding down, but there's still plenty of time for relaxing and reading among all your other favorite vacation and sunshine activities.

At the beginning of June, it felt like a luxury to pick up an 800-page epic novel and tune out the world, but by August you might want something a little more manageable.

Here's a list of great novels that leave a big impression despite their small size — they all come in under 250 pages. Plus, if your

reading session morphs into nap-time, it won't hurt if you drop one of these books on your foot!

"Housekeeping" by Marilynne Robinson is a beautifully written story of two eccentric sisters growing up in a small town in the West. Robinson's writing isn't showy, but every sentence is perfect.

"True Grit" by Charles Portis follows the quest of a 14-year-old girl to hunt down the men who killed her father. Despite this rather grim premise, the book is hilarious, with one of the most distinctive character voices you'll ever read. The audio version narrated by Donna Tartt is also a delight, and available to download through the Libby app.

"Slade House" by David Mitchell is a short, visceral horror novel about a creepy house that you can't leave. David Mitchell loves to mix genres and time periods to kaleidoscopic effect, and he manages to fit a whole world into a tiny space.

"The Daughter of Time" by Josephine Tey is a mystery novel with an unusual premise: a police detective who's recovering in the hospital solves a historical mystery (did Richard III really kill the princes in the tower?) without ever leaving his bed. A classic!

"The Queen's Gambit" by Walter Tevis is the book that the recent Netflix series was based on. It's a gripping story of a young woman chess prodigy in the 1960s. Even if you know nothing about chess, his descriptions of games will have you

on the edge of your seat, and the main character is unforgettable.

"A Company of Swans" by Eva Ibbotson begins with a young Englishwoman who has led an extremely sheltered life with ballet as her only creative outlet. When she is offered the opportunity to go to Brazil with a dance company, will she take the chance and escape her dull home life?

Come and see us at the library and get more book recommendations in person. We are open Monday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., and 24/7 online at SDCL.org with ebooks, downloadable audio, streamable StoryTimes, and much more!

—Jenne Bergstrom is managing librarian at the La Mesa Branch of the San Diego County Library.

## Featured Artist: R.J. Penner



By BONNIE OWEN

R.J. Penner is the featured artist for September for the Foothills Art Association.

Penner believes the best artwork tells a story, so he likes to include some narrative in his work. He prefers to give a painting a sense of place and space, a context, a meaning. In painting he experiences the joy of creating, the excitement of discovery, the satisfaction of completion, and the sense of connection with art history.

Penner says his inspiration comes from a lifetime of travel, visiting museums, concern for the environment and life experiences. He often finds that travel introduces

SEE FOOTHILL ART, Page 19



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# Foothill Art

CONTINUED FROM Page 18

new experiences, subjects and insights for art. He has painted many landscapes and also portraits of people and animals with an eye for the location.

Penner said his favorite artist is Winslow Homer. He especially likes Homer's many narrative scenes. He also likes the colorful expressionists.



'Bruno' by R.J. Penner

Penner began his artistic career by learning watercolor. He also enjoys painting in acrylics, which gives a more permanent feel but requires much more blending and paint mixing.

"I am a retired social worker and I took up watercolor painting during my lunch hours at the office," he said. "Since then I have expanded my skills and repertoire by attending adult art classes and professional workshops. As a social worker the conditions of injustice and inequality are especially resonant in my art. I grew up in California and have lived in Hawaii, Colorado, Germany and Italy. I began my association with the Foothills Art Association in 2011 and enjoy the camaraderie of fellow artists."

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

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