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Class officers in attendance (L-R): Owen Dahlkamp-treasurer, Claire Tran-president, Sienna Baird-secretary, and Jada Ferguson-vice president. They were responsible for organizing the event.

Helix Charter High School prom proves a great time

It's been three years since a traditional prom graced the presence of Helix Charter High School. A school based on traditions and excellence the Class of 2022 has not had the "normal" high school experience. They approached a pandemic head on and are coming out on the other side. This year our class officers wanted to focus on giving their fellow seniors a night to remember, "A Tale As Old As Time" and what better place to do that last Saturday then the nostalgic US Grant. Elegance and grace filled the air and the students looked stunning. Even more important than their attire was the joy on their faces. Beautiful venue, amazing DJ, delicious food and photos, memories that will last a life time. It was perfect. Congratulations to the Class of 2022. *Editor's note: Article and photos provided by Jaime Woodland.*



The US Grant provided the perfect setting for the 2022 Helix Charter High School prom.



The king and queen, respectively were Markees Williams and Alana Odom.

Book Publishing 1-2-3 set for June 11

Local editor and former *Beach & Bay Press* reporter Laurie Gibson is offering a one-hour class for writers called "Book Publishing 1-2-3," which gives an overview of the industry, tips for connecting with literary agents, and ideas for marketing books via in-person events. The session from 2 to 3 p.m. on Saturday, June 11 will feature writing tips to help attendees with their own book projects. There also will be handouts and a Q&A. The event takes place at the Lake Murray Church (outdoor gazebo), 5480 Lake Murray Blvd., La Mesa. Attendees are asked to pay \$20 cash or check at the door; advance registration is requested via phone number provided (no texts) due to limited seating at this outdoor venue. Ten percent of profits from the class will be donated to the church. Gibson's career started as a "cub" reporter with the B&BP in 1991 covering the entertainment beat. She has been a professional editor for more than two decades and has edited the books of more than 200 individual writers in addition to proofreading the work of high-profile authors such as Brian Tracy and Jimmy Buffett. For fun, she's currently writing a book on UK punk band The Clash. For further information, call (858) 635-1233.

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Mental health

CONTINUED FROM Page 1

According to Young, creating and hosting parent training is just a part of her role and the roles of other district social workers.

“School social workers also help connect families to resources, offer short-term counseling support, respond to crisis situations, help students build social and emotional skills, and work to create an overall positive school climate,” Young remarked.

Lauren Oppenheimer is another social worker in the district.

Oppenheimer noted, “I’ve seen students have trouble regulating emotions, managing social situations and even young students questioning their worth and ability to continue living. I believe much of this is due to the lack of social connection during the pandemic as well as the trauma and stress that occurred as a result of the pandemic. Students missed more than a year of the safety and security that school offers so many. They may have had access to academics virtually, but for so many, the stress of the pandemic and lack of structure caused many to lose motivation, fall behind socially and learn unhealthy coping strategies.”

As Young sees it, students face myriad of challenges, many of which are unique to school life.

“For many students, regulating emotions and interacting positively with peers following the pandemic has been an ongoing challenge,” Young remarked. “Physically being

away from school and friends for almost a year and a half was difficult for most students.”

LOOK FOR BEHAVIORAL CHANGES

One big challenge facing parents is to recognize their child may be struggling.

“Behavior of a struggling child may be seen in externalizing behaviors or internalizing behaviors and each child presents differently,” Young stated. “Internalizing behaviors may look withdrawn, losing interest in things the child was once interested in, changes in sleeping and eating patterns, lack of motivation and difficulty communicating their feelings. Externalizing behaviors may look like defiance, self-harm, aggression, and rule-breaking. It’s important for parents to understand that behavior has meaning and often that behavior is the child trying to communicate a need in the only way they know how.”

Oppenheimer pointed out that parents and guardians should pay attention to any changes in a child’s day-to-day behavior.

“Often, when it comes to mental health, parents think that changes in mood and self-esteem are the main predictors of mental health disorders, however, we can also see physical and social changes that can alert us to the need for support,” Oppenheimer remarked. “Things like headaches, stomach aches, diarrhea, and even defiance can be signs of emotional challenges. Parents may also notice changes or resistance to things the child

previously did or enjoyed. If a child is sleeping or eating more or less, having difficulty paying attention, showing signs of hyper-vigilance or even seeming withdrawn from previously preferred activities, this can be a sign of depression or other mood disorders.”

Oppenheimer made it clear that should a child ever mention being homeless, not wanting to live, questioning whether they should be a part of their class and/or family, or even starts to take action by causing physical pain to themselves, take these statements seriously and get immediate support. *Any adult sensing their child is in danger can call the San Diego Access and Crisis line 24/7 at (888) 724-7240 to consult with specialists. If one’s child is in immediate danger they can call 9-1-1 and ask for the Psychiatric Emergency Response Team (PERT).*

Young noted recent times have been filled with a lot of uncertainty and change for students.

“Students are having to rediscover how to interact, self-regulate and problem solve,” Young stated. “Due to this, social-emotional learning has been especially important this school year. Additionally, some students and families have experienced tremendous loss, loss of a family member, loss of a job or loss of housing. This loss can have a huge impact on a child’s mental health, education and social interactions. There have been tremendous social, familial and academic impacts coming out of the pandemic.”

SEE MENTAL HEALTH, Page 11

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1621 Grand Ave., Suite C
San Diego, CA 92109
(858) 270-3103
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Twitter: @LaMesaCourier

EDITOR

Dave Thomas x130
dave@sdnews.com

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

Kendra Sitton x136
Tom Melville x131
Dave Schwab x132

WEB & SOCIAL MEDIA

Dave Thomas x130
dave@sdnews.com

CONTRIBUTORS

Robin Dohrn-Simpson
Lauren Knuth
Laura Lothian
Bonnie Owen
Elizabeth Ranta
Jake Sexton
Jaime Woodland

PRODUCTION MANAGER

Chris Baker x107
chris@sdnews.com

ACCOUNTING

Heather Humble x 120
accounting@sdnews.com

ADVERTISING CONSULTANT

Heather Fine x 118
(951) 296-7794
hfine@sdnews.com

BUSINESS CONSULTANT

David Mannis

PUBLISHER

Julie Main, x106
(858) 270-3103 x106
julie@sdnews.com



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Race is on for Fourth District supervisor seat

By DAVE THOMAS

Politics is in the air again as the race for the San Diego County Board of Supervisors seat in the fourth district heats up.

The fourth district, made up of La Mesa, Lemon Grove and a big portion of central San Diego including parts of the College Area), will see several candidates vying to be the next supervisor.

Incumbent Nathan Fletcher, serving his second year as chair of the board, is facing Reopen San Diego co-founder and La Mesa resident Amy Reichert and LinkedIn diversity inclusion coordinator Sidiqa Hooker in the June 7 primary. The top two vote getters in the primary square off in the November general election.

College Times Courier recently reached out to the three candidates with an array of questions. All the candidates were given the same questions.

1. Why are you running for office to represent the people in District Four?

Fletcher: We are making real progress on the big challenges facing San Diego families — and I won't let anyone take us backwards. We must continue to fight forward for more affordable housing, fewer homeless San Diegans suffering on the street and safer communities in every corner of our county. There are signs of progress everywhere — we are building 1,109 new affordable homes, created Mental Crisis Response teams to get at homelessness' root problems, launched Community Choice Energy for clean power and lower utility bills, and are raising wages on local infrastructure projects so skilled San Diego workers get paid fairly. I'm honored to be endorsed in this race by the Democratic Party, Planned Parenthood and San Diego County Firefighters. We can't allow the forces of division to paralyze our progress and drag us backwards. I am fighting forward to build the better San Diego working families deserve.

Reichert: As the co-founder of ReOpen San Diego and a mom, I fought tirelessly for the safe reopening of schools and businesses. During that time, I met many parents, small business owners, first responders, and medical healthcare workers who said they do not feel listened to or represented by Supervisor Nathan Fletcher even though they voted for him. As a La Mesa resident, as soon as I learned the boundaries of District 4 were redrawn, I knew I had to run for supervisor. I am stepping up to hold Nathan Fletcher accountable for all the harm he caused San Diego and perhaps more importantly, I hope to protect San Diego from his future policies that have been divisive and politically motivated.

Hooker: I'm running for office to assist and improve the quality



Amy Reichert (Courtesy photo)

of life in the District 4 community, which is the community I grew up in and have a personal connection with. I am a native of San Diego as well as City Heights; this is the district where I spent my high school and college years volunteering for an after-school tutoring and golf training program. I still contribute my time today volunteer tutoring and am currently an interview panelist for underserved college bound students. District 4 is where my heart lies. I have great memories growing up in my district, but I noticed right away where there could be improvements that would positively impact my community. I grew up in a part of town where there weren't many thriving businesses which resulted in a lack of funding for educational resources, which led to underperforming schools. I was bussed out of my district so that I could receive a better educational opportunity. But I don't want today's generation nor families to have to leave where they live to get the opportunity they deserve. I want to help curate better opportunities within their own community where they live. More jobs with competitive salaries, schools with adequate funding, and safe thriving neighborhoods, right here in our district.

2. What do you see as the number one issue facing residents in District Four?

Fletcher: Working families are getting squeezed and slammed by out-of-control housing costs. I am fighting in every way I can to build more homes San Diego families can actually afford — and we are seeing initial signs of real progress. This year alone, we are on track to issue 1,600 building permits for new housing — a 50% increase from the prior year. There's over 1,000 new affordable homes under construction right now on county-owned land, with many more on the way. The need is great, but we are making progress every day. Our new initiative to make vacant county land available for new affordable housing construction is showing great promise. We are converting nine large lots already and more will be made available soon. Recently, I announced a new push to encourage more local cities to join our effort so we can put affordable housing on publicly owned land on a large scale that can make a real difference. The cost of housing is such a squeeze and stress on working



Nathan Fletcher (Courtesy photo)

families — and we're not going to give up on this fight.

Reichert: Homelessness (See question 4).

Hooker: I'm seeing several issues facing District 4. The one that really needs to be addressed is the cost of living.

3. Do we have a major affordable housing crisis in San Diego? If you feel we do, how best to fix it?

Fletcher: Absolutely - I detailed specific solutions above. Every day, I'm pushing for urgent action to build more affordable homes, speed up construction and raise wages for local workers to help families keep pace with the rising cost of living in San Diego.

Reichert: Yes. Everyone reading this has probably had friends or family leave the state because they can't afford to buy a home here. Unfortunately, the county is not responding adequately to this crisis. Instead of a viable solution, they tear down single-family homes in residential neighborhoods, such as the College Area, to build "affordable housing." But what about the people who want a single-family home to raise their families? Not everyone wants an 800-square-foot unit next to the trolley tracks that will cost the county \$800,000 per unit to build. We must allow sensible growth that preserves and protects our environment. Let's put forth a solution that helps the planet and the people.

Hooker: We absolutely have an affordable housing crisis in San Diego. Many families find that purchasing property let alone renting property in San Diego is unaffordable and out of reach. One of the resolutions to fix the affordable housing crisis is to get rid of the mandates that are preventing housing developers from building at the rate that's needed to address the rapid population growth. Rent control is not a long-term solution, this results in frustrated landlords; causing them to take their housing off of the market, thus making rentals more competitive and driving the rent up higher for everyone. What we need to consider is building more property, diversify the type of property that is built, get rid of the mandates that slow the building process down, consider rezoning, and lastly become transparent with our voters on what voting for certain legislation means for them long term.



Sidiqa Hooker (Courtesy photo)

4. What is your answer to the homelessness problem impacting various parts of San Diego?

Fletcher: Homelessness is our top focus at the county, and we are doing so much to tackle the crisis all across the region, but the innovation I am most excited about is our new Mobile Crisis Response Teams, which are showing great promise. These are teams of mental health clinicians and counselors, not just police, who can be deployed on mental health 911 calls to assist and treat people experiencing real mental health and drug abuse challenges. Already, these teams have helped nearly 1,000 San Diegans who are suffering from severe mental crisis, the vast majority of whom are homeless, and we are working furiously and fast to expand the program so we can help even more.

We are also making significant investments to really get at the root of the homelessness crisis, not just offer emergency response. We've opened new crisis stabilization centers, drug treatment facilities and dramatically expanded our focus on mental health care. Those are the long-term homelessness solutions we've always needed, but never had before under the County's old leadership. Together with the immediate steps we're taking to add shelters and increase mental health emergency response, we're starting to see real signs of progress on homelessness.

Reichert: Right now, we are seeing homeless encampments that have become colonies. We must ramp up our outreach using more homeless outreach teams staffed with social workers and mental health professionals. We should jump into action as soon as domestic violence victims, teenage runaways, and people who cannot afford to pay rent find themselves on the street and provide them with help. For the homeless who struggle with addiction and mental health issues, my experience as a Celebrate Recovery leader comes to the forefront of my heart and mind. In my experience, one of the worst enemies of an addict is an enabler. We have seen a rise in homelessness while the government spends record amounts to provide beds. Let's face the fact that some (not all) do not want to go to shelters, and the government has become the worst enabler by throwing money at the problem and, in

Anderson began artistic journey at a young age

By BONNIE OWEN

Rhonda Anderson’s back story is one she shares with many other artists: she was drawing from a very early age. Winning ribbons in art in grade school and high school kept her on a journey as an artist.

In 1973, she moved to San Diego and began her career as an air brush artist at “The Air Brush Shop” in Pacific Beach. It was affiliated with “Flight Realities,” a hang-gliding training shop in San Diego, and what is now “The Torrey Pines Glider Port.” She painted hang-glider sails, surfboards, skateboards, parachutes, team shirts for both flyers, parachuters, OTL as well as fancy gowns and regular clothes. These fun days could not go on forever, however, and in 1980 she went to work for Gordan & Smith.

After her son was born, Anderson became a stay-at-home mom and devoted her time to her family. Still, there were some commissions with murals for model homes, school props, assorted pet portraits and paintings. She also went back to college and received her Associates in Fine Arts with emphasis in drawing and painting.

After 10 years, Anderson returned to the work force at a private investment firm. This job was not about art but she learned a great deal and it helped her family. When the market crashed, the fund she was in was liquidated, as was her job. From there she was free to retire and devote the rest of her time to art.

Anderson loves to both draw and paint. She does it every day. She works with all drawing mediums, especially colored pencils, water-media and mixed media. With color expressionism, it is her intention to explore concepts both personal and universal with the hope of communicating the beauty and fragility of this world.

EXHIBITS, AWARDS AND HONORS:

2021

- Juried into the 2022 Artist Alliance Biennial, Oceanside Museum of Art
- Juried into “Beneath the Surface” by Artist Alliance, Oceanside Museum of Art, Ashton Gallery



Chrysanthemum artwork by Rhonda Anderson. (Courtesy photo)

- Westcoast Drawing Group Exhibition, “Unmasked”, Online Exhibition
- Westcoast Drawing Group Exhibition, “Next” Sahara West Gallery, Las Vegas, NV
- San Diego Watercolor Society, “Compliment Conversations”, Virtual and live Exhibition
- Colored Pencil Society of America, District Chapter 214-Los Angeles, “Pencil Paintings”, Won 2nd and 3rd place
- Wildlife in Art Exhibition 2021, Foothills Art Associations, La Mesa, Calif., Bastet Award – Atelier Bastet Award

2020

- Juried into San Diego Museum of Art International Exhibition 2020
- Juried into the “Explore This! CPSA Online Exhibition
- Published in Colored Pencil Treasures, Vol. 7, 2020

2019

- 27th Annual Colored Pencil Society of America International Exhibition – 3rd Place Award for Exceptional Achievement
- Public Work Commission for the Lucile Packard Children’s Hospital – Neonatal Unit, Stanford, Palo Alto, Calif.
- Published in International Artist Magazine, Oct/Nov 2019 Issue,

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

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Is working from home for you?



By JAKE SEXTON

During the lockdown phase of the pandemic, many people had to work from home instead of working in close quarters, like in office settings. Some employees found this gave them extra time and flexibility that helped them manage their lives.

As the work world reopens, some people want to keep or obtain these kinds of work from home jobs. Here are some books about finding, maintaining, and dealing with the complications of jobs that let you work from home.

The Nowhere Office: Reinventing Work and the Workplace of the Future by Julia Hosbawm is an analysis of pressures shaping jobs and the workforce. The author argues that changes in technology, society and politics have been brewing for quite some time, and that the pandemic pushed things into overdrive. Work stress, the high cost of real estate, increasing connectivity, and demands for better work-life balance have made the remote working a viable and attractive option to employers and employees alike, and increase opportunities for working from home.

The Everything Guide to Remote Work: The Ultimate Resource for Remote Employees, Hybrid Workers, and Digital Nomads by Jill Duffy is pretty much what the title says. It's an easy to read book that covers the search for remote jobs, ways maintain your daily focus, and advice for building long-distance social relationships critical to your career. The author shares concrete practices and strategies to make remote work more effective, to navigate the complications that come with solitude, and to manage the blurring of your work life and personal life.

The New Corner Office: How the Most Successful People Work from Home by Laura Vanderkam and *Remote Work Revolution: Succeeding from Anywhere* by Tiffany Jewell are both available as downloadable books from the library. Both titles answer the question: now that you work from home, how to do that job well? *New Corner Office* gives lots of advice about time management, but also has lots of tips for parents trying to work with children at home. *Remote Work Revolution* is aimed more at employers and managers who want to do right by both their staff and bottom line in this new work environment. It contains numerous real world examples from companies who have tried various remote work practices, and what the outcomes were.


And finally, there's *Your Creative Work Space: The Sweet Spot Style*

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CONTINUED FROM Page 6

many cases, making the situation infinitely worse. We must compassionately offer a loving bottom line that says people cannot build colonies, use drugs openly, and we don't want people to die on our streets. A compassionate society does not let people sleep and die in the street. It isn't too late, but these people need us right now. We need to act swiftly before this problem spills over into every neighborhood in San Diego.

Hooker: Homelessness is such a complex issue and there isn't just one resolve to address it. However, the lack of improvement and rapid growth of homelessness is sobering. What we've been doing isn't working. San Diego is known for a significant population of active-duty military residents, ironically a significant amount of our homeless in San Diego are war veterans. There is clearly a disconnect. Another major factor that is long overdue is addressing the mental health crisis within the homeless population. I think it'd also be a great idea to look at what other cities and states are doing correctly. We don't need to reinvent the wheel; we need to observe what is working in other regions and model that success.

5. How do you feel local officials have handled COVID as it relates to lockdowns, school closures etc. over the last couple years?

Fletcher: Together with the county's top medical experts, I worked every day, seven days a week, from the moment COVID-19 hit to slow the spread and save lives. I gave it everything I had because I knew we had to take the threat seriously. We mounted one of the most effective COVID-19 responses in the nation. More than 93% of San Diego County residents are now vaccinated. San Diego County has half the COVID-19 death rate of Florida. We delivered over \$85 million for small business recovery. We fought hard to protect the most vulnerable communities at greatest risk. As a result, we saved thousands of lives. One of the biggest challenges was the deep division and dangerous disinformation constantly undermining our attempts to stay united and follow basic science. Despite that, most San Diegans showed incredible resilience and united in inspiring ways during the toughest of times. I hope we never forget that and summon that same spirit of purpose and community as we tackle the serious challenges we're facing right now.

Many people from all walks of life and political beliefs including nurses, doctors, teachers, business owners, and myself have openly disagreed with the county's Covid response. San Diego was one of the most locked-down counties in the state, but we did not have better outcomes than counties that remained open. These open counties allowed their children to thrive and small businesses to survive.

My campaign's chief medical adviser, Dr. Mariah Baughn, M.D., is a pathologist at a major hospital group in San Diego County. I have consulted with Dr. Baughn to create a targeted response to COVID-19 that takes public health, mental health, and personal freedom into account when creating future county policies on this issue.

- With it, I would:
1. Keep schools open.
 2. Protect elderly and vulnerable populations.
 3. Keep beaches, trails, parks, and playgrounds open.
 4. Recognize natural immunity.
 5. Prepare for hospital influxes.
 6. Do not test asymptomatic people.
 7. Stop pushing vaccine mandates for children out of misplaced fear and anxiety.
 8. Allow businesses to remain open.
 9. Delineate hospitalizations "from COVID" versus hospitalizations "with COVID."
 10. Keep government buildings, services, and meetings open to the public.
 11. Lead with hope and courage, not with messages of fear.

Hooker: I always understood that COVID was a real virus and I never questioned that. However, I would have liked to have seen more consistency with deciding which brick and mortar establishments were reopened and which ones were not. Once we finally got a grasp on who was most vulnerable and how to protect them; I would have liked to have seen the mental health of our youth and college students considered more and more relaxed mandates for local entrepreneurs and local businesses that were affected during lockdowns while keeping residents safe.

6. What is one issue in District Four you want to tackle if elected that you feel does not get enough attention?

Fletcher: We need more focus on fundamental economic fairness in our county and our country. Working families are struggling with rising costs, stagnating wages and our economic policies are still too focused on helping those at the top. As County Supervisor, I'm fighting to support unions in their push to raise wages and ensure access to healthcare. We passed the Working Families Ordinance to add more apprenticeship training programs and pay family-sustaining wages on local infrastructure projects. We need to do more. No one who works full time should live in poverty.

Reichert: Homelessness (see questions 2 and 4).

Hooker: I want to address public safety in District Four. It's so important that families within their communities feel safe. This looks like adequate law enforcement, well-lit streets and safer roads.



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LMVA toasts local businesses at spring mixer event

Everyone was all smiles at the La Mesa Village Association (LMVA) Spring Mixer & Membership Drive event May 18. The San Pasqual Winery Tasting Room in the heart of downtown La Mesa, played host to the occasion. Guests were treated to award-winning wines, light appetizers from Continental Catering and the opportunity to mix and mingle with their fellow La Mesa Village business community.

“Our last mixer was held in February 2020 right before

everything shut down,” stated Wes Troy, LMVA co-chair and general manager of La Mesa Lumber & Hardware. “We’ve been waiting for the right time to finally host an event for our members to get together again. Everyone was really excited to see one another in a fun and casual atmosphere. San Pasqual Winery was the perfect venue for everyone to gather.”

There was a great turnout of guests who attended the event, including LMPD Police Chief

Ray Sweeney, LMPD Captain Matt Nicholass and City Council member Colin Parent. LMVA member and local photographer, CeCe Canton, captured the evening beautifully with her photography.

“It was absolutely wonderful to see our business community members come together again, as well as representation from the City of La Mesa,” exclaimed Theresa Favro, LMVA chair and owner of Amethyst Moon and Sacred Sun. “We have such a tight-knit community

in downtown La Mesa and we want to make sure we continue to foster those relationships among our businesses and city partners. Our mixers are a great way to bring everyone together and discuss what’s happening in our community and how to make it even better.”

For more information about LMVA and how to become a member, visit: LaMesaVillageAssociation.org.

Editor’s note: Article provided by Elizabeth Ranta.



LMVA officers attending the May 18 event (left to right): Wes Troy, LMVA co-chair, Pam Rader, LMVA treasurer & secretary, Elizabeth Ranta, LMVA membership, Theresa Favro, LMVA chair in photo one. In photo two, LMPD Police Chief, Ray Sweeney, LMPD Captain, Matt Nicholass, San Pasqual Winery Owners, Mike & Linda McWilliams (Photos: www.CeCephoto.com)

Mental health

CONTINUED FROM Page 5

Oppenheimer pointed out that La Mesa/Spring Valley School District brought in a number of new social workers during the COVID-19 pandemic that caused schools to go to remote learning in 2020.

“Since then, we have worked as a team throughout the district to provide support to students, parents, and teachers,” Oppenheimer stated. “As mental health providers and school employees, we have a unique opportunity to include many adults in each student’s lives. One way we are doing this is we are providing parent education to support mental wellness in students. These interactive trainings cover almost all things mental health including: common mental health challenges in children (signs, symptoms, and support), coping skills, grief and loss, self-care for parents and caregivers, community resources and more.”

Even before COVID, some students no matter where they go to school had other issues to tackle.

Both in-person and online bullying for example are things some must deal with.

“Each student has the power to help create a positive and inclusive school environment,” Young remarked. “The need for social-emotional learning has

SEE MENTAL HEALTH, Page 12

La Mesa Community Page

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Mental health

CONTINUED FROM Page 11

been strongly emphasized this year. School social workers across the district have created social-emotional lessons that teach students about self-awareness, problem solving, empathy, taking perspective and other topics that are important in building positive relationships."

According to Oppenheimer, students can definitely help each other.

"Showing love, kindness, and support to one another will increase the positive and soothing hormones that are released throughout individual bodies," Oppenheimer stated. "Each person has the power to impact one another's mood and thankfully, many use this power for good by giving compliments, praise and time to one another."

As Young sees it, every student has a story that others may not be aware of and/or understand.

"It's important to teach students to have compassion and empathy when interacting with one another," Young added. "Positive peer relationships are a vital part of a positive learning environment."

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

El Azteca food, service keeps customers coming back

By ROBIN DOHRN-SIMPSON

La Mesa has a multitude of taco shops.

What makes El Azteca stand out? And how do they win the Best Burrito of La Mesa award from the San Diego Community News Group multiple times?

According to co-owner Oscar Villa Senor, it's due to high-quality food and good customer service. "We're all about friendly service. Our customers aren't just customers, they're our friends," Oscar said.

El Azteca is an efficiently-run kitchen with a neat and clean

dining area. Oscar learned from his parents who started their restaurant business with an El Azteca in Pacific Beach in 1996 before expanding into La Mesa. He started learning the ropes of his parent's business when he was around 10 years old. Now he loves to see his young son running around his restaurant. It has come full circle.

Although Oscar currently runs the restaurant, his father, Alejandro, still works here, as do his aunt and brother.

"We don't scrimp on our ingredients. We use fresh ingredients. Locally sourced. We found a great tortilla company that makes tortillas that don't fall apart. In addition, we don't limit what people can buy. If they want something unique in their food, we'll make it in the restaurant, if we have it," Oscar said.

Besides a wide assortment of burritos including breakfast burritos, some new items are on their menu. Red or Green Chilaquiles, Sopes with your choice of meat, or an Azteca bowl with rice, lettuce, and meat are some favorites. "We have a Queza Birria that

is made from beef. This is so tasty, the broth gives it a kick and takes the flavor up a notch," Oscar said.

Other specials include the Rosarito plate with shredded chicken, fried tomato and onion, Serrano peppers on a plate with rice and beans, and a tortilla. Pork Chile Verde with green chile salsa, or Carnitas.

Alejandro, created the recipe for their hot sauce 45 years ago that is so popular they sell it by the bottle.

"Fortunately, we had an increase in sales during COVID. We are thankful for all of our followers who continued to get their meals here," Oscar said. Now that we can dine in person, the tables are out and the small patio is open.



Co-owner Oscar Villa Senor says high-quality food and good customer service has folks returning to El Azteca. (Photos by Robin Dohrn-Simpson and Heather Fine)

Located at 8306 Parkway Drive, call to place your order for pickup at (619) 466-4113.

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

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Helix High family members gathered at the school's football field recently to celebrate seniors heading off to higher learning. More than 200 students and family were in attendance for the evening.

Helix Charter High School celebrates seniors

More than 200 students and proud family members gathered on the Helix Charter High School football field recently to celebrate seniors who are heading off to higher learning.

In 2015, Michelle Obama launched "College Signing Day," a day to celebrate students who plan to pursue some form of education and training beyond high school. Her main goal was to inspire students to own their own future.

We proudly recognize all of our

students who committed to a community college, a 4-year university, a certificate program, the military, or any other education past high school.

Our students represented more than 50 different educational institutions all over the country and the world. Helix Charter High School is thrilled to celebrate these amazing students.

Editor's note: Article and photos provided by Lauren Knuth.

District 4 supervisor seat

CONTINUED FROM Page 9

7. There is a lot of division in politics these days between the two top parties. How can we get more politicians to reach across the aisle for the good of their constituents?

Fletcher: I'm proud that 93% of the proposals I've brought forward on the County Board have passed with bipartisan support and I was unanimously selected by my colleagues for a second year as Chair of the Board of Supervisors. Working together to solve problems is what service has always meant to me from my days in the US Marine Corps to my time in the Assembly when I brought people together to pass Chelsea's Law. But the division and disinformation being sown out there is very strong and very real. I'm fighting every day to stop those reactionary forces from slowing our progress and taking us backwards.

Reichert: I love this question! We must start with leadership that does not hide behind social media, engage in name-calling, and use "F" bombs in front of and directed at constituents. My opponent Nathan Fletcher has done all these things for the past two years. He has also sent 10 fundraising emails and mass texts calling me the worst names possible. I promise to be a listener and to bring people together.

Hooker: As a diversity and inclusion coordinator, I understand the importance and the need to bring people together from various backgrounds into

one space. With a variety of thoughts present, it allows everyone to consider ideas they haven't had before. Bringing this same concept into the political space will alleviate a lot of the political tension we've seen within the last couple of years. The reality is, both parties have valid points and positive efforts they are trying to contribute for the greater good. It's about knowing how to set one's pride aside and be willing to have a mature conversation. What you'll find is that there's more similarities that most are willing to admit. Ultimately, it's about actually listening to what the communities within the district are saying that they need and addressing it.

8. What is one good thing you would say about your opponents running for the seat?

Fletcher: My opponent is a passionate public speaker. I only wish she (Amy Reichert) had used her public speaking skills to help us keep people safe during COVID, instead of railing against vaccines and spreading disinformation that put people in harm's way.

Reichert: Nathan Fletcher is very good at raising money for his campaign. I have met Sidiqa Hooker and she is passionate about her beliefs - I like that in people I meet.

Hooker: I respect Amy Reichert's overcoming some personal challenges and her desire to make San Diego a cleaner place. I appreciate Nathan Fletcher's military service to our country; I also believe his wife Lorena is a strong woman.

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

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Frenzy of buyers snapping up houses hitting the market

By LAURA LOTHIAN

Like a flock of birds changing flight abruptly and in unison, so could go the real estate market.

Fueled by low interest rates and lifestyle changes brought on by COVID, the housing market of the last two years has been a frenzy of buyers snapping up houses the moment the properties hit the market. To "win" the house, buyers often paid hundreds of thousands over the list price with some homes in California selling for more than one million dollars over the asking price.

Buyers were waiving appraisals and allowing the sellers to stay in the home rent-free for months after closing escrow. Buyers dared not ask for repairs as the seller had a pile of backup offers waiting in the wings.

One Sunday, a few months ago, I held an open house for one of my listings in Mount Helix.

The comparable sales supported a list price of \$1.2M. Knowing the fervor of the market, we pushed the envelope and listed at \$1.4M. Some 200 people came through the open house and at one point, in the middle of the crowd, a man loudly demanded that I "shut down" the open house for his \$1.6M cash offer right there and then.

Of course, I couldn't stop the open house and multiple bids flowed in. The sellers accepted an offer for \$1.8M making it the highest selling home in Mount Helix history for a house under 3,000 square feet. This particular home was less than 2,400 s.f.

But now the wind is shifting. Though home prices are at an all-time high - the median price for a home in San Diego is an eye-popping \$975,000 - signs are emerging of a cooling market. Days on market are increasing. Price reduction announcements are

filling inboxes and when a home generates multiple offers, it's not quite as many as before.

So, what's going on? Most impactful is the rising mortgage interest rates.

The first half of 2021, saw interest rates as low as 2.68%. As of May 19, 2022, the interest rate was 5.42%. If a buyer purchased a home last year for \$975,000 with 20% down, the mortgage payment (principal + interest) would have been \$3,155.43. Today, that same \$975,000 house with 20% down would have a mortgage payment (principal + interest) of \$4,389.68 - a difference of \$1,234.25.

Add economic insecurity, the recent stock market volatility, and rising inflation and it is no surprise that purchase applications fell 12% in the second week of May.

Going forward, home sellers would be wise to be a little kinder to buyers.

Hire an experienced Realtor and listen to his/her advice on pricing and prepping. This is not the time to overprice properties; put your best foot forward. Buyers: if you love a home and can comfortably afford it, buy it. One of the greatest feelings in the world is owning a home you love. Make sure to retain a Realtor who understands the market for negotiating the best terms. It's not always about price, there are other terms that appeal to sellers that are good to know.

Happy home selling and home buying and remember, real estate is a great investment.

—Reach Laura Lothian at: Laura@LauraLothianRealEstate.com.

Helix High

CONTINUED FROM Page 1

to two days a week after school. Emily Burrough is both an ACE team leader and Helix teacher.

"The students design, plan and build a project throughout the year with guidance from our mentors: volunteer architects, engineers, contractors and construction industry professionals, and our lead mentor, Racieli Andrada from Turner Construction," Burrough commented. "In addition to meeting weekly, this year we went on field trips to IQHQ's Research and Development District (RADD) that is being built on North Harbor Drive Downtown and had a behind-the-scenes tour of Snapdragon Stadium (Mission Valley) with hands-on experience with multiple construction trades at ACE San Diego's Trades Day."

According to Burrough, the culminating event of the year is the ACE student showcase in the spring at San Diego State University. The event involves ACE clubs from around the county presenting their projects and discussing learning. At the end of the event, ACE awards scholarships for exceptional junior and seniors who plan to study one of the ACE career paths in college.

The Helix High scholarship winners this year are Jesus Romero (\$1,500), Isabella Reveles (\$2,000), Elisa Reveles (\$2,500), Lesly Vazquez (\$2,500) and John Funk (\$4,000).

"Each year, ACE gives the students a common theme around which to create their project," Burrough continued. "This year, the theme was virtual. Helix students chose the Chase Bank lot on Spring Street (in La Mesa) as their building site and decided to

create Vulcan Trades Academy (VTA)."

Burrough noted VTA is a place where people can meet to learn and practice myriad of trades. That would include medical (including physical therapy) and construction options like welding and circuitry. This is all done using virtual reality.

The construction project comes with challenges for students and faculty alike.

Helix High senior and project lead John Funk noted one challenge to overcome is, "Learning to think. A lot of students want to get a syllabus and have their hand held without a lot of independent learning and they might not be good at planning. That's the hard part: figuring out how to learn to be given an open-ended task and through ACE, we do a lot of open-ended research. Our mentors, especially Johnny Rivera (a civil engineering mentor from Fusion Engineering and Technology) don't give us answers to our questions. Instead, he directs us to find the right answers ourselves."

Helix High junior and engineering lead Marzia Dost commented, "One of the biggest challenges for students involved in a project like this, especially leads, is taking on a responsibility most of us have never experienced before. With the volume and complexity of some of the work we do, we have to learn to manage our time efficiently and delegate work to our team members, which is something most people don't experience until they get into the workforce."

As Burrough sees it, many students were already interested in architecture, engineering or the construction industry, including trades, when they began spending time in the club.

"For most of them, the interactions with our mentor industry

professionals and the hands-on learning have cemented (no pun intended) their interest in pursuing these fields," Burrough remarked. "Of our graduating seniors this year, all are going to California universities or community colleges to study engineering. Our juniors are all currently interested in engineering or architecture."

When it comes to the students, making the most of these opportunities is key.

"A lot of students don't realize that the mentors aren't there to teach you everything, but they are there to help us to think or make decisions like an engineer or architect," Funk commented. "What I mean is to think about these things that most of us take for granted, like drainage. For example, with drainage, we might think it's just a thing that catches water on a site, but you can't put it just anywhere. You need to contact the city and put it closest to a storm drain. Most people wouldn't think about that."

According to Dost, if you're thinking of joining ACE, simply do it.

"There is something for everyone, and even if you aren't interested in these fields, you will learn valuable skills in teamwork and discipline," Dost stated. "As much as we have fun though, ACE requires responsibility for all members. We all have to work diligently and keep our word to ensure we meet deadlines and always work towards our full potential. Ensure that you are able to efficiently manage your time and other responsibilities."

ACE Club is open to any Helix Charter High School student interested in learning more about architecture, construction or engineering.

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

La Mesa reads

CONTINUED FROM Page 8

Guide to Home Office + Studio Décor by Desha Peacock. If you're going to work at home, how can you make your workspace comfortable, attractive, and inspire you to do your best? Heavy on photos to give you ideas, it also discusses colors, finding furniture and decorations on a budget, and ways to maximize usefulness of small spaces.

La Mesa Library's hours have finally expanded to included weekends, and some weeknights! Our new schedule is as follows:

- Monday 10 a.m. - 6 p.m.
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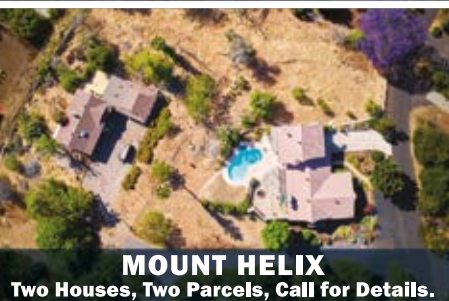


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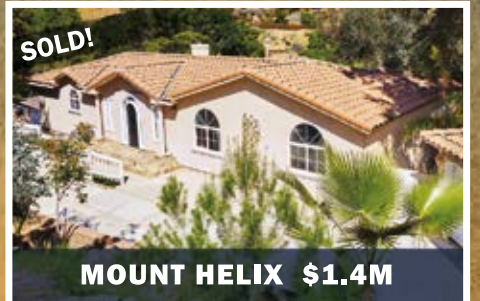
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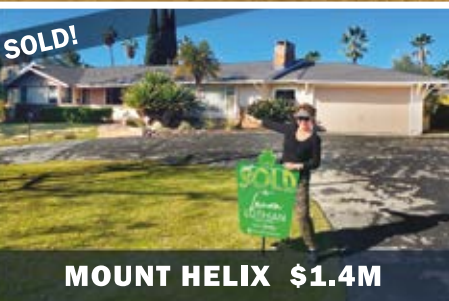
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