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CONTACT US

Editorial / Letters
(858) 270-3103 x130
dave@sdnews.com

Advertising
(951) 296-7794
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LEAP looks to have business in La Mesa hopping

La Mesa officials hope to see more people shopping and more businesses open to shop at as time moves on. (Photo by Elaine Alfaro)

By **ELAINE ALFARO**

La Mesa's one-stop boulevard for shopping, pizza, tacos, and coffee could soon welcome some more options to the neighborhood.

Entrepreneurs in San Diego now have an incentive to open up shop in the city of La Mesa. On July 1, applications for the La Mesa Entrepreneurship Accelerator Program (LEAP) opened.

LEAP is the first program of its kind in California and, potentially, the nation to allocate a portion of federal money from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) — a 2021 economic stimulus bill — to support

up-and-coming entrepreneurs. \$20,000 is available to each entrepreneur accepted into the program after fulfilling eligibility requirements.

SEE **LEAP**, Page 4

15th annual Mt. Helix Park Food & Wine Festival slated for Saturday, Aug. 20

By **DAVE THOMAS**

If you like food, wine and a good time, plan to head out to the 15th annual Mt. Helix Park Food & Wine Festival on Saturday, Aug. 20.

The event is going back to a full-scale production, and attendees are invited to "party with a purpose," surrounded by spectacular 360-degree views, while supporting one of San Diego's most beautiful historic places.

The sunset at 1,400 feet never disappoints and provides a stunning backdrop as guests experience San Diego's best restaurants, beverage companies, and artists. Then, dance under the stars to

music by well-known Beach Boys cover band, Surfs Up. The Responders will kick off the evening on the main stage, and local favorite, Surf Birdz, will keep the area at the summit rockin'.

Ticket prices start at just \$65 and were to increase July 15. You can become a member of the Park for as little as \$35 and save even more.

Vendors will return to this traditional event after two years of virtual and scaled-down versions. Returning vendors include Helix Brewing Company, Mike Hess Brewing, Trevi Hills Winery, San Pasqual Winery, Skrewball



Attendees at a past festival for Mt. Helix Park enjoy a variety of food and drink to choose from. (Photo by Gary Junker)

SEE **FESTIVAL**, Page 5

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City Tacos founder Gerry Torres becomes U.S. citizen

City Tacos founder Gerry Torres recently became a United States citizen in a ceremony held at the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services office in downtown. Torres is originally from Mexico City and he moved to San Diego in 1992.

After working in various roles in the food and beverage industry in San Diego, Miami, and Hawaii for 22 years, Torres opened his first City Tacos in North Park in 2014.

He has since expanded to seven locations overall, including

La Mesa, East Village (Ballpark), Pacific Beach, Encinitas, Sorrento Valley, and Los Angeles on the campus of University of Southern California.

The City Tacos menu features traditional tacos (pollo asado, carnitas, carne asada), caseros "homestyle" tacos (pulled pork with mayan achiote sauce, beef shank, mahi mahi), and several other meat, seafood, and vegetarian options.

For more information on City Tacos, visit: citytacossd.com/.



New U.S. citizen Gerry Torres. (Courtesy photo)

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San Pasqual Winery receives five medals at San Francisco competition

By DAVE THOMAS

La Mesa's San Pasqual Winery recently received five medals at the 2022 San Francisco Chronicle Wine Competition, including: gold for their 2021 Albariño (San Diego County), silver for their 2017 Cabernet Franc (San Diego County), silver for their 2021 Riesling (South Coast AVA), silver for their 2016 Malbec (San Diego County), and bronze for their 2016 Petite Sirah (Clarksburg).

The *San Francisco Chronicle* Wine Competition, started in 1983 as the Cloverdale Citrus Wine Competition. This year's event included more than 5,800 entries, from nearly 1,000 wineries across the United States, Canada and Mexico.

San Pasqual Winery is San Diego's first urban winery and produces approximately 3,500 cases of wine each year. The winery sources its grapes from a variety of local and renowned vineyards across California, and produces the wine at La Mesa Wine Works, located in the La Mesa commercial district.

The winery boasts four tasting rooms, including La Mesa Wine Works, La Mesa Village Tasting Room & Gallery, Seaport Village Tasting Room and Toast Bubble Bar at Seaport Village. Wine Club membership is also available featuring quarterly wine releases, events and specials.

La Mesa Courier recently caught up with co-owners Linda and Mike McWilliams (pictured above with director of operations/assistant winemaker Sheryl Huffman, center) to talk about their business success and more.

LMC: How is the wine industry in general doing these last few years due to COVID and general financial challenges to so many industries and businesses?

Mike McWilliams: It's been especially challenging for small wineries like ours that depend mainly on tasting room sales. Although there was an increase in wine consumption during the pandemic, most of that was due to purchases at larger retail stores. We, and other small wineries, are just now seeing sales getting back to pre-pandemic levels.

Linda McWilliams: We're also still trying to grow staffing back to pre-pandemic levels. We managed to keep most of our core staff, but many wineries, as well as the entire service industry, have had challenges refilling positions.

LMC: What has your winery done to provide excellent customer service to your clientele?

Mike McWilliams: Our focus has always prioritized the customer experience at our tasting rooms. In addition to training our staff to emphasize customer service we ensure that our staff are knowledgeable about the wines that they're pouring. Additionally,



(Left to right) Linda McWilliams, owner/winemaker; Sheryl Huffman, director of operations/assistant winemaker; Mike McWilliams, owner. (Courtesy photo)

as the owners, Linda and I regularly frequent all of the tasting room locations and engage with the customers, which we feel helps set expectations for our staff.

LMC: What are your goals for the winery over the next year?

Mike McWilliams: We have some exciting things going on at all of our locations, starting next Saturday (July 23) with our grand reopening of the remodeled La Mesa Blvd Tasting Room and return of live music (the Barrel Room Sessions) in our refurbished event room. We've also converted office space to an intimate "Vintners Lounge" just off the main tasting room that's great for small gatherings. At La Mesa Wine Works, we're partnering with Serpentine Cidery to offer some exciting ciders on tap. And at Seaport Village we've opened the Toast Bubble Bar, focusing on sparkling wines, and we're hosting private events again after being shut down in our first month of operation due to COVID.

Linda McWilliams: While we're not looking to expand beyond our current tasting room locations or move into large-scale distribution, we'd like to see our wines in more local restaurants. There's a real interest in supporting local in the dining scene and we'd like to see more representation of local wines, including ours.

LMC: Anything else readers should know about the winery etc.?

Linda McWilliams: Some people may not know that we were San Diego's first Urban Winery. In fact we were selected by *Sunset Magazine* as one of the hot 100 trends on the West Coast back in 2009 when we opened in La Mesa. We really enjoy being part of the La Mesa community and appreciate all the support we've received here. As a winemaker, it's always satisfying to hear how much our guests enjoy the wine and to see their surprised faces when I tell them that most of our grapes come from San Diego County - some as close as El Cajon. We do take a lot of pride in the quality of our wines. They've been consistent award winners in prominent competitions including recent awards from the *San Francisco Chronicle*, the Orange County Fair, and the Toast of the Coast wine competitions. Finally, I'd just like to invite people to come in so we can share our love of wine with them. Our Wine Club is also a fun way to get to know our wines and meet some great people. We have quarterly wine club parties where we pair new releases with foods prepared by local chefs and caterers.

For additional information, visit: SanPasqualWinery.com, call (619) 462-1797, or email: info@sanpasqualwinery.com.

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

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LEAP

CONTINUED FROM Page 1

“We see a lot of innovative programs with the caveat that they’re not usually coming out of the small local city governments,” said James Sly, president of San Diego’s East County Economic Development Council (ECEDC). “I think it’s very forward-thinking of La Mesa to decide that this is how they’re going to try to reinvest that money back into the community, and, hopefully, they’ll be able to see that return on investment.”

Mayor Dr. Mark Arapostathis and Sly, created LEAP with the hopes of helping the La Mesa business community overcome the setbacks that resulted from COVID-19 and welcome more local businesses.

“As we started to see more and more vacancy in the downtown and all across the business areas of La Mesa, we wanted to promote more local businesses or independent businesses as opposed to national chains and corporate businesses,” said Arapostathis.

“The conversation became, ‘What can we do to replace all these vacancies, bring more jobs, and strengthen the small business community?’” said Sly.

The answer was LEAP.

Arapostathis said offering support for the small business community and residents through a program like LEAP is something a local government should participate in.

“This is one of the things we [the city] should do: Try to provide an avenue to open businesses that the residents want. That’s part of our responsibility,” said Arapostathis.

Prior to the ARPA relief funds, Arapostathis explained that offering city financial support to local businesses was a difficult, if not impossible, task, which is why this is potentially the first of its kind.

“The city is limited. When people were trying to raise money for businesses that were struggling during the pandemic, it was a Chamber of Commerce, an EDC, or another outside source because [the city] can’t raise money or make money,” remarked Arapostathis. “As the federal and state governments gave us a road map of what we could use [with the ARPA], we started to brainstorm regarding how to best help the business community with relief funds but also encourage people to step out on a limb if they were anxious to open a business.”

The resulting LEAP plan requires participants to complete workshops hosted by the ECEDC and one-on-one advising sessions with business owners and advisors. The \$20,000 will be dispersed in installment grants based on a payment schedule outlined in the LEAP guide.

Jeff Bernstein, a business advisor with 45 years of experience in the flooring retailer industry and a workshop presenter for the ECEDC’s Small Business Development Center (SBDC), said



Entrepreneurs in San Diego now have an incentive to open up shop in La Mesa. (Photo by Elaine Alfaro)

a program like this is something he’s been hoping for to help entrepreneurs like the ones he worked with.

“This is the kind of program I have only wished for over the past few years,” said Bernstein. “This is really aimed at startups. They’ve got a lot of challenges, and they need support. They have a lot of obstacles to overturn.”

Bernstein will be helping the entrepreneurs hurdle the initial business obstacles in the first two LEAP workshops, “Optimizing Your Start-Up: Simple Steps to

Starting Your Small Business” and “Business Plans That Get Results.”

“I learned a lot of things. I also made a lot of mistakes along the way,” added Bernstein. “I kind of feel like it’s my obligation to be able to pass both the positives and the negatives along so people can be more successful.”

Applications for LEAP are available until July 30. However, the program will run until 2026, focusing on long-term efforts to help entrepreneurs, the business community and the city bounce back from COVID-19.

“This will benefit the businesses, but in the end, it will also benefit the city because we want the city to become a destination,” added Arapostathis. “We want people to come here, live here, shop here. It’s mutually beneficial for both groups.”

To learn more or apply, visit: eastcountyedc.org/leap-program/.

—Elaine Alfaro is a journalism student at Point Loma Nazarene University and a former intern for the La Mesa Courier.



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Festival

CONTINUED FROM Page 1

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Check the Park's website to purchase tickets, for ongoing updates, and details at mthelixpark.org.

If you want to be a part of the Food & Wine Festival, here are three ways to contribute:

- Become a sponsor or purchase tickets.
- Donate a silent auction item, experience, or gift card.
- Make a donation to the event if you are unable to attend.

For more information, contact the Mt. Helix Park office at (619) 741-4363.

Or, you may reach out to Krista Powers, Mt. Helix Park Foundation executive director, by calling or texting 619 (985-1445) or emailing Powers at: KPowers@MtHelixPark.org.

La Mesa Courier recently caught up with Powers to talk about this event returning to a more normal format after two years of COVID interruptions.

LMC: What are some of the highlights of the event for attendees to look forward to this year?

Powers: Tickets are going fast as everyone is excited to be back in person and returning to our full-scale Food & Wine Festival event. Some have known the fame of the event as the "heART"



Attendees at prior Mt. Helix Park food and wine fundraiser enjoy some evening conversation and entertainment. (Photo by Gary Junker)

or "Party on the Hill", this year we are calling it exactly what it is, a Food & Wine Festival. This annual fundraiser is not only famous for the location on one of the highest peaks in San Diego with 360-degree views, but also because it is where the private, non-profit, Mt. Helix Park raises over half its necessary income for educational programming, cultural events, security, historical restoration efforts, and more. It's a critical piece of keeping Mt. Helix Park free, clean, and safe for the community's use and enjoyment. Additionally, the 21-and-over event is just a blast to be at. A perfect date night or evening with friends. In our much-anticipated return to the full-scale event, full of local restaurants, wineries, breweries, and distilleries, we will also have a few bands and artists to enjoy

during the evening as you stroll about. We even have a special well-known Beach Boys Cover Band, Surf's Up, coming all the way from Huntington Beach.

LMC: What kinds of attendance numbers did you have in previous years for the event?

Powers: 2020 was a blur. We started off strong with a large group of planning volunteers in a January kick-off meeting and within a few months, we had to put the brakes on and pivot to an online format. Fortunately, we are a strong community and we found beauty in the ashes. New volunteers came forward with ideas on how to salvage this critical fundraiser for the park. One of the things important to myself and the planning team was how we could support the local

SEE FESTIVAL, Page 7



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(858) 270-3103
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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

Elaine Alfaro
Connie and Lynn Baer
Robin Dohrn-Simpson
Laura Lothian
Bonnie Owen
Denise Smith
Julie White

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
julie@sdnews.com



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Preventing the next school shooting

DA Notes

By SUMMER STEPHAN



Over the last 20 years, what once was the safest place for our children – school – has turned into a place of constant worry and questionable security.

In the face of overwhelming grief over the tremendous loss of life at Robb Elementary School in Uvalde, Texas, it feels like we have arrived at a time where school shootings and mass killings are the norm.

With school and public venue safety at the top of our minds, I want to remind San Diegans of the efforts the District Attorney's Office has undertaken to prioritize school safety and to emphasize the critical role the public plays in preventing school shootings.

In 2018, San Diego County established a School Threats Protocol, which guides how school, law enforcement and prosecutors respond to school threats. The protocol was updated in 2021 with the help of many agencies. It may be the first of its kind protocol with all 42 school districts in the county participating with the goal

of preventing would-be school shooters before they act.

Of course, the protocol is not foolproof, but at its heart it relies on the following:

- Never ignore a threat of harm, no matter the form.
- Every threat is taken seriously, with evidenced-based guidelines for investigation and resolution of the threat.

Taking threats seriously is supported by statistics.

- 93% of school shooters make plans to carry out their attack and
- 80% of them tell at least one person
- 60% tell at least two people.

With these odds, it's important for the public to know that you play a vital role in helping prevent school shootings by reporting suspected behavior or threats.

For anyone who thinks it's funny to cause alarm and fear by posting a threat online or calling one into a school, these incidents go beyond a prank: they carry serious legal consequences, such as jail time.

Making criminal threats is a felony crime even if there was no intent to carry out the threat; threatening words with the intent to cause fear and which reasonably cause someone to

feel fear are sufficient for a felony charge. Juveniles can face jail time, or other consequences such as having their access to social media taken away by the court. It's important to keep in mind however, that the juvenile justice system is meant to rehabilitate youthful offenders, not punish them. In instances where we can help them get on the right track with rehabilitation, mental health services and restorative justice methods, that is our first choice.

In the last 16 months, our office received 43 school threats cases to review for formal charges, of which 10 cases have been filed in juvenile court. Our message is clear: every school threat is being fully investigated and every suspect will be held accountable.

Here are some of the factors the DA's Office and law enforcement consider, to confirm the credibility of a threat once the suspect has been identified:

- Investigate their background, including whether the person made prior threats
- Look at open-source intelligence such as social media posts
- Check to see if they have registered guns, have made recent ammunition purchases or have access to guns

• Check on whether there has been contact with terrorist organizations

• Determine whether they have had psychiatric holds or other mental health red flags

• Research whether the person has had a recent traumatic event or grievance with a particular school or person associated with a school

Even though we have a way to measure successful prosecution, it's not as easy to measure successful intervention, but preventing even one death or one school shooting is our duty. The best prevention for a school shooting is bystander intervention. We use public tips to investigate and interrupt violence. It's everyone's responsibility to report threats. You can also report anonymously at StudentsSpeakingOut.org.

As your District Attorney, I'm committed to increasing communication and accessibility between the DA's Office and the public. I hope these consumer and public safety tips have been helpful.

—District Attorney Summer Stephan has dedicated more than 29 years to serving justice and victims of crime as a prosecutor. Visit: sdcda.org/office/contact/ to contact her.

5 reasons to adopt from San Diego Humane Society in July

By JESSICA DES LAURIERS

The days are long, the weather is warm and who better to share your summer with than a new furry friend?

San Diego Humane Society (SDHS) currently has more than 600 adoptable animals — just waiting to give and receive love — and we are calling on the community to help us make space in our shelters. SDHS took in more than 275 stray pets following the July Fourth holiday, and sadly, many of these strays were not reclaimed by their owners, contributing significantly to the lack of shelter space — especially for large dogs. Shelters across the country are experiencing overcrowding, thanks in part to these post-holiday strays.

If you've considered adopting a pet, but you've been waiting for the right time or a special sign from the universe, consider this to be it.

Here are five reasons to open your heart and home to an animal from SDHS this month:

1. You'll save money with waived adoption fees

To encourage adoptions — and in honor of National Adoption Week July 11-17 — San Diego Humane Society is waiving adoption fees for adult

dogs, cats (7 months and older) and small pets through July 31 in partnership with PetSmart Charities. Whether you were already considering adopting a pet or you've only recently entertained the idea, what better time to take action than when fees are waived? (Besides, that just leaves more room in the budget for toys.)

2. You'll be helping more than just one animal

By adopting an animal this

month, you're not only providing a loving home for a pet in need, but you're also helping make room for more animals who need our help. Adoption gives more animals the second chance they deserve.

3. You know you're getting a pet who has been properly assessed and cared for

Each pet who comes to San Diego Humane Society is spayed/neutered, vaccinated and cared

for by our trained staff while they wait for their new homes. Additionally, you'll be able to contact our Behavior Helpline to get expert guidance about behavior or training concerns and advice.

4. Your new best friend is good for your health

Not only do animals give unconditional love, they are psychologically, emotionally and physically beneficial to their companions. Caring for a pet also provides a sense of purpose and fulfillment, and lessens feelings of loneliness.

5. You'll have the cutest social media content

Who doesn't love scrolling through Instagram and seeing pictures of someone else's pet? Do it for your followers. They deserve to see all the cute pictures of you with your new furry family member.

Now that you're convinced and ready, check out the adorable pets currently available for adoption at sdhumane.org/adopt. San Diego Humane Society is open for walk-in adoptions Tuesday – Sunday, 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. at our campuses in Escondido, El Cajon, Oceanside and San Diego. Plus, take advantage of our waived adoption fees through July 31.

—Jessica Des Lauriers, CAWA, is senior vice president and chief operating officer at San Diego Humane Society.



Festival

CONTINUED FROM Page 5

struggling restaurants that had supported us for so many years. Susan Schalin, Valerie Hapke, and Chris Kilrain came up with an idea to sell a VIP ticket level that would cover the costs for us to purchase dinners at the local restaurants and then have our board members hand-deliver them to people's homes. At first, I thought they were crazy as I thought about the logistics but we made a plan and made it happen. We were able to purchase almost 200 dinners from local restaurants when indoor dining was shut down and raise enough money with our live stream programming to support the park.

Local realtor Steve Rotsart, Steel Canyon Athletic Director Charles Tyler, and I were able to pull off an entertaining program with the right amount of comedy to bring smiles during a time we all needed to laugh a bit. My husband reached out to one of the bands he plays in and he donated the musical entertainment for the evening. McFarlane Productions helped us with the live stream, video production, and technical side of things. I am still amazed how we were able to pull it all together in 2020 and make the best of it. We are blessed to have so many people in our community who care about the park.

In 2021, we recognized that our full-scale event was still not appropriate. So we again pivoted

to a small 200-person catered "Evening Under the Stars", which sold out pretty fast. The community and businesses once again stepped up to help us raise the critical funds we needed.

LMC: Do you tend to get mostly locals at the event or get people too from throughout San Diego?

Powers: The annual event has become pretty famous in East County. I know even myself, as I lived out of the area for 20 years, would come back to town to take my mom to it. It is definitely a wonderful neighborhood event and often the one time a year you see all your neighbors, but I have watched the news of this one-of-a-kind evening and event location spread and we now have people

come from up north and even other states.

LMC: For anyone interested in being a sponsor, volunteering at the event etc., is there still time for them to sign up?

Powers: At this moment we have five VIP sponsor tables left, starting at \$2,500, early-bird general admission starts

at only \$65 per ticket. We are still accepting new volunteers and donations for the auction. Supporting the event is an excellent way for businesses to show they care and we highlight them in advertising for an entire year.

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



Guests mingle and enjoy food and drink during a prior fundraiser. (Photo by Angie Crompton)

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Foothills Art Association features octogenarian artists for August



The Foothills Art Association proudly presents our amazing Octogenarian members as the



By Georgina Clemens

featured artists for August 2022. They are all extremely creative and talented. Their media is varied and often surprising. Whether watercolor, colored pencils, oil, acrylics, pastels or collage their work admired and collected worldwide.

Here is a list of these artists: Helen Baker, Tom Kilroy, Bill



By Helen Baker

Barr, Roberta Labastida, Ed Bertin, Dixie Sampier, Elsimae Cleeton, Sandy Seckington, Georgina Clemens, Teresa Shaffer, Jackie Grace Nancy Shaeffer, Connie Grace, June



By Connie Grace

Stankiewicz, Dottie Hays, Mary Stanley, Betty Johnsen, Barbara Stewart, Caroline Kenny and Hazel Waters. For further information, visit: foothillsartassociation.com/



By Ed Bertin

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



By Hazel Waters

Helix Charter High School launches new website, hires community relations & engagement coordinator

Helix Charter High School is getting serious about optimizing communication and connection. The historical school, which just graduated its 70th class of seniors, set out this year to increase connection among its large population. “We just celebrated the largest graduating class in our school’s history. We have 2,500 students, over 200 staff members, and a large community of families that

need to be informed so we wanted to enhance our main conduits of communication,” said Lauren Knuth. Earlier this year, Helix hired Knuth to be their community relations & engagement coordinator. She is a long-time La Mesa resident with two school-aged children. She brings more than 20 years of experience in corporate communications, event planning and marketing, and she is excited

to now be working in a school environment with people and causes she is passionate about. Helix is focusing on three main facets of communication as it moves into 2022-23 school year: **UPDATED HELIX CHARTER WEBSITE** The new version of the school’s website (helixcharter.net) is set to launch before school starts on Aug. 4, giving parents, students

and staff some time to get acquainted with it. You can watch a tour of the new website at: [youtube.com/watch?v=OGrgpFH-V7p8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OGrgpFH-V7p8). The new site will give users a better look at all of the events and programs on campus. Helix partnered with Blackboard Web Community Manager, a website and content management system that provides the tools to build a website that serves as a communications hub. The site uses



responsive web design (RWD) to ensure it can be easily read and navigated on a wide range of devices, from desktops to mobile phones and tablets. Some highlights of the Helix Charter High School’s new website include:

- A comprehensive calendar that highlights events from all departments on campus from sporting events to performing arts to academic testing
- An announcement section that will have daily news, information and social media feeds
- A hub of documents, policies and procedures to make things easy to find
- The ability to convey emergency messages in real-time

INCREASED SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE As social media emerges as one of the primary methods of communication, the school is optimizing its Facebook and Instagram accounts. Helix will be posting regularly to these accounts, as well as interacting with comments and questions. You can find it on Facebook by liking Helix Charter High School and on Instagram by following Helix ASB.

INCREASED COMMUNICATION & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT Helix is looking at ways to increase community engagement and will be launching some initiatives to do just that. In an effort to keep families informed, there will be an increase of correspondence via all channels, including email and text. With such a large population and campus, Helix is hoping this increases inclusivity and connection. “Helix has always been known for its strong community and we hope that these new initiatives will only improve things,” said Knuth.

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Foothiller accomplishments were numerous during second semester at GHS



Foothiller Footsteps
By CONNIE AND LYNN BAER

During the past two years, the challenges faced by Grossmont High School students and staff made the cautious return to activities and sports even more joyful this past spring. These were some of the Foothiller achievements in the second semester:

FOOTLOOSE

In 1921, Grossmont’s first play, “All of a Sudden Peggy”, was performed. 101 years later, drama teacher Amity Ecker describes this year’s production: “The Foothiller Players opened the first musical production, Footloose, on the main stage in our new theatre. The show was a celebration of the opening of the new theatre and was a collaboration with the dance and theatre departments at GHS. Prior to opening night, there was a community ribbon cutting ceremony, where students were honored with certificates from California State senators

and assemblymen and which was featured on KUSI. Over 50 students were involved in the show, and they played to sold out houses over six evenings of the production run.”

STAFF MEMBERS OF THE YEAR

These staff members were selected for their professionalism, dedication, and caring. Science teacher Stephanie La Berge-Luhnow, chosen by the Grossmont HS teachers as their Teacher of the Year. Recently, La Berge-Luhnow was selected as GUHSD Teacher of the Year and will be featured in the fall SDCOE Teacher of the Year showcase.

Ecker, selected by GHS students as its Golden Apple Teacher of the Year.

GHS nurse Bambi Arredondo, chosen by the GHS staff as its Classified Employee of the Year.

ATHLETICS

Congratulations to our 2022 League and CIF Championship sports teams.

Girls water polo finished second in CIF Open Division Championship and won its eighth league championship since its first championship in 1998. Coach Danielle Cook

SEE FOOTHILLER FOOTSTEPS, Page 11



The Foothill Players opened the first musical production, Footloose, on the main stage in the school’s new theatre. (Courtesy photo)



The GHS boys’ lacrosse team secured another league championship. (Courtesy photo)



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Foothiller Footsteps

CONTINUED FROM Page 9

shares, “This is a season I’ve always dreamed about as a coach. The work of everyone from the coaching staff, parents, to the amazing young women in the water really came through in the end. We battled every day to be better than the day before, and every member of the team played an important role to help achieve these goals.”

Boys Basketball, 33rd league championship since its first in 1924.

Boys Soccer, 10th league championship since its first in 1973.

Boys Golf, 14th league championship since its first in 1983. Boys Lacrosse, 13th league championship since its first in 2005. According to Coach Nick Hernandez, “We had a great season this year with an incredibly talented group of young men. Our win against Torrey Pines HS was one of the biggest wins in our program’s history. Grossmont finished the regular season ranked #3 in San Diego County.”

Boys Tennis, 44th league championship since its first in 1939. Coach Wayne Eddington shares, “We were young and talented in singles and had a few veteran doubles teams. That combo produced an excellent team and season. 15-1 overall and 8-0 in league play. The top

2 singles players were Blake Lorenzo who was selected League MVP and Jun Dilmaghanian who advanced to the Final 16 in the CIF SD City Tournament.” Boys Volleyball, GHS’s 20th league championship since its first in 1991, and its second CIF Championship. Coach Aaron French describes the season: “The Grossmont boys volleyball team worked hard day in and day out throughout the season. Because of their passion for the game and their willingness to push themselves, they were able to battle adversity and win the CIF Division 3 Championship.” Throughout the semester, Foothiller students and staff were eager to return to a sense of normalcy; the students’ and the coaches’ accomplishments are

impressive, reflecting the pride and achievement of Foothillers in and out of the classroom.

GHS MUSEUM NEWS
CLOSED UNTIL FALL 2023

While we are closed, we will have an “office” in the social science lounge in the lower quad. There, we will have access to our file cabinets, our yearbooks, the bound newspapers, and research items we use frequently; we will continue to write our monthly columns and our newsletters.

With prior arrangement, reunions are welcome to contact us to schedule a campus and district office tour. Visit our website at foothillermuseum.com to learn more about GHS, past and present. Contacts: (619) 668-6140 and gghsmuseum@guhsd.net.

UPCOMING REUNIONS

Class of 1972: Saturday, Sept.10. (6 p.m. - 10 p.m.) Contact: suziehawley@gmail.com.

Classes of 1980, 1981, and 1982: July 29 main event and July 30 family picnic, GHS campus and district office tour. Contact: mightyfoothillers@gmail.com

Class of 1992: Saturday, Aug. 27. RSVP and purchase a ticket, alumni will need to visit: reunion-specialists.com/reunion2.php?reunion=939#.YocipeiZ03A

Class of 2002: Saturday, Aug. 13. RSVP and purchase a ticket at: evite.com/event/036EO-4BAS33PYY63UEPMR7ATI6S-C6I/rsvp

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

Best of La Mesa returns

The Best of La Mesa is back, highlighting all the great businesses throughout the city. Do you have a business you’ve been a customer of in La Mesa for many years? Is there a business or several of them you’d highly recommend to family and friends? What business or businesses go out of their way to serve you and other customers?



Let it be known what small, medium and big La Mesa businesses owned and staff by the families and people in the community you support. Each year, La Mesa Courier asks its loyal readers to nominate their top restaurants, entertainment venues, stylists, designers and other businesses and professionals. Go online to <https://forms.gle/mVHunKVb6iEkS22w7> and vote for the Best of La Mesa 2022. The deadline to vote is Sept. 9. The Best of La Mesa will publish Oct. 28.



The GHS boys' volleyball team came away with both a league and CIF crown. (Courtesy photo)



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CITY TACOS

Japanese cuisine, American sushi, Mexican sushi chef

By ROBIN DOHRN-SIMPSON

"Sushi is all about passion," said 20-year veteran sushi chef and Konnichiwa Sushi & Bar manager Juan Cabrera. "Passion for the fish, passion for the freshest food, passion for the sauces, and passion for creating art. I tell my crew, that you have to have a passion for what you do, be it greeting the customer, serving them, or making perfect sushi rolls, ramen or yakisoba."

When Cabrera took over the La Mesa restaurant, he set about

changing everything about the place, from the menu to the staff.

"I always go to other restaurants and analyze what they do. I want every customer greeted immediately upon arrival. I want them to feel comfortable and at home. I want attentive and friendly wait staff who anticipate the diners' needs," Cabrera said.

Cabrera has worked with many sushi masters and studied ramen-making in Japan.

"I call our sushi American sushi. In Japan, they only use a couple of types of fish, and a couple of

sauces and they don't do rolls. Here, we have many types of fish we use and many sauces. When I make a sauce I know exactly what sushi roll it's going to enhance," Cabrera said.

Diner Debbie Dietrich said, "The pizza sushi roll has layers and layers of flavor and texture. Nice body and chewiness to the rice, creamy and warm. Mildly spicy jalapeno washed over my palate for yet another layer. After I swallowed it the flavors continued to evolve in my mouth, making me want to have another bite. Just lean back in your chair and enjoy the bite." What better of a compliment can a chef get than that?

The sushi menu is extensive with around 25 choices. Each roll is a work of art. For non-sushi lovers, you can enjoy bowls such as a tempura chicken bowl or a beef bowl or beef, chicken, or shrimp yakisoba. For the gluten-free

crowd, they offer rice beer and gluten-free soy sauce.

If you are looking for a party platter, they make beautiful works of art to take to any event.

Konnichiwa Sushi & Bar is located at 8350 La Mesa Boulevard. You can find their menu at

konnichiwasushi.com/. Just know that it is constantly changing. Phone orders for takeout at (619) 466-6446.

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



What will you order at Konnichiwa Sushi & Bar? (Photos by Robin Dohrn-Simpson)



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La Mesa announces employees of the year

The City of La Mesa hosted an employee appreciation luncheon recently after a two-year “pause” on employee events due to the pandemic.

Employees were recognized for their service years for 2020 and 2021, and employee promotions during the period were announced. The highlight of the event was the announcement of two employee of the year winners, announced by City Manager Greg Humora.

Fred Juarez, custodian in the public works department and Sheryl Sherman, risk management analyst in the administrative services department, were recognized for their extraordinary achievements. What made this year’s award stand out was that the winners were nominated by their peers across all departments as the result of a new employee recognition program. A total of 36 nominations were submitted.

Juarez is currently the longest serving active employee in the City, with 38 years under his belt at the City of La Mesa. Sherman was recognized for her outstanding work related to risk management; specifically, her expertise with COVID-19 administration, and her important work following the civil unrest in 2020. She has served the City of La Mesa since 2011, and has worked in three different departments.

The award winners received one day off, a plaque, a gift card funded by the executive team, and will be recognized at an upcoming council meeting.



UCP’s annual luncheon slated for Sept. 24

For the past 38 years, the City of San Diego firefighters have donated thousands of dollars and volunteer hours to United Cerebral Palsy of San Diego.

The firefighters have served as the major sponsor and underwriter of the annual Fire Fighters and Friends Celebrity Waiters Event for UCP and this year’s event will take place on Friday, Sept. 24 at the Coronado Island Marriott Resort and Spa – Bayside at 11:30 a.m. – no-host with lunch being served at noon with live and silent auction during the event. Tickets start at \$80 per person and reservations can be made by calling the UCP office at 858-571-5365 (ex: 112) or at: ucpsd.org.

Other sponsors for the event include San Diego Community Newspaper Group, Berkshire Hathaway HomeState Cos., Misty Thompson, Melody Morgan, David Mirisch Enterprises, Mobilityworks, and DPC Productions.

Last year, the event raised close to \$35,000 for United Cerebral Palsy and committee members are hoping to match or exceed that amount this year. Funds raised from this event will go to support the services that UCP provides to people with cerebral palsy and other disabilities including parent/sibling support groups, and training and counseling programs.

The firefighters also contribute countless volunteer hours to the agency as well. Since 1980, the firefighters’ efforts have resulted in more than \$2.5 million for UCP. The Firefighter Community Responsibility Fund, established in 1973 by Local 145, has enabled city firefighters to generate substantial monetary contributions for charitable organizations. Countless hours of volunteer time are spent annually with other charities, schools, and civic organizations as well.

The United Cerebral Palsy Association of San Diego County was founded in 1958 and provides programs and services to children and adults with cerebral palsy and other disabilities. And 86% of every dollar raised goes right back into the local community.

MC’s for this year’s event are Hunter Sowards from KUSI 9/51 and comedian Russ T Nailz.



Happy summer. Everyone seems to enjoy and gobble up this old-fashioned salad. You can add

Old-Fashioned salad

or omit whatever crunchy vegetables you like best.

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 package of elbow macaroni, cooked and drained as per package directions (whole meat pasta can be used as a healthier alternative)
- 1 handful of sugar snap peas, strings pulled and chopped
- 1 small red onion chopped
- 1 red bell pepper seeded and chopped
- 2 carrots peeled and grated
- 4 tablespoons of fresh chopped parsley (I prefer Italian flat leaf)
- 1 cup of mayonnaise
- 1/4th cup of honey
- 2 tablespoons of yellow or Dijon mustard
- 1/4th cup of white wine or red wine vinegar
- 1 tablespoon each of salt and black pepper
- Mix ingredients well, chill and serve.

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Get cooking on alternative meals



By DENISE SMITH

Who's ready to stop turning their oven on? I'm pretty sure everyone's hand just went up.

It's that time of year when it seems just too hot to cook with the oven or even the stovetop. The La Mesa Branch Library has ideas for you to explore on alternatives to creating meals that won't make you feel like you might melt away while you prepare your food.

Salt & Straw Ice Cream Cookbook by Tyler Mal gives 50 different recipes on unique flavors.

Mal gives clear instructions on how creating a base ice cream allows one to incorporate all kinds of different flavors. The author also encourages the reader

on how to create your own flavor or recreate a flavor you may have been hunting for. Equally refreshing, *Aguas Frescas and Paletas* by Ericka Sanchez offers up traditional and refreshing Mexican drinks and frozen treats. If you are a fan of horchata and lime or want something more exotic like hibiscus and orange you will be in for a treat. These recipes tend to have less sugar than what is found in grocery stores and all are alcohol-free.

I suppose we can't survive on snacks alone all summer. How about we go straight from the freezer to plate in a short amount of time? We can just skip the stove altogether.

Bruce Weinstein has figured out a way to eliminate standing over any kind of heating element with his book *From Freezer to Instant Pot*. There are over 75 recipes in which you go from the freezer, lock the lid, and in just a bit of time you're ready to eat. A similar title, *From Freezer to Cooker*, by Polly Connor, expands on this concept to include all slow and pressure cookers.

Connor offers lots of tips on how to tackle each device with frozen foods.

Luckily, we live in a part of the country where grilling can be done all year round.

The Best Grilling Book Ever Written by Two Idiots by Ryan Fey and Mark Anderson ensures "If we can grill it, you can grill it." One of the authors' goals of this book is to show readers how everything can be made on a grill. Another simple grilling book, which also includes cheat sheets, is *Easy BBQ: Simple, Flavorful Recipes for Home Grilling* by Glenn Connaughton. This book keeps the ingredients simple, but flavorful, and preparation time is down to a minimum.

* * *

Storytimes have returned to the La Mesa Branch on Thursdays at 10:30 a.m.



What alternative meal ideas might you have in mind?
(Photo: Pixabay.com)

Each week will feature one of the following programs: Miss Sara will be presenting Dance Party Storytimes with high energy education through song and dance; on alternating Thursdays Mr. Alex will present Family Fun Storytime in which parachutes, shakers, bubbles and more are incorporated into the fun. The La Mesa Branch is also a Cool Zone where anyone can come into the branch to enjoy our air conditioning while conserving their own utilities.

If you have any questions or are interested in any of the titles above, call the branch at (619) 469-2151 or visit www.sdcl.org.

'La Mesa Rocks' fundraiser set for Aug. 13

Join the La Mesa Park & Recreation Foundation for their 6th annual "La Mesa Rocks" fundraiser on Saturday, Aug. 13, 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. at Allen Airways Museum at Gillespie Field.

This will be a fun-filled evening with dinner, drinks, and entertainment to raise funds for La Mesa's parks.

The Foundation's mission is to fundraise and facilitate diverse projects and programs to strengthen community and family bonds to improve the quality of life in La Mesa and its parks.

Call (619) 667-1319 or email: friends@lamesaparks.org with questions.



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To Airbnb or not to Airbnb, that is the question

By LAURA LOTHIAN

In 2011, I purchased my La Mesa home that is still my primary residence.

Downstairs featured a neglected studio apartment with a kitchenette and full bath. Initially, I used it for storage but decided to rent it. Fair market rent would have been \$800 per month.

My son, Mack, suggested I place the apartment on, Airbnb, a company I had not heard of at the time. Mack and his girlfriend were traipsing around Europe and couldn't afford hotels and didn't want to stay in hostels, so they couch-surfed on the cheap by booking through this new home-sharing concept company, Airbnb. They loved staying in people's homes and the locals loved hosting them.

Hosting temporary guests instead of dealing with locked-in tenants plus the flexibility of accepting bookings from one night to one year appealed to me, so I placed the apartment on Airbnb.com, 30-day minimum, for the ridiculous rental price of \$1,600 per month and was instantly booked for over a year. To this day, the apartment has never been vacant.

This discovery was so remarkable and profitable, I began advising my real estate clients to seek out properties that had, "Airbnb potential." Airbnb potential can include an attached or detached guest house; studio over garage; basement or garage converted to living space; and/or a bedroom, preferably one with its own private entry/exit.

Almost all Airbnb hosts provide the essentials: fully furnished, clean premises, linens and towels, kitchen and laundry appliances, cooking utensils, flatware, Internet/Wi-Fi, TV, shampoo, conditioner, body wash, and paper products.

What elevates the experience all around - making the guests happier and the hosts more income - are the hosts providing privacy, style pizzazz, designated parking spot and designated outdoor patio space. The designated parking space gives the guest parking convenience and security while courteously freeing up street parking for the neighbors.

One of my La Mesa clients took my Airbnb advice to heart and then some.

She added a detached studio (Accessory Dwelling Unit/"ADU") to her La Mesa property. She provides all the essentials plus the designated parking space; private patio space and she hired an interior designer/colorist to create a beautiful space. This under-500 s.f. studio earns her nearly \$4,000 per month. Her property is not in La Mesa Village or Mount Helix, just a regular La Mesa neighborhood.

Therein lies the dream and nightmare of Airbnb: substantial

passive income for property owners but disappearing inventory and high rents for regular renters and, sometimes, huge nuisances for neighborhoods.

Airbnb "Party Houses" seem to cause the most acrimony between homeowners who live in their homes and homeowners who have turned their homes into motels.

To mitigate high rents and party houses, governments around the world are introducing and implementing regulations in an effort to balance homeowners' rights to freely rent their homes with homeowners' rights to live in peace.

These regulations include limiting the number of Airbnb properties in a city, the number of days a property can be Airbnb rented in a year, creating no-Airbnb zones, and often requiring owner occupancy for Airbnb properties.

If a homebuyer is purchasing a property with the intent of Airbnb-ing some or all of it, he or she would be wise to study the Airbnb regulations specific to that address.

La Mesa does not have Airbnb rules and their ADU ordinances are more lenient than California's. There are no parking requirements except to replace existing parking if removed to build an ADU and there are no owner-occupancy requirements. There are over 1,000 Airbnbs in La Mesa.

Best Airbnb Tips for neighborhood harmony:

- **Owner occupancy is best. Guests behave better when the hosts are on premises.**
- **Small is good. Studios and one-bedroom units rarely become party houses.**

- **Create a designated parking space. Guests usurping neighborhood street parking foments hostilities.**
- **Provide house rules to all guests and make sure they adhere to those rules.**

The income earned by renting a room, guest house, converted garage, ADUs, etc. has been life-changing for millions of people. Many homeowners are able to stay in their homes because Airbnb income subsidizes their mortgages.

Because of Sacramento's 2021 relaxation of ADU rules and regulations and the high income generated by regular rentals and Airbnbs, ADUs have exploded in California. Homes with ADUs are in high demand by buyers, substantially increasing the value of homes.

With an average sold price per square foot in La Mesa nearing \$600 and the cost to build an ADU around \$400 per square foot (with no land purchase costs), it makes fiscal sense to add an ADU.

The popularity of ADUs is so high, the SDMLS – San Diego's Multiple Listing Service implemented a new ADU category this year and is now a permanent part of San Diego listings.

I am currently building an ADU in my La Mesa backyard for the purpose of Airbnb-ing it. I have had great Airbnb success for over a decade with multiple properties and no neighbor issues and am happy to advise home buyers and home owners. Call, text or email me anytime.

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



Fireworks lit up the night sky to end a terrific day in the Lake Murray area. (Courtesy photo)

Lake Murray fireworks prove quite a blast

Thanks to the generous contributions of neighbors and businesses in the Navajo community, the Lake Murray Music Fest and Fireworks show was held on Fourth of July at Lake Murray Community Park.

A sizable crowd attended the Independence Day event, with music, games, food vendors, and picnics culminating in a dazzling fireworks display over Lake Murray viewable throughout the Navajo community.

This year's music headliner was Pop Vinyl, an energetic band performing dance classics from Motown to the latest hits. Special guests included San Diego Mayor Todd Gloria and District 7 Council member Raul Campillo.

The family-friendly event's \$90,000 fundraising goal was met through restaurant nights, private donations, and business sponsorships, including title sponsor Stormberg Orthodontics of La Mesa. It's Stormberg's fourth year as the top event sponsor.

As is tradition, neighborhood volunteers gathered at the park on the morning of July 5 to clean up any remnants of the previous day's festivities.

For information on next year's Lake Murray Music Fest and Fireworks and how you can donate or get involved, log on to: www.lakemurrayfireworks.org.

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