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San Diego Community Newspaper Group



Casa de Pico offers lots of space and a bustling dining experience. (Photo courtesy J. Walcher Communications)

Casa de Pico takes the honors of ‘Best Restaurant in 2021’

By FRANK SABATINI JR.

What started out in 1971 as a humble Mexican restaurant with less than 20 tables has blossomed into one of San Diego County’s most colorful and spacious dining destinations.

Casa de Pico recently earned the title of “Best Restaurant in 2021” by the East County Chamber of Commerce. Located originally in Old Town’s Bazaar del Mundo in San Diego, the spirited Mexican restaurant moved to Grossmont Center in 2005 after owner Diane Powers lost her lease at the bazaar.

That same year, she moved her other Old Town restaurant, Casa de Bandini, to Carlsbad while keeping in place nearby Casa Guadalajara.

SEE **CASA DE PICO**, Page 14

Grossmont High girls’ water polo surfaces with memorable season

By DAVE THOMAS

It was a season to remember for the Grossmont High girls’ water polo team and head coach Danielle Cook.

The Lady Foothillers went undefeated in Grossmont Hills League play. They ended up ranked third in the Open section of CIF San Diego, making it to the finals against The Bishop’s School.

While losing in the finals, this year’s team made it the furthest any Grossmont Union high school team had before. They also went



SEE **WATER POLO**, Page 7

The Grossmont High girls’ water polo team had much to smile about this season. (Photo courtesy Grossmont High School yearbook)

La Mesans eligible for new clean energy program

By DAVE THOMAS

For many people, looking at their electric bills these days there is some angst.

Now, La Mesa residents have the opportunity to take advantage of San Diego’s community community choice aggregation program that not only generates renewable power but could also lead to lower bills over time.



Power lines in La Mesa (Courtesy photo)

The community is now part of a program from San Diego Community Power (SDCP) where residents use electricity from renewable sources while still being a part of the grid maintained by San Diego Gas & Electric (SDG&E). La Mesa is one of five cities in greater San Diego in the program alongside Imperial Beach, Encinitas, Chula Vista and, San Diego City.

Some 700,000 San Diego area residents can get clean power from the organization.

Residents will be able to receive clean, renewable energy at reportedly fair rates. Although they are automatically enrolled in the program,

SEE **NEW ENERGY PROGRAM**, Page 9



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Helix High performing arts students having banner year

By DAVE THOMAS

Despite all the challenges of the last few years, performing arts students at Helix High have not let it stop them. A number of departments have been busy practicing and putting on productions.

DANCE

Katie Pipes, chair of the performing arts department, noted she has more than 100 students involved in the dance program. “I started in January of 2007 with 26 students and we have grown so much over the past 15 years,” Pipes commented. Currently, Pipes is preparing the dancers for a spring Storytime production May 5-7 centered on children’s stories. “There will be dances choreographed by faculty and students,” Pipes said. “This is a really fun show that will feature all styles of dance including jazz, hip



Students wearing masks prepare for a performance. (Courtesy photo)

hop, contemporary and modern dance.” Pulling this and other productions off has been a challenge over the last few years. “During COVID the student engagement and motivation was definitely a challenge,” Pipes remarked. “During our Zoom classes, I did my best to stay motivated and excited for the students. We did host an outdoor drive-in movie event where we presented all dance film work. The show was titled ‘Dancing Under The Stars.’ We did this in May 2021 and then we hosted the event again at the end of summer in September 2021 because we had so much fun at the first event. My goal is to keep this dance film project and part of our ‘kick off’ to the new school year. It’s really nice to host a dance event where the students get to see their

SEE PERFORMING ARTS, Page 18

St. Martin of Tours Academy: If it grows it goes! (in the green bin)

These were the words Fabian Rodriguez, EDCO’s account representative had students from kindergarten through junior high repeat at a recent presentation at St. Martin of Tours Academy to help understand the new Organic Recycling Program. La Mesa residents have the opportunity to conserve resources and extend the life of California’s landfills by using the green bins. Students will be recycling their lunch food scraps and soiled paper (napkins, paper plates) that will go into the green bin at St. Martin of Tours Academy. Teachers will be following up with videos on the processing of recycling from EDCO’s website. For the past three years, students have been putting their fruit items (banana, orange peels, apple cores) into designated buckets



St. Martin of Tours Academy students learn the value of recycling at a recent presentation. (Courtesy photo)

that go into a three-bin compost in the school garden. This is used for mulch for the raised beds. As a CA Green Ribbon school, students and staff recycle, reduce and reuse whenever possible.

Helix High debate team places third at state qualifying tournament

The San Diego Imperial Valley Speech League held its state qualifying tournament in person recently. Helix Charter High School, although its squad is about half the size of the team before the pandemic, took third place overall and has 11 students qualified to compete in the California State Speech and Debate Championships at the end of April. Owen Dahlkamp, a senior, was recognized both as the

outstanding competitor of the tournament, placing first in three of his events and second in the fourth, and as SDIVSL Speaker of the Year, for amassing the most points throughout the season in speech events. The students qualifying for the state championship were: • Ruby Anderson and Owen Dahlkamp - Duo Interpretation • Grace Davis and Lendia Wylie - Duo Interpretation • Madison Carey - Original Advocacy • Zaida Donnelly - Original Oratory • Angelina Echaves - Lincoln Douglas Debate • Gracie Goebel - Original Prose Poetry • Tori Guerin - Program Oral Interpretation • Brayden Pape - Original Advocacy • George Stulich - National Extemporaneous

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Time to celebrate! Lake Murray MusicFest and Fireworks is a go for 2022

Fundraising and planning are in full swing for this year's Lake Murray MusicFest and Fireworks show.

The annual Independence Day event at Lake Murray Community Park was postponed amid the pandemic, but is ready for its revival in 2022 as coronavirus cases trend downward.

This year's music headliner will be Pop Vinyl, an energetic band performing dance classics from Motown to the latest hits. Confirmed food vendors so far include Corbin's Q, Doggos Gus, Dang Brothers Pizza, Tiki Treats, and Finest City Sweet Treats.

"We have a lot to celebrate," said Melissa DeMarco, the non-profit Lake Murray Music Fest and Fireworks committee's 2022 president. "The event has brought this community together for July Fourth for many years now. It's a great opportunity for all of us to celebrate our nation's independence together."

Music, games, and picnics at Lake Murray playground will run from 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. on July 4, culminating in a dazzling firework display over Lake Murray that can be seen throughout the Navajo community.

The biggest challenge each year is funding expenses like fireworks, the music stage, security



Kids race at a previous event. (Photo courtesy Brett Alan Photography)

and permits. Entirely community-driven, the 2022 event is at 30% of its \$85,000 fundraising goal.

The volunteer committee is raising funds through a combination of business sponsorships, individual neighbor donations and restaurant nights. La Mesa's Stormberg Orthodontics has returned as the event's title sponsor for the fourth consecutive year. Other confirmed local business sponsors include FBS Property Management, Hanken Cono Assad & Co., Inc., General Contracting, and Kern Law, APC.

Individual donations are accepted online through PayPal at paypal.com/us/fundraiser/charity/2233619 and Venmo at @LakeMurrayFireworks-

JulyFourth. In addition to social media posts on Instagram and Facebook, volunteers will get the word out through a neighborhood flyer campaign, tentatively scheduled to begin April 9, according to committee vice president Brandy Kern. Anyone interested in helping with flyer distribution is encouraged to email lakemurray-fireworks@gmail.com.

Mark your calendar for 2 to 8 p.m. Wednesday, March 30. That's when the Rubio's off Friars Road will give 30% of profits from guests who show the event's fundraising flyer.

For more information on the 2022 Lake Murray MusicFest and Fireworks and how you can get involved, log on to lakemurray-fireworks.org.

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SEE AMAZING ART WORKS, Page 6

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Letter to the editor

Just clearing the air about who is getting solar. Some facts you can check out: 1) Almost all people who are getting solar get it through 12 to 25 year loans and do not pay cash. 2) Most of us are lower middle class who are being crippled with electric bills of over \$250 a month for a small house. 3) We pay over \$10,000 and more for our solar through these loans that allow us to pay them off at a rate of \$100 a month or so. That is how most of us can afford it. We are not paying \$54 a month for electricity when you add it all up. 4) SDG&E needs more electricity so solar owners are doing them a favor 5) SDG&E is owned by Sempra of Texas that made over 20 billion in profits last year but they want more 7) There are many programs available for low-income people who want solar such as CSI and DRISE at local, state and federal levels. The reason more people don't get solar in some neighborhoods is because no one tells them these programs are available. This is a communication issue.

This Net 3.0 that is a being considered will make sure that renewables such as solar are more expensive than staying with Sempra, so they can keep their enormous profits and ensure the public goes into debt more. Solar is a chance for people like me to become energy independent from the for-profit companies that control our lives. Please tell the real story.

Concerned citizen
La Mesa

La Mesans have alternative supplier offering clean energy

By JEN DERKS AND DAVID HARRIS

One of the great things about living in La Mesa is that small town feel we all know and love.

We witnessed it when we joined together after the riot, and we see it today as we interact with our neighbors at the farmers market or local parks. Many of us are active voices in shaping how our city evolves, balancing the need to support a growing number of residents and business owners with preservation of the landscape and environment that makes our city the jewel that it is.

One positive step toward an environmentally sustainable city is making clean, renewable energy available to all residents.

Beginning this month in La Mesa, our city officials have flipped the switch to a new clean energy provider, San Diego Community Power (SDCP). For the first time ever, residents will have a choice about where to purchase their energy. SDCP, which is locally operated, offers a baseline service of 50% renewable energy at rates that are competitive with SDG&E, with the option to power up to 100% for a slight premium of less than a penny per kilowatt hour. We're thrilled that SDCP makes this option so affordable.

All La Mesa residents and businesses have been automatically enrolled with San Diego Community Power. While any customer can opt out at any time, remaining with SDCP makes sense for the pocketbook and the planet.

La Mesa's climate action plan, adopted in 2018, includes a strategy to reach 100% renewable energy by 2035, which is estimated to reduce local carbon emissions by 53%. "Community Choice" energy, authorized by the State of California, is one of the most effective ways in which local governments can reduce greenhouse gas emissions and reach climate action plan targets. Yes, even a smaller city like La Mesa can play a key role in the global problem of climate change.

In October 2019, the La Mesa City Council unanimously voted to form a "joint powers authority" with the City of San Diego and three other cities to create SDCP. It has been a long, eagerly anticipated journey to get here. A lot of people have worked really hard to make this happen, including Council member Bill Baber, City Manager Greg Humora, and volunteer activists from SanDiego350 and Climate Action Campaign. After several years, it is so rewarding to see this project come to fruition.

The not-for-profit SDCP was founded by the joint efforts of five cities in our county – La Mesa, Imperial Beach, Encinitas, Chula Vista and San Diego – with each city represented on its Board of Directors. SDCP launched service to 70,000 municipal and business customers last year, and with the roll-out of residential customers this spring, will soon serve an additional 700,000 residential accounts.

As a community choice energy service, SDCP will become the second largest in the state. National City and the County's

unincorporated communities have also recently joined SDCP, and will begin receiving service from early 2023. Some residents are wondering why they were automatically enrolled in SDCP. California law requires all residents of member cities to be automatically enrolled. We will continue to receive just the one bill from SDG&E, which will deliver power, manage monthly billing and customer service and provide ongoing system maintenance.

But unlike the for-profit utility, San Diego Community Power will reinvest its surplus revenue (profits) into local renewable projects, supporting new clean energy jobs and equitable sustainability programs. So it's a win-win for La Mesa's future, since SDCP offers cleaner energy, competitive rates, and a real commitment to invest in our community.

For both of us, it's important to live by our values, find ways to live more sustainably, and protect our children's future. We're pleased that we can do so through the Power100 service plan. The City Council selected the Power100 plan last year and now all city-owned facilities are operating on 100% renewable energy. This progress makes us proud to be La Mesa residents.

—Harris is a climate activist, retired community development manager, and long-time resident of La Mesa. Derks is a San Diego native and proud La Mesa resident, raising her family, and running a business in the historic La Mesa Village.

Amazing art works

CONTINUED FROM Page 5

in the student yearbooks and newspapers.

Emmons was a naturally-gifted illustrator from a very young age.

Craig lovingly recalls, "One of his GHS art teachers must have written to Walt Disney Studio's art department on my dad's behalf sometime around his 1940 graduation to help him realize his high school goal of working for WDP. That summer he was formally invited by mail for a paid three-month internship at their new Burbank studio in August of 1940."

On display on the shelves housing 100 years of Foothiller yearbooks is a framed drawing of the sports section title page. The yearbook featured a Scottish theme that year, which Emmons captured vividly in black and white.



Iliana Rincon and Dawna Locher with one part of the class ceramic project. (Photo courtesy GHS Museum)

1979 ENVIRONMENTAL BAS RELIEF CERAMIC CLASS PROJECT

A teacher's aide in the art department for six years, David Nichols then served as a student teacher while earning his teaching credential under Carol Lockwood and Jerry Lewis.

This Environmental Ceramics piece, made with 150 lbs. of clay, was part of a class project. The

class was divided into six groups of 5-6 students, each making one piece.

Today, David recalls, "The assignment was to create a 3-D relief using repeating pattern and texture. We also talked about the idea that an artist can place meaning within, but good art allows the viewer to see what is relevant to them. While you may see snakes, a duck, acorns,

in reality the artists may have been depicting something entirely different."

Students pounded the clay into large slabs, then sculpted by hand using repeating patterns. The back side was then hollowed out to make it easier to fire. After bisque firing, iron oxide was rubbed onto the piece to enrich the brown coloring before high firing in a reduction atmosphere to cone 10.

After the final firing, each piece was attached to a plywood base, brackets were added for hanging, and the pieces were installed throughout the Grossmont campus, this one being displayed in the district office.

Two of the six are known to remain today, one in the museum and one in David's living room, both testaments to Foothiller artistic expression.

1980 GUS

Soon after we began the museum, we were presented with

Water polo

CONTINUED FROM Page 1

to states for the first time in the girls' program history.

"There are so many things that made this group special," Cook stated. "One of the things is that this group has been playing together for three years. That is a lot of time to bond and get to know each other. This group has been through great seasons and seasons where we were not as successful, so they understood how important every game and practice was. These athletes wanted to win and were willing to work harder every day. As a coach, this makes my job easier. The level of intelligence for the game we had was high. Each player was able to contribute ideas and new things to help each other improve."

According to Cook, the goals they set as a team to begin the season was to win the league undefeated and be ranked in the Open section of the CIF San Diego again.

While this season was quite successful, the focus turns to next season.

"We will lose six seniors from this group of 14," Cook commented. "We hold the same standards from season to season no matter what players graduate. We expect to have a team with great fundamentals and continue to be a high-ranking team in San Diego."

As Cook sees it, the team still has an amazing group of athletes who were part of the starting lineup as well as players who have already begun to train for next season.

Among the key team members this past season was three-year varsity goalie and senior Erica Neri.

"I walked onto Grossmont's pool deck not knowing what I was getting myself into," Neri remarked. "I was a freshman that wanted to try something new to see if I like playing a sport in high school."

Neri noted she was immediately acknowledged by her coaches and team with such love and was a goalie not knowing what she would become or even think to continue.

"I started to love the feeling of adrenaline during game days and how I felt blocking a ball for my teammates," Neri continued. "I'd have to say this was the best season I have ever had. Going undefeated in league and going to state was an amazing accomplishment for me and my team. My coaches and team have shaped and helped me grow into who I am today and I couldn't thank them enough for it. I have never been consumed with so much love and energy until I met this group of girls."

For any girls interested in trying out for the team next season, Neri advises them to always be positive to those around you and for yourself.

"You'll never know, you might love it and create so many fantastic memories with the most

amazing people just like I did," Neri added.

Another key piece of the team's success was four-year varsity utility player and fellow senior Katie O'Laughlin. She is the career leading scorer for girls' water polo at the school.

"Out of all four of my high school water polo seasons, this year was by far my favorite," O'Laughlin remarked. "It's extremely rare to come across a women's sports team where everyone gets along. Our team had an incredible bond that secured our success this year. To be able to be a part of a program that has excelled and positively changed so rapidly has been an experience I will carry with me throughout my life."

For O'Laughlin, she indicated she'd never been a part of a team that was so driven and had such a strong will to win every game.

"Being able to play a role on such a bonded and goal-oriented team was an experience that I will remember and cherish forever," O'Laughlin stated. "This drive to win, alongside our team's strong connection both inside and outside of the pool contributed to our

team's record-breaking success this season."

While she will graduate and move on, O'Laughlin hopes to see many girls trying out for the program in the seasons to come.

"I encourage incoming freshmen to come and try water polo because it's an amazing way to meet new people and stay in great shape," O'Laughlin added. "Grossmont's water polo team has a way of lifting up everyone on the team and making everyone rise to the occasion."

For any Grossmont High girls thinking of coming out for the team next season, Cook said everyone is welcome.

"We are very fortunate to have an amazing aquatics program here at Grossmont and because of that we welcome anyone even if they don't have previous experience," Cook said. "Our coaching staff is able to teach new players the ins and outs of water polo so anyone can feel confident playing in the games. We want hard-working people who are willing to try something new."

—Reach editor Dave Thomas:
dave@sdnews.com.

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La Mesa reads: How to craft



By DENISE SMITH

March is National Craft Month and the La Mesa Branch Library is a great place to look into what kinds of craft or handiwork might be worth giving a shot. Keep in mind that the term “craft” includes far more than just scrapbooking and yarn. The possibilities are endless: woodworking, textiles, pottery, models and more. Stop by and borrow a book for free and find out if the investment will be worthwhile before buying instruction manuals, supplies, etc. Following is a sample of some of the new craft books that the San Diego County Library has acquired. “Craft: An American History” does not offer instruction on any particular skill, but examines how creating objects has shaped our country. Glen Adamson explores the skills of Benjamin Franklin, Frederick Douglass, as well as many lesser-known names, all the way up through the crafting “empire” of Martha Stewart. Woodworking, basketry, pottery, 3D printing and more are covered. Pick this one up if you want to see how America’s handiwork movements, both the physical and social, affected our country. If you do not feel that you have enough inspiration to create, “Get Messy Art” by Caylee Grey, may be what you need. Although there are 15 different

projects included in this book, there are no set list of materials or instructions for them. Grey focuses on play and experimentation so that you can express yourself any way you want. Included is a project that helps you create a visual journal. Also provided are techniques to combat the dreaded blank page. For those looking for a traditional craft with a healthy dose of whimsy try “The Compendium of Wooden Wand Making Techniques.” This book will be useful to anyone interested in woodworking or cosplay. An expert artisan woodworker goes over the skills needed to create a wand. It includes clear, detailed photographs. Also included is the history of wands in different ancient cultures up to its use in pop culture. Although this is not an advanced level of woodworking, some basic skills knowledge is recommended. When we hear the word “wreath”, most people think of Christmas. However, Stephanie Petrak’s “Elegant Handcrafted Wreaths” opens up the entire year for beautifying a home with wreaths. Twenty different projects are split into three different sections: “From the Garden,” “From the Woods,” and “From the Fields.” Petrak covers shopping tips on how to obtain supplies from craft stores, creating the wreaths and the upkeep of the finished product. Are you hoping to make a statement with your handiwork?

SEE LA MESA READS, Page 9

Tom Kilroy: Art student and teacher for life



Tom Kilroy was first recognized in the art world in the 7th grade. His English teacher caught him drawing Disney cartoons instead of reading. Not only was he chastised, but also complimented on his drawings. He continued to do a little drawing in high school, but it was several years later before art entered his life again. After a hitch in the Navy, he enrolled in the State Teachers College at Boston. He minored in art, but there was no emphasis in a media so he did a little bit of everything. Kilroy was recruited by the San Diego City Schools and had only planned to spend a year or two here, but 60 years later he’s

still living in the same area – Mission Beach! Kilroy said, “The wonderful thing about being an elementary teacher is that art was in the curriculum; at least it was then. Eventually I became an ‘in-school art resource teacher,’ a Saturday

needed help in watercolors, Kate Fitzsimmons became his mentor. He loved her classes which were fun and full of laughter. Others who have helped him along the way are Annette Paquet and a workshop by Frank Webb. After 40 years of teaching, Tom retired to have more time to concentrate on his own art. Eventually, his paintings were accepted into the Del Mar Fair Art Show and the San Diego Watercolor Association. Today, Tom is constantly experimenting with subject matter and style. Being from Boston he has a tendency to gravitate towards boats and seascapes. Tom says, “I enjoy being a member of this friendly Foothills Art Association and having the opportunity to show some of my works each month. I truly appreciate the opportunity to be the “Artist of the Month.”



“P Town” by Tom Kilroy (Photos courtesy Foothills Art Association)



“Solitude” by Tom Kilroy



“Stormy Maui” by Tom Kilroy



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New energy program

CONTINUED FROM Page 1

customers do have the ability to opt out whenever they choose. In staying enrolled, customers will be investing in green energy projects and jobs while the cities aim to reach their Climate Action Plan goals.

SDCP service tiers offer PowerOn, providing 50% renewable energy and Power100, providing 100% renewable energy.

SDCP Chief Operation Officer Cody Hooven told La Mesa Courier when customers enroll in the service, they empower local control of electricity procurement decisions, reduce their carbon footprint associated with their service, and support the reinvestment of the local community.

“We’ve been very pleased to find that the community of La Mesa has embraced San Diego Community Power and are generally well-informed about their energy choices,” Hooven said. “Families and businesses are excited to have access to cleaner energy at competitive prices to reach our regional climate action goals. Many folks are interested in the opportunity to receive 100% clean and renewable energy without any additional effort and only a few dollars a month. We make an effort to educate our customers on their rates and energy bills because we know they can be complicated and not traditionally user-friendly. Our website has many resources, including a bill comparison tool, found at sdcommunitypower.org.”

When it comes to spending less on electricity, Hooven advises La Mesa and residents around the San Diego area do the following:

- For those working from home, make sure you have or do establish your work area by a window for natural light. This helps from having the lights on all day;
- Unplug devices and appliances that are not being used, turning off the lights when not in use, running full loads of laundry and dishes, and minding open fridge and freezer doors to reduce costs;
- During colder days, adding caulking or weather-stripping to seal air around leaky doors and windows helps keep heat in and avoids turning on the heater;

- Allow sunlight in by opening curtains or shades during the day and closing at night;

- Use fans before air conditioning or setting your heat a little lower and wearing more layers at home;

- Replacing standard incandescent lightbulbs with LED bulbs can allow for up to 90% less energy along with lasting longer.

Hooven noted that SDCP is one of dozens of community choice aggregation programs that have formed across California in the last decade.

“CCAs were enabled by state legislation as part of the solution to the 2001 energy crisis, allowing local communities to control the energy they buy and reduce constraints on competition that contributed to the problem,” Hooven remarked. “All decisions on energy procurement, rates and reinvestment are made at open meetings giving all residents and businesses a voice in the energy they receive. Ten states have passed community choice aggregation laws, connecting consumers to alternative energy through their local governments.”

Hooven, pointed out there are currently 23 CCAs across California operating successfully and reliably. They serve more than 11 million customers in more than 180 cities and counties. SDCP is the second-largest CCA in the state, forecast to onboard more than 770,000 customer accounts in 2022 and nearly one million after full enrollment in 2023.

According to the SDCP’s current rate plan, PowerOn customers have the ability to save 1-2% on their bills while using 50% renewable energy. That is compared to SDG&E base generation service which is a little more than 30% renewable. Customers who choose to enroll in Power 100 will reportedly pay a little more for their energy – less than a penny per kWh for full renewable energy. La Mesa is one of the areas taking part in the standard PowerOn service.

According to La Mesa City Manager Greg Humora, switching to SDCP will support the city’s Climate Action Plan as customers go about reducing greenhouse gases.

“Many residents are excited to save on electricity while having their electricity coming from

50 to 100% renewable sources,” Humora stated. “Some clarification was needed for rooftop solar customers and when the switch would occur to net energy metering. For solar customers, they will start service with SDCP once they receive their annual ‘true up.’ Once the charge for SDCP appears on residents’ bills in April, we anticipate there will be additional feedback.”

Outreach tied to the new program has included social media campaigns, postcards, mailers, city manager updates, a late February SDCP residential roll-out presentation to city council, and SDCP having a vendor booth at the La Mesa Farmers Market and other local events.

“SDCP staff has also conducted virtual and in-person presentations to community groups, business organizations and local agencies,” Humora noted.

SDG&E will keep delivering energy, oversee monthly billing and service to customers, and be in charge of ongoing maintenance of the system. SDG&E will continue with a single monthly bill, providing a new line item that covers electricity generation via SDCP.

The San Diego County Board of Supervisors voted late last summer to join the SDCP, serving as a different option to SDG&E in buying energy contracts.

SDCP’s board is comprised of elected representatives from

each member jurisdiction – which might grow as new communities in the surrounding area determine whether to join SDCP at some point.

“The Board is publicly accountable to SDCP ratepayers and hosts monthly board meetings, where they establish policy, set rates, determine power options and maintain fiscal oversight,” Humora commented. “As a public agency (not-for-profit), SDCP is designed to be fully transparent with all meetings and information open to the public.”

To learn more, visit: sdcommunitypower.org.

—Reach editor Dave Thomas:
dave@sdnews.com.


La Mesa reads

CONTINUED FROM Page 8

Not interested in just making something look nice? Then pick up a copy of “Rebel Crafts” by Hester van Overbeek. The 12 different projects, ranging in skills from beginner to experienced, will “teach you how to stitch your way to freedom, screen-print for equality,

letter-write for the people” and more. Projects include making banners, shirts, badges, capes and jewelry, all with a message to inspire change.

Come 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!



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22 years for La Mesa burglar

By NEAL PUTNAM

A La Mesa burglar has been sentenced to 22 years and eight months in state prison after he pleaded guilty to eight residential burglaries in which he posed as a maintenance worker.

Corey Omar Henson, 47, of San Diego, pleaded guilty to all the charges filed against him after he was arrested by La Mesa Police in Feb., 2020. He stole purses, cash, and other belongings after gaining access to apartments.

San Diego Superior Court Judge Rachel Cano said Henson will not be paroled until he is in his mid 60s. She gave him credit for serving 870 days in jail since his arrest.

The daughter of one victim, Joanna Anaya, spoke remotely from her computer at home, saying her mother "will never be the same" and is "under panic mode all the time," as "she lives with terror."

"I will pray for you so you will change your path," said Anaya to Henson.

Cano ordered Henson to pay Anaya's mother \$5,082 in restitution, and \$1,550 to other victims. Henson was fined \$1,380. Several burglaries in the series occurred in El Cajon and San Diego.

Henson did not address the court.

Henson's lawyer, Al Arena, said his client was honorably discharged from the U.S. Marine Corp and had served in the Middle East.

Arena asked the judge if he could serve some of his sentence in fire camp which was objected to by Deputy District Attorney James Koerber. It was denied by Cano. Fire camp is intended for inmates with much shorter sentences who wish to volunteer to help put out wildfires and is dangerous work.

—Neal Putnam is a local court reporter.

Hit-and-run driver who killed medical student pleads guilty

By NEAL PUTNAM

Sentencing is set for April 7 for the hit-and-run driver who killed a promising young medical student who was struck in La Mesa in 2021.

Scott Douglas Satterfield, 62, of Spring Valley, pleaded guilty to felony hit and run in the death of Jok "Michael" Joseph Jok, 18, who was struck by his Ford F150 pickup truck on Bancroft Drive just south of Golondrina Drive in La Mesa.

Deputy District Attorney David Vallero said Satterfield faces a maximum sentence of four years in state prison after pleading guilty in El Cajon Superior Court just before he was to have a preliminary hearing.

Jok "Michael" Joseph Jok, 18, was struck by a white Ford F150 pickup truck on Feb. 27, 2021, on Bancroft Drive just south of Golondrina Drive in La Mesa.

Jok was taken to a hospital around 9:10 p.m., but he died six days later on March 5, 2021 from head injuries. The driver fled the scene.

La Mesa Police alerted the public with photos of the vehicle from security cameras and announced Satterfield's arrest on April 7, 2021. They said detectives were able to arrest Satterfield as the truck operator with help from San Diego Crime Stoppers, the media and the public.

No allegations of drunk or impaired driving were brought

as he was not identified or arrested until five weeks after the incident.

Satterfield had been free on \$25,000 bond for awhile, but was remanded into custody on Dec. 16. He remains in the East Mesa Detention Facility without bail.

Jok had begun an accelerated bachelor's program at UC Riverside that would have led him to medical school, as he wanted to specialize in neuropharmacology, according to his obituary.

His parents came to the U.S. in 1998 as refugees from Sudan and his father became a case manager to help other refugees in San Diego. Jok was born in 2002.



Victim Jok "Michael" Joseph Jok at his high school graduation. (Courtesy photo)

—Neal Putnam is a local court reporter.

Amazing art works

CONTINUED FROM Page 6

the mystery of "Big Gus," which originally hung on the walls of the old boys P.E. locker room. The first mystery was its date, which was solved when we stumbled on "him" on the cover of the 1980-81 Student Handbook; the second mystery was the artist, which we have yet to solve.

Its vibrant colors and impactful design distinguish it as a powerful representation of Foothiller spirit. We welcome

information about its origins and its artist!

Foothillers have left their footprints on campus in countless ways; these items remind us of how essential art is in the high school curriculum and the many ways it echoes through the decades.

GHS MUSEUM CLOSING FROM JUNE 2022 THROUGH SUMMER OF 2023

Recently, we learned that the museum's needed installation of heating and air conditioning as well as the replacement of the windows required a seismic

SEE AMAZING ART WORKS, Page 17



Anthony Gomez, Abby Chiu, Cody White and Tomas Suarez with "Big Gus." (Photo courtesy GHS Museum)

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Casa de Pico

CONTINUED FROM Page 1

Casa de Pico boasts one of the largest outdoor patios in La Mesa for eating and drinking. It seats 115 guests. Inside, fiesta-style décor flows attractively throughout various dining areas, including a bright, windowed section resembling a solarium. The property in total has a 500-seat capacity.



The restaurant makes both flour and corn tortillas in-house. (Photo by Frank Sabatini Jr.)

The restaurant received its honor last month at Sycuan Casino Resort during the East County Chamber's annual awards gala. The event also celebrated the organization's 110th anniversary and the swearing in of five new board members.

The chamber has 550 business members. For the awards process, each member is allowed to nominate another business (or their own) across 14 categories. The

nominees are then tallied and sent to the membership, allowing each member to cast a one-time vote within each category.

The "Best Restaurant (or catering)" option is the only category pertaining to the food industry.

"It is the first time Casa de Pico won this honor," noted Stephanie Deppensmith, the chamber's events, marketing and program coordinator. "They have been an incredibly valued member to the chamber. They have great food and support the East County business community."

The famous Southwest stir fry known as fajitas are a top draw at Casa de Pico. The sizzling dish was added to the menu in the early 1990s with the help of longtime employee Lino Rodarte, who had explored various recipes for fajitas in kitchens throughout Texas during a cross-country drive.

According to Powers, the enchilada Suizas and the carne asada and shrimp combo plate are the restaurant's other big sellers.

Although she added, "We find that everyone has their favorite items, and we are continually testing our food to make sure we're always offering the best, and that all our dishes are made with the freshest, in-season ingredients."



Famous fajitas (Photo courtesy J Walcher Communications)

Past winners of "Best Restaurant" within the chamber have included Chick-fil-A in Santee (for 2020) and Brigantine Seafood Restaurant in La Mesa (for 2019).

Powers is moved by the recognition, saying "We are very appreciative to have won this award. I want to thank the members of the East County Chamber of Commerce and our loyal local

following. La Mesa residents have always been very supportive which motivates us to work hard and provide an excellent, warm experience."

Casa de Pico is located at 5500 Grossmont Center Drive. For more information call 619-463-3267, or visit casadepico.com.

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

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Little Roma Restaurant: A passion for made-to-order Italian cuisine

By ROBIN DOHRN-SIMPSON

In most Italian families, life revolves around the kitchen stove. Sergio Bellofatto's family kitchen was no different.

"I grew up in Southern Italy. When I was about eight years old I started watching my grandma cook," he said. "I also watched my father at the stove and learned how to make everything from sauces to minestrone. Grandma taught me 80% of what I know today.

"We also had the iconic large table that seated around 25 people. There was a lot of eating, drinking, discussing, arguing - but always respect."

Bellofatto immigrated to the United States and worked for 37 years in Italian restaurants before he bought Little Roma Restaurant in La Mesa.

"After 34 years, the restaurant I was working at closed its doors and that's when I realized it was time to move on." Bellofatto and his wife bought the Little Roma Restaurant from the previous owner who was ready to retire. "It's a family restaurant. My wife and I and my kid all participate."

Most of his recipes are family recipes and are all made to order. His food is from all over Italy: some classics, some from Northern Italy, some from Southern Italy, and some Sicilian desserts.

Every plate is made fresh at the time of order. "My food might take a little longer to come out, but I'm making it on the spot." He wants every dish to taste like home.

Bellofatto wants you to feel at home. Enjoy the patio. Enjoy your meal. Take your time.

"People bring their friends with them. They love the patio. They love to sit there with a bottle of wine and my food and relax, talk and refresh. I love to see people leaving the restaurant with big smiles on their faces and say, 'Hey, I'm coming back next week.' We work hard for that. Good food and good service are the keys."

Adding to the ambiance is the unique décor with beautiful

paintings on the walls and ceilings. "An artist came from Rome in 1999 and painted the wall murals. They are still beautiful and have never needed to be touched up. We just clean the walls," he said.

Bellofatto has an extensive menu with soups and salads, fresh and dry kinds of pasta, fish and shellfish, the basic standards such as lasagna, lobster ravioli, manicotti, gnocchi and eggplant parmigiana.

"I offer daily specials where I experiment with different cuisine.

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At the end of the day, he said, "Working in a kitchen is not a job — it's a passion. There are lots of headaches but at the end of the day — it's a passion."

Visit Little Roma at 5575 Baltimore Dr, Suite 104 in La Mesa. Check out the menu at: littleromarestaurant.com.

—Robin Dohrn-Simpson is a local food and travel writer. Reach her at: robindohrnsimpson.com.



Little Roma's exterior (Photo by Robin Dohrn-Simpson)

Marinated feta cheese



By JULIE WHITE

Marinated feta cheese is a refreshing appetizer or afternoon snack. Serve with pita chips, warm wedges of fresh pita or slices of baguette.

INGREDIENTS:

- Zest and juice from 1 lemon
- 8 Oz or 2 cups of feta cheese cut into cubes
- 1 Tbs of fresh minced Oregano or 1/2 Tbs of dried Oregano
- 1 medium shallot sliced very thin
- Pinch of red pepper flakes (optional)
- 1 cup of extra virgin olive oil

DIRECTIONS

In a saucepan cook all ingredients except the feta for about 10 minutes.

Remove from heat and add feta cheese. You may add more oil if needed.

Refrigerate and use cold or at room temperature.

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La Mesa Rotary Club comedy hypnosis show set for April 1

If you want potentially to be the star of the show, plan on attending the La Mesa Rotary Club's comedy hypnosis show on Friday, April 1 at La Mesa Community Center (4975 Memorial Drive). Doors open at 6:30 p.m., with the show

slated for 7 p.m.

The club's hilarity for charity event will feature The Hypno Diva, Marsha Starr.

100% of the proceeds fund the charities supported by the club.

Tickets are \$25 and can be purchased at: LaughLaMesa.org.

Local Cub Scout Pack hosting drive-thru food donation event

La Mesa Cub Scout Pack 319 would like to invite folks to participate in a COVID-safe donation drive. The event is Saturday, March 26, 9:30 am - 12:30 pm.

Scouting for Food is a council-wide service project to care for people in our local communities who are hungry and in need; all donated food items will be delivered to the San Diego Food Bank.

Simply fill a box or bag with some of the following suggested non-perishable items: canned soup, canned

vegetables, canned meats, canned fruits, canned beans, peanut butter, cereal, oatmeal, crackers, pasta, dried fruit, nuts and rice. (Avoid perishable items, frozen foods, items in glass containers and home canned foods.)

This is a contact-free drop off. Just pull in, pop your trunk, and scouts will collect donations. All participants will wear masks.

The drive-thru drop off location is at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church (4816 Glen Street, La Mesa).



Cub scouts carrying food donations. (Photo courtesy of La Mesa Cub Scout Pack 319)

Amazing art works

CONTINUED FROM Page 13

retrofit of the building. These improvements are not possible in the 1950 Dance Room, where the museum is currently located. Our new space will be about the same size, but without the historic memories.

Alumni who want to visit the campus as part of their class reunions are welcomed to contact us for a campus tour, which could include our smaller decade displays of the 1920s-present in the school office, the athletic displays in the PE Building, the first athletic team photos in the 1970 New Gym, as well as a peek inside the 1937 Old Gym. Your tour could also include the district office, where we have a large display upstairs and where a walk on the 1922 hardwood floor in the hallways will rekindle many memories. Contact us to confirm a time and a date for your class.

Hours: Wednesdays by appointment or from 10 a.m.-1 p.m., Saturday, April 9 or Saturday, April 23. For more information or to make an appointment for a Wednesday visit, contact us at ghsmuseum@guhsd.net or (619) 668-6148.

—Connie and Lynn Baer write on behalf of the Grossmont High School Museum.

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Performing arts

CONTINUED FROM Page 3

work along with the audience at the same time."

Anyone looking to join the program should add this class to their course interest form.

"Dance is for everyone," Pipes added. "We have an amazing dance community that is loving and supportive."

VOCAL MUSIC

When it comes to vocal music, the program under Michelle Tolvo-Chan continues moving along despite COVID.

"This year we are at 42 students ... but the vocal music department has had over 120 students in previous years (pre-pandemic)," Tolvo-Chan stated. "All last year our performances had to be virtual, which is a whole different ball game and not conducive to choral singing. Anyone that's tried to sing 'Happy Birthday' in a group Zoom meeting knows that the only person you can hear is the loudest one with the best microphone. This year has been full of transitions back to 'normal.' We sing outside as much as possible in order to practice without masks; however, we just participated in a competition where performers were still required to wear masks, making it even harder to be effective communicators through performance."

For any students interested in choir, Tolvo-Chan encourages them to try it.

"I just heard another story on NPR this morning about the power of music; as singing uses a different part of the brain than talking, it can tie together neural synopsis, helping people that have suffered from a stroke or other ailments, both mental and physical," Tolvo-Chan remarked. "Simply put, singing transforms lives. Singing in a choir in particular fosters teamwork, leadership skills and meaningful involvement in something bigger than oneself."

Show Choir auditions are set for May 14.

Allison Kerth, a four-year choir member, has enjoyed her time with the group.

"I have been in choir at Helix for all four years that I have attended, and I can easily say it is the best decision I've made in probably my whole life," Kerth remarked. "The friends I've made, the thrills I've experienced, and the joys I've shared make Helix choir better than any other program I have ever been a part of."

As Kerth sees it, the people she has met through choir have been well worth the time invested.

"The best thing about being a part of choir at Helix is meeting an incredible group of very different people who come together to do what we all love: singing," Kerth stated. "We have had such a variety of people in our choirs in the past from stem kids, to full on musical theater kids, to pro football players!"

Kerth also noted that an amazing trait of the choir program is that it gives its students the tools to build their confidence, whether it be performing onstage for their family or working up the nerves to audition for solos and specialty acts.

THEATER

When it comes to theater, the department under Paul Reams has attempted to return to a normal schedule.

"We have three main stage shows – 'Twelfth Night', which was produced in October; 'Mamma Mia,' which will be

performed April 20-23; and 'The Laramie Project,' which will be performed at the end of May," Reams stated. "We also have a student produced 'Coffee Break', an annual variety show created by the Highway Players, our drama club."

According to Reams, more than 100 students are enrolled in theater classes at Helix. Many students participate in the productions without being enrolled in a class.

"I would guess that more than 140 students take part in some aspect of theater at Helix, whether that's performing or crewing in show, ushering or working the box office for a production, or enrolling in a theater class," Reams said.

Like many others, COVID challenges impacted theater students and staff.

"COVID was really hard on the theater program," Reams noted. "Theater is, by its nature, an 'in-person' experience. Mr. (Gregg) Osborn made incredible, sacrificial efforts to keep theater going during last school year. He produced two full-length shows: 'Clue' was produced while students were still entirely on Zoom and 'Working' (a musical) was produced in person but without a live audience. I'm so grateful for his hard work last year in making sure that the Highland Players produced a theater season."

According to Osborn, staff and students got creative in 2021 to ensure that they could do anything.

"We held auditions, rehearsals and the performances of the mystery-comedy, 'Clue,' primarily online," Osborn stated. "In the spring, we were able to get together for rehearsals, with the students in masks and distanced. This year, rehearsals for Shakespeare's 'Twelfth Night' and the musical 'Mamma Mia' were in person with students masked. We have had to cast understudies for all the major roles to deal with students missing rehearsals/performances because of positive tests or because cast members have been in close contact with others testing positive. During dress rehearsals and performances, cast and crew needed to test twice weekly."

Any Helix students looking to theater should sign up for one of the classes, attend drama club meetings Thursday at lunch and audition for open calls.

INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC

Finally, the instrumental music department under the direction of Rachel Casey and Mike Bengé, has around 150 kids total in the program. This includes students who are in the following ensembles: bagpipes, band, color guard, jazz band, orchestra and percussion.

The group's final concert this year will be its Pop's Concert on Tuesday, May 17 at 7 p.m. in the school's performing arts center.

The bagpipes will also be performing at the school's Foundation Highlander Open at the Chula Vista Golf Course on Saturday, May 21 at 1 p.m.

Finally, the jazz band will have a concert in April (date to be determined). It will likely be a combined concert with Grossmont College.

For more information on upcoming performances, visit: helixinstrumental.org.

Like other groups at school, the instrumental music department has had to deal with the challenge of COVID.

"During the pandemic, we had to change the way we teach and the focus of our teaching," Casey stated. "In all of

Performing arts

CONTINUED FROM Page 18

our courses, we focus on creating an ensemble sound and how individuals work together to perform as one entity. Because of distance learning, we had to pivot to focus more on the individual and how (they) hear music and analyzes musical concepts.”

COVID also interrupted necessary practice before classes.

“One major challenge that COVID created is how many students are able to practice,” Casey noted. “When at school, many students would stay and practice in the music room, as they cannot do so at home. When we switched to 100% online, they were no longer able to put in the time on their individual instruments. It was most difficult for percussionists as most do not own any of the larger

instruments (mallets, timpani, etc.) that can cost tens-of-thousands of dollars. So, for them, teaching had to go back to fundamentals and rudiments of music and rhythm.”

Casey also credited school officials with helping get the students through these challenging times.

“We are very fortunate to have an amazing administration who hears our challenges and helps to provide opportunities to fix them,” Casey commented. “After meeting with our administration, they bought us the proper PPE to make it possible for our students to finally play inside. With weekly testing and proper PPE, we were able to move all of our classes back to the classroom, where we can provide the best opportunities for learning and understanding music.”

As Casey sees it, many students love being in the program due to the family atmosphere.

“Because performing arts is an elective, students choose to be in our classes and most choose to say for their entire high school career,” Casey noted. “We tried our best to keep students connected, but the nature of distance learning made this very difficult and some dropped music because of it. Although there have been challenges, our program continues to evolve and move forward. This is made possible because of our supportive administration, staff, and parents. Thank you for the support. We look forward to continuing to create music and offering performances to the community.”

If interested in the instrumental program, visit: helixinstrumental.org.

—Reach editor Dave Thomas: dave@sdnews.com.



SUDOKU PUZZLE

Fill in the blank cells using number 1 to 9. Each number can appear only once in each row column and 3x3 block. Use logic and process elimination to solve the puzzle.

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

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

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

- CLUES ACROSS**

 - One who regrets
 - Gets rid of
 - Time zone
 - Subway dweller
 - Bend in a river
 - Alias
 - Isodor __, American Nobel physicist
 - Very (music)
 - Zero
 - Phil __, former CIA
 - Competitions
 - Unwell
 - Puts in place
 - Allows light to pass through
 - Climbed quickly
 - We all have it
 - There's a North & South
 - Emaciation
 - Supervises flying
 - Very dark colors
 - Unwanted
 - Grants
 - Three visited Jesus
 - Wife of Amun
 - Broadway actress Daisy
 - A Spanish river
 - I (German)
 - French opera composer
 - Six (Spanish)
 - Last letter
 - Spiritual leader of a Jewish congregation
 - A curved shape
 - Make a mistake
 - Tall plant
- CLUES DOWN**

 - Computer memory
 - "Et __": "And wife" (Latin)
 - Ancient Syrian city
 - College army
 - Cassava
 - Talented
 - Capital of Estonia
 - Finger millet
 - In a way, assists
 - Men's fashion accessories
 - Misery
 - Skin disorder
 - Selling at specially reduced prices
 - Good friend
 - Stationary portion of a generator
 - Expression of disappointment
 - The 17th letter of the Greek alphabet
 - Where birds fly
 - Midway between north and north-east
 - Chaotic states
 - Comedic actress Gasteyer
 - Kids' dining accessory
 - Snakelike fish
 - Midway between S and SE
 - Assign lifelike qualities to
 - One who cites
 - Midway between E and SE
 - North wind
 - One or the other
 - Cavalry sword
 - Of the Hungarian language
 - Life stories
 - Flat tableland with steep edges
 - Swiss river
 - Plant that makes gum
 - French cleric
 - One point east of northeast
 - Free from

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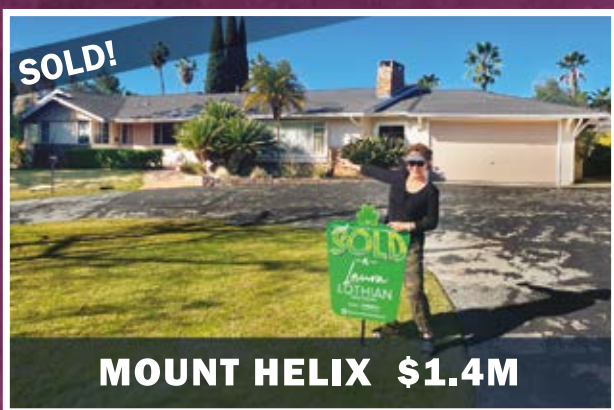


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